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JOHN OF PATMOS AND THE NEW JERUSALEM OF THE BOOK OF

REVELATION:

A MIDRASHIC APPROACH

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Religious Studies

by

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JUNE 2023

The dissertation of Jamila Herman Gonzalez is approved.

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March 2023

John of Patmos and the New Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation: A Midrashic  
Approach

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by

Jamila Herman Gonzalez

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## ABSTRACT

John of Patmos and the New Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation:

A Midrashic Approach

by

Jamila Herman Gonzalez

This dissertation demonstrates the midrashic character and principles of John's visions through comparisons to midrashic traditions, with a new translation and commentary of Revelation 21 and 22, and by analyzing John's visions as midrash on the Genesis cosmogony. As a depiction of an end-of-the-world apocalypse, John's visions are usually placed in the apocalyptic genre; however, the midrashic approach can mitigate the apocalyptic view of the text and encourage environmentalism and stewardship of the planet (as a home for the new Jerusalem). The midrashic approach also integrates Jewish and Christian depictions of the heavenly Jerusalem, reversing the scholarly "parting of the ways." Including John's visions among midrashic traditions suggest early evidence of a divine bride: the city actualized as a Jerusalem bride is a precursor to the Kabbalistic Sabbath bride; Jerusalem as a tabernacle-city rather than temple-city connects to the etymology of God's presence, the *Shekinah*.

In midrashic tradition, the heavenly Jerusalem exists as a primordial creation, preserved along with or as Eden, and intertwined with the earthly Jerusalem. Jerusalem above is quantumly entangled with Jerusalem below in ritual, cult, existence, divine presence, and cosmography. Jerusalem is "on earth

as it is in heaven” and vice versa, “in heaven as it is on earth.” John’s Jerusalem on earth is the same as the Jerusalem in heaven; it is the nomadic temple: the tabernacle, which descends from heaven to earth, literally creating “heaven on earth.”

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## INTRODUCTION: JOHN'S NEW JERUSALEM AS MIDRASH

Many people long for a better world. Some strive to make this world a better place, while others hope for a new world entirely. For many Christians, John of Patmos described their hoped-for new world in the final chapters of the book of Revelation. The focus of this new world was the new Jerusalem.

According to the end of the book of Revelation, the new Jerusalem will come about at the end of days. The presumed author of the book of Revelation, John of Patmos, likely was alive during the destruction of Jerusalem's second temple in 70 CE and likely wrote the Book of Revelation about 95 CE during the reign of Domitian. This was a time of catastrophic loss, not just of the temple, but of the land, and the Jewish rulers therein. While this violent shift was occurring, John envisioned an imminently emerging holy city. In this future sacred space, the kings of the earth no longer ruled and no longer harmed God's people, God's temple, or God's land. Furthermore, there was no longer a heaven separated from earth. Humans mingled freely with God in this heaven-on-earth Eden, this new paradise of Jerusalem.

While many Christians accept the new Jerusalem as their future world, they do not appreciate its Jewish elements. Similarly, while scholars had various approaches to John's new Jerusalem, they also do not fully appreciate its Jewish elements. However, if John's new Jerusalem is placed among first-century Jewish genres, and anti-Judaism bias is expunged as much as possible, the new

Jerusalem could be better understood as both a historical and imaginary Jewish city.

The earthly Jerusalem was the highest place on earth in first-century Jewish cosmography, but the heavenly Jerusalem was even higher. The heavenly Jerusalem sat as the pinnacle of the axis mundi as a holy place located in heaven directly above the earthly Jerusalem. How this heavenly Jerusalem came into existence in the imagination and theology of the Jewish people can be traced to the origin and the destruction stories of the earthly Jerusalem.

The story of the earthly Jerusalem was a compendium of holiness and tragedy. According to the Torah, God designated Jerusalem as the special place for his presence to dwell; however, God's presence was nomadically attached to the ark of the covenant until the ark was finally emplaced in Jerusalem during the reigns of David and Solomon. Moreover, this time of the united kingdoms under the reign of David and Solomon became halcyon days in the collective memory of the people. Thus, the memory of the first temple under a messianic king became a nostalgic ideal.

This ideal Jerusalem found alternative existences after its destruction. In 587 BCE, the Babylonians destroyed the temple and city. A significant number of the Jerusalemites and Judeans were exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem. During the exile the prophet Ezekiel envisioned a new temple in the holy city (Jerusalem), even more magnificent than the first (Ezekiel 40-48). Ezekiel's vision seemed to find fulfillment when the Persian king Cyrus wrote a decree permitting the Judeans to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple (Ezra 1:1-

4). After many years and after the urging of the prophets, the Jerusalemites built a second temple (Ezra 5:1-2). This temple was a small version of its former glory. Later, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt (Nehemiah 2:17; 6:15). Yet, the temple and Jerusalem did not do Ezekiel's vision justice. Thus, this lackluster fulfillment of prophecy was likely an impetus that gave rise to the belief that there would be a greater temple and greater Jerusalem, either in the future eschaton or that such a temple already existed in heaven.

Thus, for the Jewish people living in the land of Judea after the return from the exile in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Ezekiel's promised temple remained in the abstract only, unrealized. This dissatisfaction continued with the questionable lineage of the Hasmonean priests in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. This led to some groups of Jews protesting the validity of temple. This dissatisfaction continued again at the turn of the era when Herod made the temple into a wonder of the world. Despite King Herod's massive beautification and enlargement projects, his own blood-thirsty character and lack of proper lineage also precluded him and his temple from the approval of the religious Jewish people.

In 70 CE, Titus' soldiers destroyed the temple again and the Jewish people again held out hope that it would be restored, either by the people or by God himself. John of Patmos was one of the Jewish people who expressed this belief. In John's vision, the new Jerusalem was built by God, not people. It existed in heaven and, like the previous ark of God and tabernacle of God, could move to God's designated holy place.

In John's descriptions of the new Jerusalem, John utilized the visions of biblical prophets, especially Ezekiel's new Jerusalem vision and Isaiah's new Jerusalem visions, as well as the paradigm of the original holy place: Eden. John did not utilize these biblical texts *sui generis*; rather, he read them alongside other contemporary Jewish interpretations and with contemporary Jewish methods of reading the biblical texts. John, like other first century Jewish visionaries, believed that just as their Judean ancestors had returned and were restored to Jerusalem, so would they be restored to an even greater ultimate new Jerusalem.

#### SCHOLARLY ANTI-JUDAISM AND ANTI-RABBINISM

Scholars of the last fifty years have debated the symbolism of the new Jerusalem, which was to be expected, but what was unexpected was that scholars diverged over their understanding of the Jewishness of the new Jerusalem. While most recent scholars did have a theoretical awareness of the history of anti-Judaism and its adverse effect on scholarship, many were still negligent in recognizing anti-Judaism in scholarship and in rooting out its supersessionist remnants in their own methodology.

Supersessionism was common in previous eras of scholarship and theology where Revelation was often interpreted through a lens that favored Christianity. Previous scholars and theologians emphasized the new Jerusalem as a Christian symbol rather than a Jewish symbol. They viewed the new Jerusalem as a bride emancipated from her Jewish parents, a city which had rejected the Jewish temple and Jewish religion.

This supersessionist worldview was not limited to traditional theologians, it infiltrated critical scholarship as well. Remnants of this supersessionist worldview remained in much of critical scholarship and traditional theology despite a general consensus that scholarship and theology should be egalitarian and non-biased. To be fair, there are scholars and theologians who are careful to filter out potential bias, but overall, anti-Judaism bias has not been fully expunged from general scholarship. This is because the anti-Judaism was inherited from previous scholars. It is in a sense institutional racism/anti-Judaism rather than overt or intentional racism/anti-Judaism. Thus, while the Jewish character of John of Patmos's new Jerusalem should be apodictic, there is nevertheless *residual* anti-Judaism in scholars' analyses of the past fifty years. With regard to institutional anti-Judaism, this dissertation will first inspect this problem in scholarship of the past fifty years. Secondly it will counter-balance the institutionally inherited aspects of anti-Judaism and supersessionism by focusing on the Jewishness of John's new Jerusalem. The main way the Jewishness of John's Jerusalem will be highlighted is to broaden the Jewish genres to which the visions of John belong.

#### JEWISH GENRES

Usually, scholars placed the book of Revelation in a single genre: the apocalyptic. Placing the book of Revelation in the right genre is considered essential to deciphering the meaning behind the symbols of the new Jerusalem. There are many early Jewish genres that are relevant to the book of Revelation such as apocalyptic (and its subgenres of ascent apocalyptic, Hekhalot, and



Merkavah mysticism); pseudepigrapha; Dead Sea Scroll *pešārîm* (commentaries); and midrashim. Each of these genres apply to John's visions to some extent but some are more useful than others. The apocalyptic genre will be one of the larger sources of investigation in this chapter, since scholars predominantly considered the book of Revelation as apocalyptic. The significance of midrash will be explored, since it offers the most likely explanations for John's new Jerusalem. Additionally, the genre of *pešārîm* will be discussed, since there is debate among two scholars as to its place among apocalyptic and midrashic genres.

#### APOCALYPTIC GENRE

Generally, scholars of the last fifty years have placed John's visions in the apocalyptic genre; there are advantages and disadvantages to placing John's new Jerusalem visions in the apocalyptic genre. This genre does, in fact, accurately describe four characteristics of John's new Jerusalem visions; moreover, this genre includes other new Jerusalem visions.

The four traits of the apocalyptic genre are as follows: a dualistic worldview, a dichotomization of time, a hidden revelation, and a select person to interpret that revelation for the present time and chosen people. Each of these characteristics of the apocalyptic genre are also present in passages in the book of Revelation. While the apocalyptic genre does accurately categorize these same four elements that appear in the book of Revelation, this genre provides few cogent explanations for the meaning of John's visions or how he derived them.

To begin with, apocalyptic ideology dichotomizes the world into good and evil. For example, in the War Scroll, the Sons of Light fought against the Sons of Darkness. In Revelation, the dichotomization of people is also separated into two groups: the good people, who were called “conqueror” or “son,” and the bad people, who were called “the cowardly and unfaithful.” The good inherited the water of life, while the bad people inherited the sea of fire.

Secondly, these apocalyptic texts dichotomized time—there was a clear demarcation between the earthly present and the eschatological imminent future. But although salvation was near, it could not be hastened or delayed. It was delineated to happen in a specific time frame and could not be affected by outside interference. Likewise, in the book of Revelation, the future was expected imminently, but could not be hastened or delayed by anyone’s actions.

Thirdly, while revelation was from God, the saved did not understand it; thus, fourthly, there was a figure to interpret the revelation. For example, since the book of Habakkuk claimed to be speaking for a later time, for the Qumran community that meant that the original readers did not understand the book of Habakkuk. According to D.S. Russel,

The meaning of the prophets’ words had been hidden from the original writers; what they wrote had reference, not to their own day, but to ‘the end of days’ in which the Covenanters were now living. The hidden meaning of these

prophecies had awaited the coming of the Teacher of Righteousness by whose inspiration and insight they had now been revealed.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Habbakuk was written for the later community and their Qumranite “Teacher of Righteousness” was able to interpret Habakkuk for his own day and people. Similarly, John of Patmos interpreted the eschatological visions in the Bible as pertaining to his own day and age.

Revelation also cloaked its vaticinations in symbolic language: Babylon, the dragon, the woman, the jewel-encrusted bridal city, the slain lamb. These symbols obscured the meaning of John’s description of the end to outsiders. This may have been to hide what he was saying from the Roman rulers—thus Babylon instead of Rome—but it may be because the symbolism said so much more than the exact designation. For example, since the First Temple was destroyed by Babylon, Rome, who destroyed the Second Temple, was also called Babylon. To a certain extent placing the book of Revelation in the apocalyptic genre helps with understanding the structure and worldview of John of Patmos.

Additionally, placing John’s visions of the new Jerusalem in the apocalyptic genre was helpful in that it pointed to other apocalyptic Jewish visions of the new Jerusalem such as 1 Baruch, the Animal Apocalypse, Enoch. These primary sources for early Jewish visions of the new Jerusalem provided

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<sup>1</sup>D.S. Russel, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 41.

evidence that John's visions were not unique or new. They were part of a larger community of ideas.

Several early apocalyptic books had visions of a supernal Jerusalem. 1 Enoch, written before Revelation, described a "new" Jerusalem. Baruch, written soon after the destruction of the second temple, described a preserved heavenly Jerusalem. 4 Ezra, also written as a response to Titus's destruction of the second temple, described a heavenly Jerusalem as a woman mourning the loss of her children of the earthly Jerusalem.

#### 1 ENOCH

Portions of 1 Enoch were written as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century before the common era and were named after Enoch, the biblical figure who lived before Noah's flood. Enoch walked with God until he was "no more because God took him" (Gen 5:24). The speculation of this phrasing was that Enoch did not actually die; however, for the purposes of the new Jerusalem visions of Revelation, the writings of Enoch were relevant because they foretold a new Jerusalem in the future.

The "Animal Apocalypse" was an early vision included in 1 Enoch written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. It included a vision of the destruction and restoration of an eschatological Jerusalem. As Michael Stone explained,

Quite ancient too is the view that the heavenly Temple and heavenly Jerusalem would replace the earthly ones at the end of days, at the time of the full revelation of God's glory. So, by way of example, it is found in 1 Enoch 90:28-9, which was composed in the Maccabean age. There it does not solve any

particular problem arising from destruction or desecration; it is simply part of the coming, ideal, eschatological state.<sup>2</sup>

The following passage from the Animal Apocalypse in 1 Enoch was written over 200 years before the temple's destruction, yet it described the first "house" (i.e., temple) as having been "folded up".

And I saw till the Lord of the sheep brought a new house, greater and loftier than the first, and set it up in the place of the first which had been folded up: all its pillars were new, and its ornaments were new and larger than those of the first, the old one which he had taken away, and all the sheep were within it (1 Enoch 90:29 "Animal Apocalypse").<sup>3</sup>

This text was written long before King Herod's renovations, which made the second temple a wonder of the ancient world. The state of the second temple at the time was a poor imitation of the first temple's glory.

Moreover, this section of Enoch was written at the time of the Maccabean revolt, after the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes). Thus, the temple was in a state of flux. Its holiness was in doubt and its permanence questioned. If a pagan king could establish the holy temple as a place for him to be worshipped, how could it be the true temple?

Therefore, the true temple must be elsewhere or "else-when"—in 1 Enoch it is located in the future as a "new" temple. Like John of Patmos's "new" Jerusalem, Enoch's temple has a supernatural origin and a supernatural builder.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael E. Stone, "Reactions to the Destructions of the Second Temple: Theology, Perception, Conversion" in *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, Vol. XIII, no. 2, (2004), 195-204, 199.

<sup>3</sup> Rafael Patai, *The Messiah Texts*, (New York: Avon, 1979), 221.

In both visions, the human-built earthly temple/city is “folded up” or is made to “pass away.” In both cases, the Lord brings forth a new temple/city to replace the old one.

Again, the remarkable thing about this passage is how early it’s dated. This vision occurred several hundred years before the destruction of the second temple. Thus, the idea of a future “new” temple/Jerusalem existed long before John’s visions. While this passage in the Animal Apocalypse did not specifically describe the new temple as preexistent in heaven with God, it implied it. And more importantly, it implied a conflation of the future earthly temple with a heavenly temple.

#### BARUCH

In contrast to 1 Enoch’s new temple vision which occurred before the second temple’s destruction, there are apocalyptic texts that were written after the destruction of the second temple: 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra.

The pseudepigraphal protagonist, Baruch, was the scribe of Jeremiah the prophet during the time of the Babylonian exile. However, 2 Baruch was written just after the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70 CE. Thus, 2 Baruch had a pseudepigraphical author, specifically one who had authority because he was the scribe of the prophet Jeremiah.

Baruch described the destruction of the first and second temples and its restoration as the third eternal temple when he wrote:

For after a short time, the building of Zion will be shaken in order that it will be rebuilt. That building will not remain; but will again be uprooted

after some time and will remain desolate for a time. And after that it is necessary that it will be renewed in glory and that it will be perfected into eternity (2 [Syriac] Baruch 32:2-4).<sup>4</sup>

Baruch described the double destructions of the temple and envisioned an eternal, perfect, renewed temple. So, while both John and the author of 2 Baruch were writing around the same time and about the same events, John's persona was as a contemporary, while Baruch's was pseudepigraphically retrojected to an earlier time.

2 Baruch went into even more detail on the heavenly nature of the temple, which he conflated with the city of Jerusalem and Eden. Baruch also shared the notion that both Abraham and Moses saw these heavenly counterparts.

Or do you think that this is the city of which I said, *On the palms of my hands I have carved you?* It is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with me, that was already prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise. And I showed it to Adam before he sinned. But when he transgressed the commandment, it was taken away from him—as also Paradise. And after these things I showed it to my servant Abraham in the night between the portions of the victims. And again I showed it to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed him the

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<sup>4</sup> (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch, translated by AFJ Klijn, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, volume 1, edited by James H. Charlesworth, Garden City, New York; Doubleday & Co., 1983, 631.

likeness of the tabernacle and all its vessels. Behold, now it is preserved with me—as also Paradise.<sup>5</sup>

“That city” was Paradise and the tabernacle (or existed alongside Paradise and the tabernacle). Baruch narrated that the city was prepared beforehand, engraved on God’s hands, shown to Adam, Abraham, and Moses, removed from Adam, and preserved with God.

The history of the “cosmic” Jerusalem was described in this passage. Stone explained,

The development of meta-historical eschatology and the heightened cosmic role of the Temple combined to produce such passages as 2 Apoc. Bar. 4:2-6...which is, in effect, ‘The History of the Heavenly Jerusalem.’...For all its glory, the earthly Temple, like the earthly Jerusalem, does not bear the full weight of a cosmic role. This is reserved for the heavenly Temple.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, according to 2 Baruch, the heavenly Jerusalem-cum-temple was the garden of Eden. Adam saw it before he was expelled from the garden. Abraham saw it during his sacrificial covenant with God, Moses saw it on Mount Sinai as the blueprint for the tabernacle, and it was preserved with God. Thus, despite the loss of the second temple and the dispersion of the Jewish people from

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<sup>5</sup> 2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch 4:2-6, translated by AFJ Klijn, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, volume 1, edited by James H. Charlesworth, Garden City, New York; Doubleday & Co., 1983, 622.

<sup>6</sup> Michael E. Stone, “Reactions to the Destructions of the Second Temple”, 199.



Jerusalem, the temple-cum-Jerusalem continued to exist, a place of refuge and hope for the Jewish people.

2 Baruch's vision of a preexistent blueprint was reflected in John's vision of a heavenly Jerusalem. The idea that there existed a Jerusalem in heaven presumed a holy city built by God which he showed to Moses as a blueprint for the earthly city. Thus, for John, despite the destruction of the earthly city, there still existed the heavenly blueprint. Instead of rebuilding based on the heavenly blueprint, John envisioned the heavenly city as a nomadic tabernacle that could move to the earthly holy site.

#### 4 EZRA

Another book written in response to Titus's destruction of the temple was 4 Ezra (also labeled as 2 Esdras). Like the pseudepigraphical Baruch, the book of 4 Ezra was also retrojected back to an earlier time. The book 4 Ezra described the 5<sup>th</sup> century scribe Ezra as seeing visions. Ezra's fourth vision described a woman mourning the loss of her children (2 Esd. 10:25–27). Ezra admonished her, arguing that the loss of the temple was greater than whatever her loss was, but he did not know that she was mourning the same loss as Ezra. Before Ezra's eyes, the woman turned into the heavenly city of Jerusalem mourning the loss of her children, the earthly city of Jerusalem. According to Stone, "The experience of the heavenly Jerusalem gives him the new perception that relieves his agonizing" (Stone, 204).

While each of the above authors were pseudepigraphical: Enoch, Baruch, Ezra, the author of the book of Revelation may or may not be pseudepigraphical.

The early Christian community reluctantly allowed the book of Revelation into the canon because they believed it was written by John the apostle of Jesus. However, most modern scholars argued that John of Patmos was not the same as John the apostle. They argued he was a lesser-known John and not a pseudepigraphal figure.<sup>7</sup> One scholar, Josephine Massyngberde Ford, however, argued that John of Patmos was pseudepigraphical for John the Baptist. She argued that if the book of Revelation was part of the apocalyptic genre, it would be logical for it to have a pseudepigraphical famous author, not just some lesser “John.” She noted the many commonalities between the apocalyptic theology of the book of Revelation and the teachings of John the Baptist. Nevertheless, whether John the Baptist or some other John, John of Patmos presented himself as an apocalyptic prophet who was a conduit of God’s revelations.

Thus, the apocalyptic genre is in some ways useful for understanding John’s visions of the new Jerusalem. The apocalyptic texts shared similar characteristics of the genre: pseudepigraphical authors, visions, imminent eschatology, a dualistic worldview, a dichotomization of time, a hidden revelation, and a select person to interpret that revelation for the present time and chosen people. Some apocalyptic texts also shared John’s ideas about a heavenly Jerusalem, an eschatological Jerusalem, and Jerusalem as a woman. Thus, John shared some of his apocalyptic contemporaries’ paradigms of cosmology

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<sup>7</sup> John J. Collins, *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 119.

and eschatology; however, similarities did not elucidate the meaning of John's visions or explain how his visions were derived.

#### MIDRASHIC GENRE

In contrast, placing John's new Jerusalem visions in the midrashic genre opens up a myriad of possibilities. Additionally, a midrashic approach to John's new Jerusalem brings together two historically separate disciplines: rabbinical and Christian, thus reversing the scholarly "parting of the ways" between traditionally Jewish and Christian approaches. While the midrashic approach cannot completely undo the historical anti-Judaism bias, it can help mitigate those tendencies.

The midrashic genre has not been significantly explored as a means for understanding John's visions of the new Jerusalem. In contrast to the apocalyptic genre, if we consider Revelation as midrash, much of John's new Jerusalem can be explained. Instead of John of Patmos acting as a visionary or one who is bringing back revelation from heaven, a midrashic approach shows that John was acting as an interpreter of the Jewish canon.

There were several reasons the midrashic character of Revelation's new Jerusalem was not thoroughly explored. To begin with, at first glance, the midrashic character of John's visions were not apparent. John claimed to receive his visions directly from heaven, not from biblical source texts. John did not quote biblical verses in the same manner as many midrashim. However, one major clue of the visions' midrashic character was the significant number of allusions to Scripture contained within them. According to J. Massyngberde Ford's count,

there were over four hundred allusions to the Hebrew Bible in the book of Revelation.<sup>8</sup> Krister Stendahl added that “Without a single true quotation, it is nevertheless interwoven with O.T. material to a greater extent than any other writing in the N.T.”<sup>9</sup> Other scholars did not see these allusions as important in identifying the genre of Revelation, because, at first glance, the book of Revelation did not seem to be interpreting scripture at all. Yet, because of the intentional and copious amounts of allusions to scripture, John of Patmos was doing some sort of exegesis.

When we explore the visions of the new Jerusalem as midrashic, we can uncover the exegetical and, in fact, midrashic, work he was doing. Thus, we can understand the underlying symbolism and structure of the text more than if we only considered the visions as apocalyptic.<sup>10</sup> So while at first glance it may seem that John is describing new, even Christian, apocalyptic visions, what he was really doing was weaving together Jewish scriptures using midrashic principles. And while his visions did fit generally into the apocalyptic genre, they could only be fully explained by also categorizing them into the midrashic genre. When the midrashic characteristics of John’s visions are explored, the surface appearance

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8 J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, 1975 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc.), 27. Revelation also has more New Testament allusions than any other NT book. Chapters 20-22 contain 30 (42).

9 Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and its Use in the Old Testament* (1954), 158-159.

10 Apocalyptic and ascent vision genres were common Jewish modes of thought, although they can be found in Christian and Gnostic writings as well. In addition, Jewish ascent visions and apocalypses also have some characteristics of midrash which will be considered in the following chapter.

of John's writings as solely visionary fall away to reveal a deft underlying midrashic work.

Before considering the new Jerusalem visions in the book of Revelation as midrash, midrash itself needs to be defined.<sup>11</sup> Midrashic interpretive approaches were based upon the closing of the canon of scripture. Closing the canon meant that there was no further revelation from God outside of the canon. Thus, everything God wanted to say must be contained within the canon. From the basis of belief that the canon was closed scholars derived the three main characteristics of midrash: Torah primacy, *ḥārīzā*, and *ribbū*

The first characteristic, Torah primacy, meant that the first five books of the Bible took precedent in midrashic discourse. The words of God within the Torah held more weight and authority than other scripture. Additionally, the focus of the midrash often began and ended with the Torah. Midrash tended to begin as "a homily on a passage of the Torah," explained Daniel Boyarin, which then "invokes, explicitly or implicitly, texts from either the Prophets or the Writings ... as the framework for interpreting that initial passage" of Torah.<sup>12</sup> Even though verses from the Prophets and Writings were used to interpret the Torah, the

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11 According to I. Epstein, midrash has been around since the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile. It appears in certain late books of the Bible, such as Ezra, where he contextualizes and explains the Torah orally to the people who have returned from Babylon. Epstein's description of midrash is as d'rash or modernizing commentary on Scripture. Midrash is a further development of what some scholars call the intertextuality of the Bible. Epstein sees a clear demarcation of approaches to the Scriptures with the advent of the Mishna. Midrash Rabbah, transl. and eds. Rabbi Dr. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon with a foreword by Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein (London, Soncino press, 1939), ix-xxiii.

12 Daniel Boyarin, "Logos, a Jewish Word: John's Prologue as Midrash" in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 2nd ed., eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, 688-691 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 690.

focus was the Torah and the most weight was given to the Torah. The books of the Torah were the basis for *halakha*, mythology, and doctrine while the books of the Prophets and Writings added support to the foundation of Torah.

The second characteristic, *ḥānīzā*, was the process of connecting one passage to another.<sup>13</sup> A *ḥānīzā* of verses meant that the same word in one section of scripture could be connected to that word in another section of scripture based on the belief that each word of scripture stemmed from God. While this *ḥānīzā* did invoke “texts from the Prophets or the Writings” as Boyarin wrote, there was more to it. The connection of words was similar to a dictionary of biblical terms; however, instead of finding nuances to the word itself, the midrashists applied the surrounding context of one word to bring a new context to the other word. This additional valence was based on scriptural canonization since there was no additional revelation.<sup>14</sup> Anything God wanted to tell us must already be contained in the existing scripture. Fishbane argues, “The emergent enchainment (*ḥānīzā*) of possibilities thus dramatizes what is always the presupposition of midrashic exegesis: that all scripture is one interconnected whole.”<sup>15</sup> The *ḥānīzōt* were how the sages found hidden revelations of God, how they “wrote with scripture” after the canon was closed.<sup>16</sup>

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13 Michael Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 12-13.

14 *Ibid*, 12.

15 *Ibid*, 13.

16 Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, eds, “Midrash” in *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 429a.

There were two approaches to this interconnection of scripture. Some rabbis argued that one can use several verses as proof texts for an argument while other rabbis argued that each verse, and even each word, must mean something different. This latter view was important for deriving the heavenly Jerusalem and temple and its characteristics. The latter rabbis argue that these layers of meaning go in one direction, they add meaning, they do not subtract it. Two arguments for this latter point of view were in B. Sanhedrin 34a:

אמר אביי דאמר קרא אחת דבר אלהים שנים זו שמעתי כי עז לאלהים

Abbaye said, "It says, 'The word of God called once, [but] twice I heard it for God is strong' (Ps. 62:12).

מקרא אחד יוצא לכמה טעמים ואין טעם אחד יוצא מכמה מקראות

Several senses can come from one verse, but no single sense can come from several verses.

דבי ר' ישמעאל תנא וכפטיש יפוצץ סלע

It was taught [in the school of] Rabbi Ishmael, " '[Behold my word is like fire] and like a hammer that shatters rock' [Jeremiah 23:39]

מה פטיש זה מתחלק לכמה ניצוצות אף מקרא אחד יוצא לכמה טעמים

"As the hammer is so strong that several pieces come out of it, [so] also a single verse brings forth several meanings."<sup>17</sup>

The rabbis argued that God did not speak superfluously; each of his verses had layers of significance.

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17 B. Sanhedrin 34a. My translation. Cf. David Stern, *Midrash and Theory* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 17.

Furthermore, this non-recursive approach to interpretation was amplified in verses with parallelism since (in contrast to biblical critical or literary interpretation) no verse (or half a verse) can have the same meaning as another (or the second half of a verse). This type of polysemy was called *ribbû* and was also based on the amplified significance of scripture that had been canonized. According to Jacobs and Derovan, “This method of interpretation, used particularly in the school of R. Akiva, proceeds from the premise that every word of scripture has significance.”<sup>18</sup> This midrashic logic differs from the logic of biblical and literary scholars who describe reasons why an idea is reiterated in the scripture, such as a gloss by an editor or a style of parallelism found especially in prophetic and poetic writings. In contrast, *ribbû* is a way that midrashists offer proof of a heavenly temple and heavenly Jerusalem

According to some midrashic traditions, scripture’s meaning must be discovered by mortals, not by divine oracle. So, for example, when Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanus called on a divine oracle to prove that his argument was the correct one, the other sages rejected it—even though there was a voice from heaven. Rabbi Yermiyah explained, “Since the Torah has already been given from Mount Sinai, we do not pay attention to heavenly voices, for you have already written at Mount Sinai, ‘after the majority incline’ (Ex. 23:2)” (B. Baba Mezi’a 59a-b).<sup>1</sup> In other words, God already had his say at Mount Sinai; now it is up to his people to interpret the meaning of his words. The canon was closed;

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<sup>18</sup> Louis Jacobs and David Derovan, “Hermeneutics” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 2007) Vol 9:28.



God cannot add to his revelation. The halakha was by majority decision of the rabbis. Yet even if the majority got the final say, the minority opinions were still included in the tradition. All the various opinions were ultimately from God and true—even if they contradicted each other.

Through the midrashic principles of Torah primacy, intertextuality, and *ribbû*, the rabbis developed the heavenly temple and Jerusalem as interconnected to the earthly temple and Jerusalem. Parallel verses became interpreted as parallel worlds. Through these three approaches to canonized scripture, the rabbis connected the two realms in location, emotions, sacrifice, and primordial, eschatological, and present existence. The new Jerusalem in midrashim will be explored in detail in chapter 3 (while John's new Jerusalem as midrash will be explored in chapters 4 through 6).

#### GENRE OF PEŠĀRĪM

John's new Jerusalem as midrash may be problematic if midrash cannot be apocalyptic. Some scholars argue that apocalyptic writings, such as the Dead Sea Scroll *pešārîm* (commentaries), are not midrashic. The *pešārîm* have a definitive format: they quote a line of a prophet and then interpret it. Of the three characteristics of midrash outlined above: Torah primacy, *ḥārīzā*, and *ribbû*, the main point of contention was whether the *pešārîm* read the text polysemously, i.e., with the principle of *ribbû*. David Stern argued that *pešārîm* are neither

polysemous or midrashic while William H. Brownlee argued that they are both polysemous and midrashic.<sup>19</sup>

First of all, there was no debate that the *pešārîm* are apocalyptic. They shared the four characteristics of apocalyptic outlined above: 1, they had a dualistic view of the world; 2, they expected an imminent final Day; 3, they identified the obscure prophetic text as referring to their own day; and 4, they had a designated inspired interpreter who has the ability to decipher said prophecy. However, the point of contention was, can the *pešārîm* also be midrashic or, as some argued, were the genres of apocalyptic and midrashic mutually exclusive? If they cannot be both, that could also mean that the visions of John of Patmos cannot be both. However, if *pešārîm* can be both, this bolstered the argument that Revelation can be both.

David Stern took the position that the *pešārîm* were apocalyptic but not midrashic because they did not have the midrashic characteristic of polysemy. Instead, the *pešārîm* had a singular, not multivalenced, fulfillment of prophecy within history. Stern argued, "Unlike the exegetes of Qumran, the Rabbis appear to have repudiated the absolutist claims of apocalyptic fulfillment in favor of hermeneutical multiplicity."<sup>20</sup> As an example of apocalyptic fulfillment, Stern pointed out that the Teacher of Righteousness interpreted the book of Habakkuk as having a hidden meaning (which is its only true meaning) for the current generation. He contended that,

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<sup>19</sup> David Stern, *Midrash and Theory* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1996).  
William H. Brownlee, *The Midrash Peshar of Habakkuk* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979).

<sup>20</sup> Stern, *Midrash and Theory* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 30.

the apocalyptic force of the commentary, its persuasiveness as a political and religious document, depends directly on the absoluteness of its claim that each and every interpretation is true and that the contemporary meanings—the events and personages—that underlie the Scriptural text will exhaust that text’s prophecy as soon as they come to pass in the imminent future.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Stern differentiated the *pešer* (commentary) by it having a singular interpretation while the midrashic parables or homilies derived multiple meanings from each verse of Scripture.

Stern also argued that midrashic polysemy itself was a reaction to eschatological interpretation of the text. Midrashic polysemy was “an attempt on the part of the Rabbis to divest exegesis of both such prophetic pretension (and their potential subversion of Scripture’s unique status) and the more publicly dangerous charge of apocalyptic and sectarian politics.”<sup>22</sup> According to Stern, midrash was a reaction to apocalyptic. The underlying belief of midrashic polysemy was the view that God was no longer inspiring people to write prophecy, the canon was closed; and in the place of the prophets, the rabbis could find the meaning of the text. Thus, for Stern, midrash by definition cannot be apocalyptic and apocalyptic by definition cannot be midrashic.

In contrast, William H. Brownlee (20 years earlier) described the writers of the *pešārîm* as midrashists. Brownlee labeled them midrashists precisely

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid, 31.

because of the characteristic of polysemy within the Dead Sea *pešārîm*. He wrote,

To grasp what the ancient midrashist made of the divine oracles, one must read orally, and not just visually; for to the ancient interpreter the words never lost their oral character. Also, one must not keep in separate categories all the various homonyms, as though they were different and unrelated words. It is not altogether clear that there was even the notion of such distinctions as may be listed in a modern lexicon, as roots I, II, or III....Not only was it legitimate to select any one of these meanings which suited the purpose of the interpreter, without regard to the original context; but it was also legitimate to employ more than one meaning in an exposition.<sup>23</sup>

Unlike modern critical biblical scholars who looked for the original etymologies of the Hebrew words, the writers of the *pešārîm* conflated homonyms, homographs, and homophones.

Additionally, Brownlee argued that there was midrashic polysemy in the *pešārîm*: the author of the *pešer* could “employ more than one meaning in an exposition, for such things belonged to the ‘mysteries of the words of God’s servants the prophets.’”<sup>24</sup> He argued,

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23 William H. Brownlee, *The Midrash Peshier of Habakkuk* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 34.

24 *Ibid*, 34.

One should not view midrashic exegesis and eschatological interpretation as mutually exclusive categories; for both elements are clearly present in the *pešārîm*.<sup>25</sup>

Brownlee's argument for multivalency obviated Stern's insistence that apocalyptic writings were not polysemous. Brownlee's description of the writers of the *pešārîm* playing with the meanings of words and having multiple meanings of words identified them as midrashists. Nevertheless, Stern had a point that the Teacher of Righteousness had final authority on the truth of his interpretation.

What Stern and Brownlee mainly differed on was who had authority to derive meaning from the sacred words of Scripture and the degree of final authority that final interpretation had. For the Dead Sea Sect, the Teacher of Righteousness (or the teacher of right) had the final say. For the rabbinical community, the rabbis as a group had authority to give a collective interpretation to the text. As far as the degree of authority, Dead Sea *pešārîm* could have multiple layered meanings, but rabbinical midrashim could have meanings that were more fluid and paradoxical. Like the cat in the box who could be both alive and dead before it is opened, rabbinical midrashim could have conflicting interpretations that are true and authoritative, yet not final.

#### REVELATION'S MULTIPLE GENRES

Revelation was somewhere between the *pešārîm* and the midrashim, while John's new Jerusalem was multivalenced. John's midrash took the form of

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 31.

vision which added weight to its authority as the final vision. Yet, when we look more closely at John's visions, we see that they are a collation of biblical verses that are multivalent in character: John did not just offer one vision of the new Jerusalem, but several. Just like *pešer* Habakkuk had words with multivalent characteristics, so too did John's visions of the new Jerusalem have multivalent meanings. Like the rabbinic midrashim, John's visions even had paradoxical and contradictory meanings. Additionally, like the *pešārīm*, John focused on a prophetic book: Isaiah; however, like midrash, John placed primacy on the Torah: Genesis 1-3.

In addition to the characteristic of polysemy (whether complementary or contradictory), John's visions had the characteristics of Torah preeminence and *ḥāzāzā*. Thus, despite the apocalyptic aspects of John's visions, they also reside within the midrashic genre. The importance of placing the visions within the genre of midrash is not to say that they were not apocalyptic—for they were still apocalyptic—the importance of the midrashic label lies in its usefulness. Uncovering John's midrashic hermeneutic will show the underlying work of his visions, which will be discussed in detail in chapters 4, 5, and 6. Even if one insisted on keeping John's visions within the apocalyptic genre, this would not diminish the midrashic work behind the visions.

While Revelation and the Habakkuk *pešer* both share characteristics of apocalypses and midrash, they differ on their format. The *pešer* follows a biblical text in order, first quoting the verse, then interpreting the verse. John's visions of the new Jerusalem in Revelation instead were organized more like a midrashic

homily which started with a quotation from the Torah and then went in many directions with *ḥāīzōt*—shared word connections to various passages from the Prophets and Writings. Also, instead of explicit quotations like in the *pešer*, Revelation’s quotations were quite short and more like the brief quotations/allusions to Scripture found in midrash. The briefness of the quotes can make it a little more difficult to identify Revelation’s allusions and quotes to Scripture; however, once the midrashic organization and numerous allusions to Scripture are noted, we can see the background work of Revelation and its similarities to midrash.

Like midrash, Revelation alluded to biblical references. Like *pešer*, it tied its vision to imminent eschatology. Like both *pešer* and midrash there was more than a singular interpretation—the new Jerusalem had multiple iterations. Its descriptions went beyond the plain meaning of biblical verses.

#### JOHN OF PATMOS AS A RABBINICAL JEW

Writing in the 90s CE, John was a Jew. The question should not be was he a gentile or a Jew, but what kind of Jew and how did his belief in Jesus affect his Jewish views. From the text of the book of Revelation, it was apparent that John was steeped in Jewish paradigms of the cosmos. His views of Jesus did not cause him to reject these Jewish paradigms since there was no “parting of the ways” yet. However, many scholars still adhered to the outdated idea that there was a “parting of the ways” in the first century.

Generally, scholars do not place John among the early rabbis. This is often based on the polemics against the Pharisees in the gospels and Pauline

epistles. (Whether or not Jesus and Paul were opposed to the Pharisees or vice versa is another matter.) Historically, Christians became opposed to Judaism which led to Christians interpreting the book of Revelation as anti-Jewish. Today's scholars are the inheritors of this long history of interpretation, which means that even though most modern scholars are not intentionally anti-Jewish, they inherit the writings of theologians and scholars who have anti-Jewish bias. Thus, it is often difficult for those who were not immersed in the Jewish worldview to see the biases in their interpretations that they inherited.

Revelation's symbols and ideas should be placed within the greater structure of meaning—especially first-century Jewish meaning. Usually, scholars compare Revelation to extant Jewish writings that were clearly earlier than Revelation. However, limiting the Jewish texts in such a way drew a false dichotomy between Revelation and its Jewish influence. Revelation can be placed within a greater circle of influence that did not have a clear “parting of the ways” nor a clear line of demarcation between Jewish and gentile Christian thought. There was a great exchange of ideas that did not “stay in their lanes” by following their respective orthodoxies. Often the lines for the lanes were blurry and the information bled through these permeable boundaries. John's vision of the new Jerusalem should be situated among his contemporaries whether earlier or later. Many other Jewish visionaries likewise saw a new Jerusalem either in heaven or in the future eschaton.

Revelation may have influenced the Jewish texts that were redacted later but it may also have been describing ideas that were already in the Jewish



community. Ideas are not just successive. They develop as various strands of thought that sometimes intertwine and sometimes die out and sometimes reemerge. It would be more accurate to look at Revelation as a knot of various Jewish ideas that bring them together. These Jewish ideas continue—perhaps as strands influenced by Revelation but most likely reflecting similar ideas in other Jewish communities. These ideas continued back in the Jewish world and were then further developed within Jewish apocalypticism and Merkavah visions. The visions of Revelation were located right in the middle of the timeline of Jewish Jerusalem visions. Enoch was written 200 years earlier, *Pirkei Mashiah* was redacted 500 years later (although much of the material stems from much earlier). Even before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, there were visions of it being destroyed and of a new Jerusalem taking its place. Thus, the passages on the new Jerusalem found in the last two chapters of Revelation were a conflation of written and oral Jewish ideas that were compiled, translated, and re-ordered into an account of the end of days.

The following chapters of this dissertation examine the possibilities of a midrashic approach to John's new Jerusalem. Ch 2 describes the other approaches to John's new Jerusalem visions in scholarship from the last fifty years. In chapter 3, midrashic descriptions of the new Jerusalem and its like are examined. These midrashim preserved some first century traditions concerning the new Jerusalem. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the similarities between John's new creation and the first six days of the Genesis creation. Chapter 6 considers the new Jerusalem in light of the Sabbath.

The following chapters offer evidence that John's visions were midrashic; but more than that, they offer new and better explanations for John's visions. In a sense, as in the sciences, this dissertation offers a theory. The theory is that John's visions are midrashic. Whether proven or not, the better question is, is this theory useful? Does it help the modern reader understand the cosmography, biblical interpretative methods, and prophetic realization of John of Patmos and his Jerusalem. As in the sciences, a useful theory stays in place until a more useful one comes along. Previously, John's visions were considered apocalyptic. This dissertation argues for a more useful theory—that they were midrashic.

## CH 1

### HISTORY OF RESEARCH

Over the last fifty years scholars have taken a variety of approaches to explaining John's new Jerusalem. This chapter will provide an overview of the insights and the flaws of these scholars. The scholars of the past fifty years are organized into five categories which corresponded to their main hermeneutical approach. The five basic approaches to John's new Jerusalem were: 1, theological; 2, historical- critical; 3, literary; 4, postmodern; and 5, the theoretical study of religion.

Scholars utilizing these five approaches provided foundations that could be built upon; however, these foundations were not perfect. The main rhetorical purpose of the theological approach was to develop the importance of the text for faith-based communities. Unfortunately, this rhetorical impetus also encouraged the flaw of supersessionism. Theologians often highlighted the difference between John's visions and other Jewish visions. In these differences, the theologians saw supersessionism or, at least, superiority, which created bias and inaccuracy while interpreting John's vision and other relevant texts.

Unlike the theological approach, the historical-critical approach deconstructed the canon. Nevertheless, historical-critical biblical scholars often brought with them the anti-Judaism from the theologians. The common theological fallacy of supersessionism morphed into a historical-critical fallacy of “genius” or originality, in which scholars intentionally or unconsciously sought original concepts in Christianity as superior criterion.<sup>26</sup>

The literary approach analyzed the narrative paradigms and rhetorical devices of the text. Some scholars from this group aligned more closely with theologians and some scholars from this group aligned more closely with historical-biblical critics. Thus, the flaws of both theological and historical-critical scholarship usually transferred to the literary school of thought.

The postmodern approach deconstructed not just the text but the interpreter. This approach was concerned with the rhetorical impact of the text on the faith-based communities; however, in a more subversive way than the theological approach. This approach, in a sense, revived the critical origins of the historical-biblical critics who undermined the dogmatic assumptions of theologians. Nevertheless, the supersessionist and originalist fallacies were not usually examined and deconstructed.

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<sup>26</sup> Stanley E. Porter, ed., *Reading the Gospels Today*, Cambridge: Wm B Eerdmans Publishing, 2004, 50.

Finally, the religious theory approach utilized interdisciplinary approaches to the text with broader understanding of religious impetuses and responses. However, this approach was not sufficient to completely root out the inherent supersessionist and anti-Judaism biases of their fellow scholars.

Thus, each of these five approaches suffered from an anti-Judaism bias. This did not mean that this anti-Judaism bias was like the anti-Semitism of previous eras. Rather, the effects of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism were imbibed in a more diluted form from the inherited texts and teachings from eras when anti-Jewish and anti-Semitism were de rigueur.

A more detailed analysis of the scholars from each of these five approaches follows. Highlights of these scholars' advancement of the understanding of John's new Jerusalem will be described briefly. Where applicable, the flaw of anti-Judaism from the theological to the other approaches will be noted. Since the theological approach was the first and the oldest approach, it had significant theological influence on interpretations of the new Jerusalem in Revelation in biblical-critical, historical, literary, and religious theoretical approaches.

## 1. THEOLOGICAL APPROACH

Theologians who held the text as sacred were Revelation's first interpreters. Thus, it follows that theologians had an outsized influence on all five approaches to the text of Revelation. These theologians were not just concerned with the original intent of the author, but also with how to apply the ideas of Revelation to their own lives. Additionally, early theologians tended to be anti-Jewish. More recent theologians tended not to be intentionally anti-Jewish, yet there was still some anti-Judaism in their approach. The recent theologians highlighted here, Robert A. Briggs and Pilchan Lee, both delved deeply into the Jewish sources. Despite their intentionally Jewish approach, they favored Christianity over Judaism.

While on the surface, a religious person favoring their own religion over another may not seem too problematic, in actuality, this practice not only caused a bias that obviated the Jewish characteristics of John's new Jerusalem but hindered Jewish and Christian relations. The problem of supersessionism has been fully examined by many theologians and scholars. To summarize the problem briefly, not only did supersessionism undermine the meaning of the text, but it caused anti-Jewish views in contemporary culture. Thus, scholars who held anti-Judaism bias neglected their professional role of unbiased examination of the text and promotion of ecumenicism and interfaith dialogue.

John, as a Jew himself, made great use of Jewish symbols and methods of interpretation. A theologian who mainly saw John as a Christian could not fully appreciate John's Jewish worldview. Even theologians who maintained that John was a Jew might interpret his Jewishness through their own Christian bias, undervaluing his Jewish symbols and methods. Thus, despite the significant advancement in theology towards ecumenicism and valuing the Jewishness of early Christianity, the supersessionist bias has not been fully expunged.

ROBERT A. BRIGGS

Our first theologian, Robert A. Briggs, wrote a book entitled *Jewish Temple Imagery in the Book of Revelation*.<sup>27</sup> This book was a revision of his 1996 dissertation written at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Despite the focus on "Jewish" temple imagery, Briggs remained consistent with older theological perspectives by contrasting Judaism with Christianity.

Briggs contrasted "Ezekiel's generation" with Revelation 21 where he argued that the temple was abandoned. Briggs claimed that "Ezekiel's generation" was "not far enough along the revelatory timeline to cope with the idea that the temple institution, the very heart of their religious life, was to be

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<sup>27</sup> Robert A. Briggs, *Jewish Temple Imagery in the Book of Revelation*, Studies in Biblical Literature 10 (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), xv.

altogether abandoned.”<sup>28</sup> For Briggs, abandoning the centrality of the temple was a more advanced theology.

While Briggs allowed that the earlier temple imagery in Revelation described the temple as not abandoned or rejected, he argued that this temple was “primarily for the benefit of believing Jews.”<sup>29</sup> Briggs argued that the altar in the temple signified prayers rising to the temple in heaven for these Christian Jews. Nonetheless, according to Briggs, the altar had no importance for gentile Christians and thus, any remnant of the altar or temple was passing and obsolete.

Briggs saw a clear break between the Jewish religion and the Christian religion in the theology of Revelation—or more specifically, he saw God’s older religion for the Jewish people and God’s newer superior religion for the gentiles. Briggs took John’s description of the new Jerusalem without a temple to mean that the central place of worship within Judaism was obsolete. However, Brigg’s interpretation perpetuated an anachronistic Christian understanding of the lack of a temple in John’s vision as signifying the obsolescence of the Jewish religion.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 103.



## PILCHAN LEE

The second theologian to be considered here is Pilchan Lee. Pilchan Lee focused exclusively on the last two chapters of Revelation. Moreover, he focused on the Jewish background of those two chapters.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, he had a theological approach with some of the theological flaws, especially preference for Christian novelty over Jewish continuity.

Lee identified two theological problems with the new Jerusalem of Revelation: 1, the descent of the new Jerusalem and 2, its lack of a temple. Both of these were problems for Lee since they did not occur in the Hebrew Bible and, thus, were not consistent with canonical scripture. Lee expanded his search beyond the canon to Second Temple Jewish literature and early Jewish literature for solutions to these problems. This comparative approach was a more common trait of historical-critical methodologies. Thus, Lee combined the theological approach with the historical-critical approach. However, Lee's identification of problems was based on theological concerns. Moreover, his solutions favored early Christianity over early Judaism, and, thus, succumbed to the supersessionist fallacy.

Lee's first identified problem was the descent of the new Jerusalem since it did not occur in the Hebrew Bible. While this was a theological problem, Lee

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<sup>30</sup> Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation: A Study of Revelation 21-22 in the Light of its Background in Jewish Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

began to solve it the historical-critical way by looking for a connection to the heavenly Jerusalem in extra-canonical writings. Lee found “a bridge” between “OT restorational messages” and Revelation in early Jewish apocalyptic literature.<sup>31</sup>

Lee traced the development of the idea of the new Jerusalem from the exilic period to the writing of Revelation. First, the exilic period prophets--Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah--offered hope for a restored temple. Then, the Maccabean period writers--represented by Tobit, sectarian DSS, and 2 Enoch--developed the idea of a heavenly temple and started to connect it to the future new Jerusalem. Lastly, the Jewish apocalyptic writers--represented by Revelation, 1, 2, and 3 Baruch, the Apocalypse of Abraham, Pseudo-Philo, the Sibylline Oracles [book 5], 4 Ezra, as well as rabbis of the Yavnean movement, and zealots of the Bar Kochba revolt--further developed this restorational idea with the eschatological Jerusalem/temple. Lee, in detailed diagrams, compared elements of Revelation to contemporary Jewish works and concluded that the descent of the new Jerusalem of Revelation was closest to Qumran writing and I Enoch.<sup>32</sup> This approach was very helpful in locating John’s new Jerusalem descent among contemporary Jewish writings and traditions.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 295-300.

Lee's approach to the second problem, the lack of a temple, was a mixture of locating John's vision within contemporary Judaism and opposing his vision to contemporary Judaism. Lee found three possible solutions to the lack of a temple in John's new Jerusalem: 1, as a polemic against "other Jewish traditions"; 2, a transference of the heavenly Jerusalem to an eschatological earthly Jerusalem; and 3, to emphasize Jerusalem as a city.

First, Lee posited the possibility that John had a "particular polemic against other Jewish traditions." He claimed that John opposed "the rebuilding of the New Temple from a Christological perspective."<sup>33</sup> According to this argument, the temple was no longer needed by the Christian religion. The sacrifices of the temple were made obsolete by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. This answer was similar to the position of Briggs as well as many other theologians. This answer, however, projected a later Christian (gentile) viewpoint onto an early Jewish(-Christian) apocalyptic prophet. Lee proffered this answer without defending this problematic and anachronistic anti-Judaic polemic.

The second possibility that Lee put forward was that John transferred "the Heavenly Zion to the New Zion."<sup>34</sup> In contrast to Lee's first solution, this second answer appropriately placed John's new Jerusalem within the Jewish milieu. With this answer, Lee addressed the concept of a heavenly Zion in Jewish thought of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

late antiquity. Furthermore, Lee investigated the idea of an eschatological unification of the heavenly with the earthly spheres. This solution, however, did not sufficiently explain the theological problem Lee had with the lack of a temple in John's new Jerusalem.

Lee's third explanation for the lack of a temple in the new Jerusalem was a literary explanation. Lee claimed that John used a "deliberate rhetorical technique to establish a parallel" between two cities: the new Jerusalem as the virgin bride and Babylon as the great harlot.<sup>35</sup> This third answer explained much of the description of the new Jerusalem as a city that, like Babylon/Rome, would rule the world, have riches such as gold and gems, and would be where kings came to pay homage. This also explained why John's emphasis was on the city itself rather than the temple of Jerusalem; however, this city parallelism did not explain why John specifically said there is no temple.

Moreover, like many theologians and scholars, Lee insisted on a distinction between other early Jewish writers and John. He wrote that "it is noteworthy that this tenor of Revelation does not mean that John is purely a Jewish commentator, because his exegetical standpoint is Christological."<sup>36</sup> Additionally, Lee concluded his analysis by describing martyrdom as a distinct Christian marker:

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 3.

John represents martyrdom as the mark of the church. This is the most radical way of overcoming the crisis they faced. In this sense, Revelation is different from the early Jewish literature, the problem of which is the defilement and destruction of the Temple.<sup>37</sup>

Lee argued that martyrdom was a distinctly Christian trait in contrast to Judaism; however, one does not need to look hard for Jewish examples of martyrdom, such as the woman with 7 sons (2 Maccabees 7) and the kiddush ha-shem martyrdom of Akiva. So, while Lee found many explanations within Jewish texts, as a theologian, Lee ultimately turned to the fallacy of superiority and originality for John's worldview.

Both Briggs and Lee found significant Judaic elements in their analyses of the new Jerusalem, yet they still maintained a bias for their own Christian faith over Judaism. This pro-Christian (somewhat supersessionist) bias had come to be expected among theologians and was not as frowned upon since it did not go as far as anti-Semitism. Even with their pro-Christian bias, Briggs and Lee were significantly more favorable to Judaism than earlier generations of theologians. This new favorability to Judaism was an improvement—it both reduced the earlier blind spots within the theological approach and fostered interfaith dialog. Theologians were less likely to be intentionally anti-Judaic, but some lingering ideas persisted: the Christian faith was still seen as the culmination of Judaism

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 304.

and any difference was seen as superior. Also, as is common with “confirmation bias,” differences were looked for.

## 2. HISTORICAL-BIBLICAL CRITICISM

In contrast to the theological approach, the second approach--historical-biblical criticism--began a new era of biblical studies which was not concerned with promoting faith. Early practitioners of historical-biblical criticism, such as David Friedrich Strauss, in fact, viewed this critical approach as undermining faith and religious practice. The foundation of biblical-criticism was that the texts were formed by humans, not God, not supernaturally. These biblical critics added extra-canonical texts to the purview of their studies, eschewed dogmatic constraints, looked for alternate explanations for miraculous stories, and identified seams in the textual traditions. Nevertheless, biblical critics built upon the earlier theological foundations, including anti-Judaism. In fact, the idea of uniqueness or “genius” of Christianity was common in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century biblical-critical scholarship such as Renan’s *Life of Jesus (Vie de Jésus)* 1863) and Albert Schweitzer’s conclusion in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus (Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung)* 1906). Remnants of that idea legitimized the theological idea of superiority in a new form as originality or genius in subsequent biblical criticism. Moreover, as a general rule, these new biblical critics came out of theological seminaries and, thus, were learned in theological methodology, much of which was anti-Judaic. To complicate matters, more

recent historical-biblical critics often returned to theological concerns which were reflected in their analyses and conclusions.

The four authors highlighted here each came out of theological seminaries—albeit progressive seminaries which emphasized biblical criticism. Two of these scholars, Robert John McKelvey and Adela Yarbro Collins, went to progressive Protestant seminaries and two of them, Josephine Massyngberde Ford and Florentino García Martínez, had Catholic affiliations. All four scholars mainly approached the text using historical and critical methodologies but did not undermine the dogmatic tenets of Christianity as enthusiastically as earlier generations of biblical-critical scholars; on the other hand, these four scholars were not as anti-Judaic as earlier historical-critical scholars. Thus, they tended to strike a balance by favoring both Christianity and Judaism, although some do a better job than others.

#### ROBERT JOHN MCKELVEY

Robert John McKelvey approached the concept of the new temple with a biblical critical-historical approach. In his monograph, *The New Temple*,<sup>38</sup> McKelvey described the new temple's and the new Jerusalem's theological evolution from ancient biblical texts up to early Jewish and Christian traditions

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<sup>38</sup> Robert John McKelvey, *The New Temple* (Glasgow: Oxford, 1969). See especially his chapter, "The Book of Revelation," 155-178.

and texts. For McKelvey, the idea of the “new temple” was similar in concept to the “new Jerusalem” since the temple and the city could be substituted for each other. In this book, he gave readers a sense of the scope and transformation of ideas about the new temple and the new Jerusalem; however, surprisingly, he did not fully integrate his analysis of the history of the new temple idea with his analysis of Revelation’s new Jerusalem; instead, he seemed to disassociate the Jewish history of the idea of the new temple from John’s “Christian” new Jerusalem.

McKelvey argued that in the early narratives of the Bible, God was anthropomorphically described as dwelling in a house. McKelvey explained that: “The early narratives represented Yahweh as dwelling in the tent or the sanctuaries of Palestine as a man dwells in his house.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, just as a person dwelled in a house, so God dwelled in his tent or temple. McKelvey argued that even at this pre-exilic stage an earthly temple was problematic as a dwelling place for a transcendent God.

During the exile, though, McKelvey argued that the theological innovation was the placement of a temple projected into the future. This was the “new” temple. According to McKelvey, “The loss of the temple meant nothing less than the loss of God’s presence.... It was to such disconsolate spirits that the new

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 26



temple became a symbol of hope."<sup>40</sup> Thus, the situation of exile was the womb for the idea of a new future Jerusalem temple.

After the exile, the second temple was built in Jerusalem; however, according to McKelvey, this temple rebuilt by poor returning migrants did not live up to the new temple vision. McKelvey explained that,

In a sense, the temple which was built after the return from the exile was the fulfillment of the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah, Ezekiel, and others, but in another sense, it was not. The restored temple did help to unify the restored community and act as a beacon of hope for the many Jews who did not return, and the little nation became relatively strong and influential. But when the actual was put alongside the ideal the disparity was too great and too painful to bear any comparison.<sup>41</sup>

Because of this disparity, people continued to long for a new temple.

According to McKelvey, even though the Maccabees cleansed the temple after Antiochus Epiphanes, the cleansing was not sufficient because the subsequent Hasmonean priesthood was not legitimate. This illegitimate priesthood continued into Herod's reign. Thus, despite the fact that Herod's temple was a wonder of the ancient world, the temple was considered defiled by

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

illegitimate priests and an illegitimate king. The Qumranites were so dissatisfied with the Jerusalem temple that they believed they were “called by God to provide an alternative means of atonement for both themselves and Israel at large.”<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, according to McKelvey, apocalyptic writers felt so dissatisfied with Herod’s temple, they began to envision a heavenly temple as an alternative to a new future temple.<sup>43</sup> McKelvey explained: “Ideas traditionally associated with the new temple are now used of the temple in heaven. It is the heavenly temple that is the navel or source of life and blessing for the universe.”<sup>44</sup> Since the terrestrial temple continued to disappoint, the apocalyptic writers came to believe in an extant and perfect heavenly temple.<sup>45</sup>

With regard to Revelation, however, McKelvey did not connect John’s new temple to the Jewish heavenly Jerusalem. McKelvey’s lapse in seeing the new Jerusalem as a Jewish creation, was perhaps because of the residual influence of the idea of superiority of Christianity or latent anti-Judaism. Instead of connecting John’s new Jerusalem to the Jewish heavenly Jerusalem, McKelvey

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 26-27. For example, I Enoch had several descriptions of the new temple/Jerusalem such as: 1, the throne of God (I Enoch 14) and 2, “a blessed place” in the “middle of the earth” on a “holy mountain” (I Enoch 26).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>45</sup> However, synchronistically with the heavenly temple idea, there continued to be a hope for a new earthly temple as well. See Adela Yarbro Collins below.

argued for three types of new Jerusalem in the final vision of Revelation: 1, a new creation, 2, a community of the faithful, 3, and a restored temple-cum-Jerusalem.<sup>46</sup>

McKelvey's first theory of the new Jerusalem was a creation based on the verse: "I saw a *new* heaven and a *new* earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away."<sup>47</sup> McKelvey interpreted the term "new" (or *kainos*) literally: the city was not just restored or renewed but completely new. McKelvey claimed that such a novel idea was not entertained by the Jews of the time.<sup>48</sup> They habitually thought of the new creation and the new Jerusalem in terms of a rejuvenation and transformation of the old. In the period after the New Testament when eventually the rabbis came to believe the heavenly Jerusalem would descend to earth, what they envisaged was something quite different from what our author had in mind. The city expected by the rabbis was the heavenly prototypical city.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 155-178.

<sup>47</sup> Revelation, 21:1, trans. Robert McKelvey, Ibid. 169).

<sup>48</sup> This is not entirely correct—the Animal Apocalypse did describe the temple as "new." Also, Qumran writings have a God-built temple as well as a human-built temple (see Adela Yarbro Collins below).

<sup>49</sup> Robert John McKelvey, *The New Temple* (Glasgow: Oxford, 1969). See especially his chapter, "The Book of Revelation", 170.

Here McKelvey forcibly exaggerated the distinctions between John's new Jerusalem and the rabbinical "heavenly prototypical city." According to McKelvey,

The city expected by the rabbis was the heavenly prototypical city. Such an idea has no place in John's new world. The prototypical city (like its ectype on earth) belongs to the old order of creation, 'the first heaven and the first earth', which in John's scheme of things has been destroyed. His city, like the world-order it symbolizes, is altogether new. It is not merely new in time (*neos*), but new in quality (*kainos*). No hint is given as to its previous existence. All we know is that it descends 'out (*ek*) of heaven from (*apo*) God'. What is John saying? Surely this: the new order issuing from the paschal victory of Christ is not part of the present order; it is not the fulfillment or *évolué* of the natural order or the historical process. It is rather the inbreaking of that which is outside and beyond history, the supersession and not the consummation of the old.<sup>50</sup>

Thus, McKelvey argued that a new Jerusalem arising out of the ashes of a destroyed earth and obliterating Jerusalem was solely the idea of John of Patmos.

McKelvey argued for the novelty of John's imagery while still conscribing to the rabbinical belief that there was a heavenly Jerusalem and it would descend

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<sup>50</sup> 170.

to earth. The distinction for McKelvey was that the rabbis' city was described as preexistent, created in primordial time, while John's city was "new," created at the end of time. Instead of looking for overlap between these two ideas in the prophets or first century rabbinical eschatology, McKelvey decided that John's idea was "novel."<sup>51</sup> This novelty showed McKelvey's confirmation bias for Christian supersessionist improvement in originality that broke with Judaism.

McKelvey's second type of new Jerusalem was a group of people—the Christian church. McKelvey based this city-cum-people on the verse: "the new Jerusalem...prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). Since Revelation 21:9 described the bride as "the wife of the Lamb," McKelvey interpreted these faithful as Christians. He wrote, "One has only to ask who the Lamb's spouse can be for the imagery to become plain. The bride of Christ is the church."<sup>52</sup>

McKelvey did add some layers to this interpretation of the bride as the Christian church. He also explained that the community-cum-Jerusalem was a metaphorical temple. He wrote, "Since Jerusalem always presupposes the temple, the representation of the church as the city of God naturally evokes the thought of God's presence (the other aspect of the nuptial figure), and we have

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<sup>51</sup> McKelvey, 168 n.3, 170.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 169.

the intimate picture of God tabernacling with his people.”<sup>53</sup> McKelvey did not point out parallels in other Jewish writings, but rather he said, “Let us note the thoroughgoing nature of John’s reinterpretation of the traditional hope of Israel.”<sup>54</sup>

The third new Jerusalem was a physically restored temple-city. McKelvey stated that the metaphor of the community of the faithful took on shape and became a material temple-city again:

The vision changes before our eyes. The gates which we thought were simply for symbolical effect swing open to admit the nations. The city is no longer the self-contained box-like thing we took it for but a vast metropolis with crowds coming and going.<sup>55</sup>

McKelvey identified this physical new Jerusalem as the great pilgrimage city for the Feast of Tabernacles, a celebration that both commemorated the giving of the Torah at Sinai and was expected to be celebrated in the eschaton. McKelvey did not point out that John’s idea of gentile pilgrimage to the new Jerusalem already existed in contemporary Jewish writings and beliefs. Perhaps the parallels seemed too obvious to him between this end time Jerusalem and its appearance in later prophetic works and the Dead Sea Scrolls or perhaps he drew too clear of a distinction between Judaism and John’s Christianity.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 174.

In contrast to Briggs and Lee, McKelvey argued that the city was always equivalent to the temple in Revelation. He explained that: “In John’s mind of course the two ideas would never appear apart (cf. 3. 12): the description of the city in chapters 21-2 implies a temple, just as the description of the temple in chapters 4-20 implied a city.”<sup>56</sup> So, the new Jerusalem could be the described temple, while not requiring a separate temple within the city.

McKelvey viewed the Christianity of John as co-opting Judaism. He wrote, “This chapter has attempted to show how the ancient oriental and Jewish conception of the heavenly temple and city was taken over by the early church and put to Christian use.”<sup>57</sup> So instead of viewing John’s new Jerusalem as a variation of an early Jewish apocalyptic concept, McKelvey viewed it as a concept transformed by Christians. McKelvey fairly clearly followed the trajectory of the Jewish idea of the new/heavenly Jerusalem until he came to John’s vision. Then he hiccupped and lost the thread of continuity. He was looking for a break from Judaism and he forced one.

However, the idea that there was an early parting of the ways between early Christianity and Judaism has been corrected by many scholars.<sup>58</sup> Many

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 167. McKelvey does make a distinction, however, between the earlier temple/city and John’s city/temple.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, Annette Yoshiko Reed, “‘Jewish Christianity’ after the ‘Parting of the Ways’” in *The Ways that Never Parted*, Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds.,

now see early Judaism and Christianity as part of the same fabric and lacking clear boundaries. It's crucial to emphasize how much a first century Jewish apocalyptic writer—John of Patmos— would still be embedded in Jewish ideas and community.

The new Jerusalem of Revelation did, in fact, share many ties with contemporaneous Jewish writings that corresponded to McKelvey's three Jerusalems of Revelation 21-22, yet surprisingly, McKelvey did not acknowledge these. First, Jewish writings contained descriptions of a heavenly Jerusalem which correlated with how John's newly created Jerusalem was to descend from heaven. Second, the image of Jerusalem as a group of people was also common in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Third, John, the later prophets, and the Dead Sea Scrolls all depicted the eschatological Jerusalem as a temple-city. All three of McKelvey's categories of Jerusalem were found among contemporary Jewish writings of his day; therefore, they were not a novel Christological creation. While McKelvey's analysis and research were overall excellent, his view of "the parting of the ways" projected distinctions between Revelation and other Jewish texts anachronistically and, thus, led to some false conclusions.

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(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 189-231, and Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004).



JOSEPHINE MASSYNGBERDE FORD

In contrast to McKelvey, Josephine Massyngberde Ford questioned the Christological assumptions scholars have made regarding Revelation. In contrast to more Christologically minded scholars (and despite being a Catholic herself), Ford presented Revelation from the vantage point of a Jewish text.<sup>59</sup>

Ford asked, “Have Christian scholars presupposed a Christological interpretation and performed an isogesis (sic) such as would not be acceptable for other biblical texts either in the OT or the NT? ...Can we fail to take into consideration the fact that practically all the apocalyptic works of the first century and earlier were Jewish, most of them with Christian adaptation?”<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, she argued that “Revelation is unlike Jewish apocalypses adapted to Christianity because there are no clear Christian interpolations woven into the text; rather, a block of Christian material (chs. 1-2) has been grafted onto the beginning and four Christian verses (22:16-17a, 20-21) have been grafted onto the end. Neither shows the NT Christ. Revelation is therefore unique.”<sup>61</sup> Unlike many other (mostly Christian) scholars, Ford did not argue that Revelation’s uniqueness was in its Christian originality. Rather, she argued that

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 38-39, 347. This theory was a reiteration of Paul Gaechter’s, “The Original Sequence of Apocalypse 20-22,” *TS* 10 (1949), 485-521.

<sup>60</sup> Josephine Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, The Anchor Bible 38 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975), 27.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 27-28.

the unique thing about Revelation was that other than with the exceptions mentioned above, Revelation remains a Jewish apocalypse.

With regard to John's final visions of Jerusalem in chapters 21-22, Ford argued that John envisioned not one Jerusalem but two distinct Jerusalems. One vision was the millennial Jerusalem of Revelation 21:9-27, 8, and 22:1-2. Even though this millennial Jerusalem appeared second in the book of Revelation, Ford argued that it in fact should have come first in the apocalyptic vision. This new Jerusalem would descend from heaven and exist for a thousand years, then all would be destroyed before the second new Jerusalem appeared. The second new Jerusalem was the eternal Jerusalem. It would emerge as part of the new creation of heaven and earth and would be eternal. Thus, using source-critical methodology, she emended the last two chapters of Revelation and essentially reversed them.

Ford argued that there was not just one type of eschatological Jerusalem. Instead, John of Patmos incorporated more than one Jewish apocalyptic vision. Rather than conflating the contradictory visions, Ford allowed a multiplicity of views.

Additionally, Ford theorized that John the Baptist and his followers wrote the text of Revelation. This novel theory gave her the lens to view Revelation as from a place of early Jewish apocalypticism and messianism. This is because, even in the gospels, John the Baptist was portrayed as an essentially Jewish figure: a prophet and messianic figure with many followers. John the Baptist also

shared similar theology with Qumran writings. Thus, throughout Ford's commentary she cited an abundance of contemporary Jewish literature.

Moreover, in contrast to many scholars who approached the lack of a temple in the new Jerusalem with anti-Jewish polemic or as a new Christological idea, Ford argued that the idea of no temple in the new Jerusalem was a Jewish idea.<sup>62</sup> She wrote, "The absence of the temple is not a new motif."<sup>63</sup>

Ford convincingly reinforced the importance of how the Jewish milieu interplayed with the new Jerusalem in Revelation in several ways. She questioned the long-standing Christological assumptions that surrounded it and argued that both the lack of a temple in the new Jerusalem and the idea of a millennial temporary Jerusalem were Jewish ideas. Additionally, Ford explained John's vision as a merging of two separate Jerusalems that had sources rooted in a variety of different Jewish apocalyptic visions. Moreover, her theory that the school of John the Baptist was involved in writing Revelation located the context more specifically. Using these various approaches, Ford elucidated the text and tapped into its Jewish *Sitz im Leben*.

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<sup>62</sup> One scholar who agreed with Ford that the idea of no temple was a Jewish idea was David Flusser, "No Temple in the City," in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 454-465.

<sup>63</sup> Ford, *Revelation*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975), 344.

In contrast to Ford, Florentino García Martínez argued that John of Patmos “used a Christian interpretation” in formulating his new Jerusalem vision.<sup>64</sup> Despite being a preeminent Dead Sea Scrolls’ scholar, Martínez did not contribute much insight into the new Jerusalem in Revelation. While at one point he seemed to suggest an intriguing idea of continuity between Ezekiel, the New Jerusalem Scroll, and Revelation, he later disavowed and rejected that position. Thus, his conclusion is that there was shared background between the New Jerusalem scroll and John’s new Jerusalem visions but no direct influence. Instead, Martínez emphasized their differences.

In an early article, Martínez seemed to argue that the vision of Jerusalem in the New Jerusalem Scroll was a midway point between Ezekiel and Revelation’s new Jerusalems.<sup>65</sup> However, he later corrected that as a misinterpretation of his argument, and instead clarified his view as being that there was no direct connection. He explained that “The general interpretive

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<sup>64</sup> Florentino García Martínez, “New Jerusalem at Qumran and in the New Testament,” 277-289, in *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology: Studies in Honour of Ed Noort*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 124, Jacques van Ruiten and J. Cornelis de Vos, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 282.

<sup>65</sup> His earlier work was: Florentino García Martínez, “The ‘New Jerusalem’ and the Future Temple of the Manuscripts from Qumran.” in *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran*, Florentino Garcia Martinez and Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen, eds., 180-213. Leiden: Brill, 1992.

framework of both corpora was the same—the Hebrew Bible, but a genetic relationship among both corpora is not the most logical explanation of the similarities or of the differences that can be found among them. Therefore, I consider the relationship between these two corpora in terms of different phases of evolution that began from a commonly shared ground, the so-called “Hebrew Bible” or “Old Testament.”<sup>66</sup>

Martínez reasoned that both the New Jerusalem Scroll and Revelation shared a common background, so they did not need to directly influence each other. For example, they both developed ideas found in Ezekiel. He explained,

My conclusion will be that in pre-Christian Judaism as revealed by the Scrolls, the development of theological ideas that can be found in the New Testament had already taken place.... What Ezekiel saw in the vision of the temple, the city and the land, is the blueprint, the plan, the heavenly model, which was to be realized at the moment of restoration, when the glory of God returns to the temple He had previously abandoned.<sup>67</sup>

While both the New Jerusalem Scroll and the book of Revelation included a future restoration of Jerusalem, according to Martínez, they inherited and

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<sup>66</sup> Martínez, “New Jerusalem,” 279.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

developed that idea from Ezekiel, not each other. Thus, according to Martínez, John of Patmos did not inherit the new Jerusalem idea from the New Jerusalem Scroll. In contrast, another scholar, Loren Johns, argued that the New Jerusalem Scroll could be a (if not the) missing link between Ezekiel's vision and John's vision of the new Jerusalem.<sup>68</sup>

In contrast to the heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation, Martínez pointed out that Paul and Jesus expected a restored earthly temple/Jerusalem at the end of days. Martínez found similarities between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the predictions of Jesus and Paul. Quoting and agreeing with E.P. Sanders, Martínez wrote that Jesus "expected that the Temple would be replaced in the coming kingdom of God."<sup>69</sup> In Mark 14:58 the temple was described as "not made by human hands." According to Martínez, this same temple would not descend from heaven, but would be created on earth by God. In contrast, "In the eschatological scenario of Revelation 20-2 there is no place at all for an earthly Jerusalem [or earthly temple]."<sup>70</sup> Thus, God would replace the earthly Jerusalem with an otherworldly heavenly Jerusalem--not restored but superimposed. Martínez

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<sup>68</sup> Loren L. Johns, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Apocalypse of John" in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Volume III: The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2006), 255-279.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 282; E.P. Sanders, "Jerusalem and Its Temple in Early Christian Thought and Practice," in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, L.I. Levine, ed., (New York: Continuum, 1999), 90-103 at 93

<sup>70</sup> Martínez, "New Jerusalem," 283.

argued that the temple/Jerusalem of Paul and Jesus were similar to the visions of a restored Jerusalem found in the War Scroll and the New Jerusalem Scroll.

So, while Martínez argued that Jesus and Paul did share a vision of a restored earthly temple within Jerusalem and that the temple can be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Martínez did not accept that Revelation's vision of a heavenly Jerusalem was influenced by the Dead Sea Scrolls. Despite this, Martínez failed to explain how the War Scroll, the New Jerusalem Scroll, and Revelation developed Jerusalem visions independently of one another or from Ezekiel. He argued that these texts arose solely from Ezekiel and other books of the Hebrew Bible. Martínez did not attribute John's vision to extra-canonical sources.

#### ADELA YARBRO COLLINS

In contrast to Martínez, Adela Yarbro Collins found much in common between John's new Jerusalem and Qumran writings. Collins located Revelation within a Jewish continuum.<sup>71</sup> Earlier in her career, Collins took an interest in Revelation as a mythic text influenced by Babylonian combat myths. Collins also considered Revelation in light of sociology. Thus, over a lengthy career, Collins

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<sup>71</sup> Collins could also be placed in the religious theory category.

took mythological (theory of religion), sociological, and biblical-critical approaches in her examination of Revelation.

Early in her career, Collins wrote *The Combat Myth*, which placed Revelation within the context of the ancient Near East. She pointed out that the chaos symbols of Revelation were also found in the cosmic battle myths of Babylon.<sup>72</sup> The main Babylonian myth of the battle between Marduk and Tiamat explained the creation of the heaven and the earth. After killing Tiamat, Marduk used her body to form the sea. Thus, the sea became a symbol of Tiamat who represented chaos and evil and thus, Collins pointed out that in the book of Exodus, while not mentioning the gods outright, the enemies of Israel were still drowned in the sea as they were chasing the Hebrews out of Egypt. Similarly, hell, death, Satan, and those not written in the book of life were thrown into the lake of fire in Revelation. This comparative and mythological approach demonstrated that Revelation was a product of its particular time and place. While some have compared it to the first century Jewish milieu or the contemporary Roman milieu, Collins initially placed it in the earlier Babylonian milieu.

In a slightly later book, *Crisis and Catharsis*, Collins took a sociological approach to Revelation. In the introduction to the book, she placed the study of

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<sup>72</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976).



Revelation in the context of the current American belief of a coming apocalypse.<sup>73</sup> She argued that American Christians have often perceived relatively minor persecution as severe. Similarly, she argued, the persecution represented by the book of Revelation may not have been that severe. Thus, she placed the writing of Revelation under Domitian's reign (95-96 CE)—a standard dating for Revelation which was based on the 2<sup>nd</sup> century writings of Irenaeus, despite it being a time of relatively minor persecution.<sup>74</sup> She wrote, "The crucial element is not so much whether one is actually oppressed as whether one *feels* oppressed."<sup>75</sup>

Collins wrote that John was ambivalent towards Jerusalem.<sup>76</sup> On the one hand, Jerusalem was a symbol of salvation—such as in John's portrayal of Jesus saying: "If you conquer, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name" (Rev. 3:12 NRSV). On the other hand, Collins argued

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<sup>73</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

<sup>74</sup> In contrast, J.A.T. Robinson placed Revelation in the period between 64-70, the time leading up to the destruction of the temple (J.A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press; London: SCM Press, 1976]).

<sup>75</sup> Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 86.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

that John “interpreted the destruction of Jerusalem as a punishment for the rejection of the Messiah.”<sup>77</sup>

Collins seemed to locate John among a Christian community that no longer felt themselves to be a part of the Jewish community. Collins and many other scholars looked to the Christian gentile community for dating Revelation. But John was part of the Jewish community suffering from diaspora and destruction of the temple and Jerusalem and his visions likely represented this time of severe persecution of Jews (rather than gentile Christians).

Adela Yarbro Collins later wrote an article, “The Dream of a New Jerusalem at Qumran.” In this article, Collins placed the Qumranic idea of a new Jerusalem in the larger context of exilic and second temple Jewish writings, including the book of Revelation. Thus, in contrast to Collin’s earlier work, in her later article Collins placed Revelation squarely amongst early Jewish works.<sup>78</sup> Collins also contrasted John’s vision to Ezekiel’s vision and compared John’s vision to the three types of new temple/new Jerusalem found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Dream of a New Jerusalem at Qumran,” in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Volume III: The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, 231-254, James H. Charlesworth, ed., (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2006).

Collins pointed out that Ezekiel's vision sanctified the temple and de-sanctified the area of Jerusalem outside of the temple and the priestly residences. In contrast, Collins argued that John's vision sanctified the entire city, which itself represented the temple: "The city itself is also presented as equivalent to the temple... [and] its cubical shape suggests that it plays the role of the holy of holies."<sup>79</sup> Collins wrote, "In this regard, the vision of the new Jerusalem in the book of Revelation is the polar opposite of Ezekiel's vision."<sup>80</sup>

Collins found three types of temple in the DSS: 1, a community as temple; 2, a latter-day temple; and 3, a final eschatological new creation temple.<sup>81</sup> Collins explained the first type of temple in the DSS as the community or the people. She also argued that this occurred in Revelation, "the gathering of the faithful with God and the Lamb constitutes a metaphorical temple within the city."<sup>82</sup> Here, Collins reached a similar conclusion as previous scholars; that the new Jerusalem was symbolic of the people.

The second type of temple Collins noticed in the DSS was an ideal temple built by human hands. Collins said, "The temple to be built in this period is

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 252, 254. Cf. McKelvey above who had three Jerusalems in Revelation: a community-cum-Jerusalem, a brand-new Jerusalem, and a restored pilgrimage-city Jerusalem.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 253.

probably the one described in the *Temple Scroll*.<sup>83</sup> She contrasted this ideal temple with the one described in Ezekiel. She wrote, “As argued above, the program for restoration in Ezekiel is eschatological. The temple of the *Temple Scroll*, however, is normative and ideal, but not eschatological, since it is not to be the final, definitive temple.”<sup>84</sup>

Collins argued that a passage from the Temple Scroll pointed to a contrast between the second and third types of temple.<sup>85</sup> She quoted from 11QTemple 2: “I will cause my glory to rest on it [the human-built temple] until the day of creation, on which I shall create my sanctuary, establishing it for myself for all time.”<sup>86</sup> This final temple would not be built by human hands but by God himself. This overlapped somewhat with John’s heavenly temple-cum-Jerusalem which was described as new, built by God not human beings, and which descended to earth to become the new earthly-heavenly temple-city.

Additionally, Collins looked at a section of the book of Enoch, which was also found in Qumran. The Animal Apocalypse, an allegorical description in the book of Enoch of past, present, and future history in which humans were represented by animals, also shared elements of the temple detailed in other

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> = 11Q19.29.8-10; DSS Martinez vol 2 p 1251

Jewish literature. Collins pointed out that the Animal Apocalypse similarly described a final city or “house” made by God. The portion of the Animal Apocalypse Collins referred to says:

And I stood to see that old house was folded up, and all the pillars were taken out, and every beam and ornament of that house was folded up together with it. And it was taken out and put in a certain place to the south of the land. And I saw until the owner of the sheep brought a house, new and larger and loftier than the former, and he erected it in the place of the former one which had been rolled up. And all of its pillars were new and the ornaments were new and larger than those of the former old one which he had taken out. And all the sheep were in the midst of it. (1 Enoch 90:28-29)

While the descriptions were different in approach and detail, the basic outline of this final city was the same as John’s new Jerusalem. Collins wrote, “The lack of a temple building and the emphasis on the gathering and dwelling of the people in the city are motifs that the book of Revelation shares with the Animal Apocalypse.”<sup>87</sup> Thus, in contrast to Briggs and Lee, Collins argued that the lack of a temple in the new Jerusalem was not novel to John but was an early Jewish idea found in the Animal Apocalypse. Per Collins research, John’s final city

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 253 n.106.

paralleled the final temple found in the Temple Scroll and the final holy city found in the Animal Apocalypse.

In these explanations Collins placed the new Jerusalem of Revelation within the milieu of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Although Collins did not specifically argue for cross-pollination of the new Jerusalem ideas, rather, her descriptions implied that the Dead Sea Scrolls and Revelation may have shared genetic material or, at the least, common interpretations of the Hebrew Bible.

Throughout her works Adela Yarbro Collins looked for the right *Sitz im Leben* for the book of Revelation. She initially placed it among the Babylonian milieu and later aligned it with anti-Jewish Christianity. Finally, she settled on instating Revelation among other Jewish apocalyptic texts.

Adela Yarbro Collins's journey was in a sense a microcosm of the general trajectory of new Jerusalem scholarship, which more and more appreciated the new Jerusalem's rightful place within the first-century Jewish milieu. Some of the biblical-critical scholars, however, still resisted viewing John's new Jerusalem without some sort of Christian originality. Thus, for example, the theological fallacy of supersessionism re-appeared disguised as the biblical-critical criterion of dissimilarity from Judaism.

### 3. LITERARY CRITICISM

The literary approach likewise struggled with supersessionism and dogmatism. As the name suggests, the literary approach looked for literary themes in the text. This approach could be used by those with faith-based beliefs about the canonicity of the text by avoiding biblical-historical criticism or it could also be used by those who employ biblical-historical criticism. Like theologians, those who took the canonical literary approach to scholarship continued to navigate the faith aspects of the text and community; like historical-biblical critics, those who took the critical literary approach likewise often considered the implications for the faith-based communities, yet they were more critical of the text.

For example, a person with faith in the inspiration or even inerrancy of the biblical text could take the text as a simple whole. This canonical literary approach would not concern itself with extra-canonical sources or biblical criticism. It would look mainly to narrative devices, tropes, and themes within the text, in a sense, treating the text as any other book in literature. One of the literary scholars below, Celia Deutsch, was the clearest example of this approach. Celia Deutsch remained within the bounds of the canon and did not consider critical approaches.

However, there is also a critical literary approach. The other four scholars considered in the literary approach category all focused on the literary themes

and structure of John's visions of the new Jerusalem, but also had their own more complex approaches. Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza integrated the literary approach with the historical context as well as with current theological concerns. Robert H. Gundry, Jan Fekkes III, and Jan A. du Rand seemed to have a conversation/debate concerning the meaning of the new Jerusalem symbols, such as the jewels. Gundry used a literary analysis to posit the jewels as symbolic for the people's attributes and rewards. Fekkes used a comparative etymological approach to theorize a genetic link between the pearls in Revelation and the pearls in Tobit. Finally, du Rand used the literary approach to tie Revelation to Genesis as a narrative *inclusio*. Despite these complex approaches, Gundry, Fekkes, and du Rand all agreed on a simple definition of the new Jerusalem as the people of God/the Church.

#### ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER-FIORENZA

Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza took a complex literary-critical approach while still tackling theological concerns.<sup>88</sup> She argued for a poetic-symbolic approach drawing on studies of linguistic structuralism, genre, rhetoric, and orality. She looked to the broader genres of contemporary literature, but she also

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<sup>88</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).



considered the theological implications of the new Jerusalem for oppressed people today.

Schüssler-Fiorenza argued that the poetic-literary approach allowed ambiguity within the text. She explained, "To understand Rev. as a poetic work and its symbolic universe and language as an asset rather than a 'scholarly confusion,' it becomes necessary for interpreters to acknowledge the ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy of all literature."<sup>89</sup> She preempted the argument that one cannot then know anything (historically). She argued that Revelation was not just a "symbolic-poetic work but also ... a work of visionary rhetoric."<sup>90</sup> John was trying to persuade and motivate his readers "by constructing a 'symbolic universe.'"<sup>91</sup> This rhetorical situation was the oppression of the community by the Romans.

Schüssler-Fiorenza promoted placing the literary structure of Revelation within genres of the Hebrew Bible and early Christian patterns, but also "within the wider context of Greco-Roman revelatory literature which would allow us to understand it not just in relation to Jewish apocalyptic literature but also to Gnostic 'apocalypses.'"<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

Nevertheless, she contrasted John of Patmos' genre to the rabbinic genre. She explained that he wrote in the prophetic tradition rather than a scribal rabbinic tradition. She wrote,

[T]he author of Rev. does not once introduce his OT materials with a "formula quotation" ... nor does he correctly quote them.... John uses OT texts as he uses Jewish apocalyptic, pagan mythological, or early Christian materials in an allusive "anthological" way. He does not interpret the OT but uses its words, images, phrases, and patterns as a language arsenal in order to make his own theological statement or express his own prophetic vision.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, according to Schüssler-Fiorenza, John was unlike the rabbis who taught from the Hebrew Bible with quotes and explanations. Instead, John wrote as a prophet and used Jewish writings as material or a "language arsenal" for his visions. She argued that John never accurately quoted the Hebrew Bible. Thus, his allusions did not count as rabbinical commentary.

Moreover, Schüssler-Fiorenza argued not just for reading the text but listening to it:

Since the author [of Revelation] does not employ discursive language and logical arguments but speaks in the language of symbol and myth,

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 135.

the often somewhat unsophisticated discussion of the imaginative, mythopoetic language of Rev. need to be replaced by a literary approach and symbol analysis that would bring out the evocative power and “musicality” of its language, which was written to be read aloud and to be heard.<sup>94</sup>

She claimed that scholars studying Revelation were missing a key element if they did not treat it as more than a literary document.

She did not advocate for a purely literary/auditory approach however. She instead said, “It should not neglect traditional-historical and form-critical analyses since the author does not freely create his images and myths but reworks traditional materials into a new and unique literary composition.”<sup>95</sup>

Schüssler-Fiorenza brought in her own theological perspective (and rhetoric) by then arguing that similar situations allowed the reader in any time period to also receive encouragement from the text. She wrote, “Wherever a social-political-religious ‘tension’ generated by oppression and persecution persists or re-occurs, the dramatic action of Rev. will have the same cathartic effects it had in its original situation.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 199.

However, she cautioned that today's first-world reader might find the feminine symbols of city, whore, and bride misogynistic. Schüssler-Fiorenza wrote:

Rev. engages the imagination of the contemporary reader to perceive women in terms of good or evil, pure or impure, heavenly or destructive, helpless or powerful, bride or temptress, wife or whore. Rather than instill "hunger and thirst for justice," the symbolic action of Rev. therefore can perpetuate prejudice and injustice if it is not "translated" into a contemporary "rhetorical situation" to which it can be a "fitting" rhetorical response.<sup>97</sup>

The challenge that Schüssler-Fiorenza left with her reader was to embrace the ambiguity of the text, understand its rhetorical situation, and strive for a fitting modern response. She considered the potential negative impact of the text, much like the post-modern scholars that will be considered below.

Each of Schüssler-Fiorenza's approaches brought out a different nuance in her analysis of Revelation. She continued to emphasize the ambiguity in the text, for example, with regard to John's reference to the various types of temple/Jerusalem: "But attempts to show that the author means the heavenly and not the historical or the eschatological and not the heavenly temple-berg are

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

inconclusive."<sup>98</sup> She argued that it did not need to be one or the other; there could be polysemic meanings to John's new Jerusalem. Thus, Schüssler-Fiorenza embraced the equivocation as well as the multivalence of the new Jerusalem. In contrast, Ford (above) clarified the sometimes conflicting writings about the new Jerusalem by theorizing that the contradictory parts addressed two separate Jerusalems: the millennial and the eternal. Schüssler-Fiorenza took a different approach and was able to embrace the layers of poetic overtones pertaining to the descriptions of the new Jerusalem in Revelation by using the literary approach. Strikingly, her theological approach did not seem to interfere with her analysis. Rather, she found ways to translate the message of Revelation for today. She also neither limited her approach to only the canon nor took an anti-Judaic stance.

#### CELIA DEUTSCH

Celia Deutsch took a simpler, less critical approach to the text of Revelation, mainly by keeping to the text of Revelation in her analysis. She used the literary method to demonstrate the transformation of the main symbols of the new Jerusalem. She asked, "Given the fact that the author [of Revelation] has used symbols from the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition, what do those

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 186.

symbols mean in the context of those earlier traditions? How have they been transformed? What do those symbols say to John's community regarding present and future?"<sup>99</sup> She identified symbols such as the city, Paradise, and bride, and highlighted their sojourn through passages in the Hebrew Bible and in apocalyptic texts into the book of Revelation. Deutsch argued for uniqueness in the book of Revelation and departure from Judaism, although she did highlight the tension of the first century loss of the temple.

Deutsch argued that John departed from other Jewish literature in the universalism of his new Jerusalem vision by including gentiles as well as Israel as the restored community. Entry to the new Jerusalem was extended to the entire community, they were "no longer 'gentiles', but true people of God."<sup>100</sup> Similarly, entry into the new Jerusalem was no longer limited to the Jewish people; the "universalist expectation [was] no longer nation-based."<sup>101</sup> Deutsch underscored the inclusion of the gentiles; however the inclusion of gentiles in the final community was not unprecedented within first century Jewish understandings of prophecy. Thus, Deutsch's argument was flawed; likely, by

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<sup>99</sup> Celia Deutsch, "Transformation of Symbols: The New Jerusalem in Rv 21.1-22.5" in *ZNW* (Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche) 78, 1 (1987): 106-26, 107.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

keeping to the text she missed the larger cultural context.<sup>102</sup>

Deutsch argued that the significance of the temple persisted in the new Jerusalem of Revelation, explaining that “a restored temple was central to the hope for a new Jerusalem, whether historical or apocalyptic.” This temple, however, would be symbolic: it would be God himself. She explained, “John however, is not simply reassuring the community that they will indeed be able to approach God and the Lamb in the apocalyptic order, but that the immediacy of their access will surpass traditional hopes.”<sup>103</sup> In John’s apocalypse this immediacy was the temple being replaced by the divine “Presence itself.”<sup>104</sup>

Deutsch reached beyond a simple textual analysis in her conclusion. She brought the text back to the historical situation and concluded that John’s use of symbols solved the tension between what the early Christians believed about God and what was actually happening to them. She explained,

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<sup>102</sup> The inclusion of gentiles in the end times prophecies was also how Krister Stendahl explained the theology of Paul. It was through eschatological interpretations that the apostle Paul found a way to include gentiles qua gentiles in the church—they did not need to be circumcised or otherwise convert to Judaism. Stendahl in many ways reversed scholars’ understanding of Paul’s attitude toward Judaism. Scholarly consensus previously was that Paul had rejected Judaism, especially the law (Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976], 135).

<sup>103</sup> Deutsch, “Transformation,” *ZNW* 78,1 (1987), 115.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

John's use and transformation of traditional symbols assures his community that restoration and re-ordering occur not only in fulfillment of the promises made to the churches (2.1-3.22), but also in continuity with the prophetic promises and with the tradition. And so John presents a way of resolving the chaos experienced by his community as a result of the conflict between what ought to be and what is, between their self-understanding as the faithful ones protected by God and their actual experience of persecution and internal tension.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, according to Deutsch, John's description of the new Jerusalem resolved the disparity between the reality of the people on earth and their belief that God was in control and loved them. John's transformation of the symbol of Jerusalem to a promised place rather than a current place resolved the dysphoria between God's rule and Roman rule.

Although a somewhat limited analysis, Deutsch began to explain the changes to the symbols found in Revelation and why they transformed. Moreover, she identified the temple in the new Jerusalem as God himself. However, she looked for novelty and argued the universalism of the new Jerusalem was a break from traditional Jewish ideas. Her lack of attention to

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 126.



early Jewish texts and her theological Christian concerns surfaced as bias against John's Jewishness.

Deutsch tried to contrast John with Judaism. She emphasized his originality and transformation of the Jewish symbols. Doing so blinded her to the similarities and shared mode of thought of John with his Jewish contemporaries. Each of the items Deutsch identified as unique: God as the temple, gentiles within the new Jerusalem—these items were not transformations of Jewish symbols by John alone, they were interpretations of symbols by various Jewish contemporaries.

#### ROBERT H. GUNDRY

Robert H. Gundry also took a literary approach but focused on the historical and grammatical. Like Deutsche, Gundry argued that the new Jerusalem eased the disparity between the lives of the believers and what they believed their lives should be. The historical situation was the utter poverty of the early Christians, as well as their lack of power. In addition to placing Revelation in historical context, Gundry argued for a focus on grammar. He argued, "The path to discovery lies along the line of historical-grammatical interpretation, which assumes that the language of the biblical text, including its symbolic language, grows out of and speaks to the historical situation of the writer and his

readers.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, Gundry took a grammatical-historical-literary approach. Moreover, Gundry resolved the dysphoria of the lives of first-century Christians by arguing for a direct connection between what the people did in their everyday lives and what would happen to them in their future dwelling place, that is, the new Jerusalem.

In Gundry’s interpretation of John’s message, there was no disparity between God’s power and the powerlessness of the early Christians. Gundry found John’s motivation in describing the splendor of the new Jerusalem as a message to believers that their fortunes will be reversed. He explained, “John wanted his Christian readers ... to see in the new Jerusalem, not their future dwelling place, but ... their future selves and state.”<sup>107</sup> For example, the new Jerusalem was so large because the saints were so numerous. Gundry explained, “The huge dimensions of the city do not mean that it has to be large to hold all the saints so much as they mean that all the saints, whom the city represents, will amount to an astronomically high number.”<sup>108</sup> This encouraged the Christians to feel that they were not so few in number (and not so outnumbered). Also, the new Jerusalem was made of gold, pearls, and

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<sup>106</sup> Robert H. Gundry, “The New Jerusalem: People as Place, Not Place for People,” *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 29, Fasc. 3 (Jul., 1987): 254-264. Brill. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1560758>, 255.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

gemstones because the saints were so poor at this time. In their future city, they would be wealthy. They would also be the kings in the coming city. Roles would be reversed: oppressed to conquerors, poor to rich, small in number to large. Gundry wrote, "It does not require Marxist inclinations to see the liveliness of the text (so understood) in the sociological setting of Christian believers dispossessed through persecution."<sup>109</sup>

Yet the descent of the new Jerusalem did not imply for Gundry an archetypal or heavenly Jerusalem. Instead, the people of God were themselves the new Jerusalem already dwelling in heaven. "This descent means that at the dawn of the new creation the saints... will come from their place of heavenly origin in God to possession of their property, the new earth."<sup>110</sup> So the heavenly Jerusalem was not a literal city, but a metaphorical city-bride made up of the previously deceased saints descending to inherit the earth. He reasoned, "The New Jerusalem is a dwelling place, to be sure; but it is God's dwelling place in the saints rather than their dwelling place on earth."<sup>111</sup> For Gundry, God dwelled not in a house like a man nor even in a heavenly temple, but within a group of people imminently both on earth and in heaven (then back to earth again in their descent as the new Jerusalem/bride). Therefore, the city as people also

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 258-259.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 256.

represented the holy of holies: “Thus the whole of the city has the glory of God because the whole of the city is the holy of holies, filled with the glory of his presence.”<sup>112</sup>

Gundry argued that John not only Christianized Jewish traditions of the new Jerusalem but transformed the Jewish city "into a symbol of the saints themselves."<sup>113</sup> Using a literary approach, Gundry “set aside source critical questions, e.g., the question of a Jewish source and the question of an original distinction between a millennial city and an eternal city” took the text as it stands.<sup>114</sup> Gundry argued that the new Jerusalem no longer represented the promised eschatological “Jerusalem as capital city of the world and as occupied by regathered Israel while the Gentiles live outside”<sup>115</sup>

Although Gundry sought to find the meaning for the author of Revelation and its early readers, his approach put aside multivalence, as well as source-criticism, and adhered to a singular symbolic cipher of Jerusalem as the community of saints. Thus, Gundry’s approach was too simplistic and did not explain the polysemic aspects of the new Jerusalem.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 263.

## JAN FEKKES III

Jan Fekkes III, like Gundry, focused on the idea of the new Jerusalem being the people of God.<sup>116</sup> Unlike Gundry, Fekkes delved more deeply into comparative texts using a literary-critical and etymological approach.

Fekkes regarded Gundry's analysis as too literal. He wrote, "Gundry's literal interpretation of the precious stones as a materialistic reward and future compensation for the earthly poverty of the saints is hardly convincing."<sup>117</sup> Instead, Fekkes interpreted the symbols of Revelation 19-21 metaphorically in light of nuptial imagery from Isaiah, Tobit, and Joseph and Aseneth.

Fekkes explained that in Revelation, the bridal city was identified with God's people. The bridal adornments, therefore, described aspects of the saints: "Just as the fine linen of the bride stands as a metaphor for the 'righteous deeds of the saints' (19:8; cf. 3:4-5), so also her bridal ornaments were collectively emblematic of the spiritual fidelity and holy conduct of those in the churches who 'overcame.'"<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Fekkes, Jan. "His Bride Has Prepared Herself: Revelation 19-21 and Isaian Nuptial Imagery." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109, no. 2 (1990): 269–87. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3267018>.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 287, n. 49.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 287. "The New Jerusalem prophecy of Isa 54:11-12, which served as a principal model for [Revelation] 21:18-21, was itself part of a larger oracle that employed marriage imagery

Fekkes had also been able to demonstrate genetic etymological links between John's Revelation, Isaiah, and Tobit. For example, "pearl" was one interpretation of Isaiah 54:12b: "I will make your... gates of stones of 'qdh.'" This word, קדח ('qdh), is a *hapax legomenon* and had been interpreted and translated variously by early Jewish literature such as targum Isaiah and Tobit.

Fekkes traced the various Hebrew and Aramaic translations demonstrating that "pearl" ultimately stemmed from interpretations of this word in Isaiah. In Hebrew, the translation came from the root *qdh*, meaning "to kindle" and was interpreted as "precious stones." In Aramaic, the translation came from the (Aramaic) root *qdh*, "to bore" and was interpreted as "stones hollowed out." Combining the Hebrew and Aramaic meanings, קדח referred to "a precious stone bored out." Fekkes argued: "Now, to ask what is a precious stone that is often bored or hollowed out seems to imply the obvious. For then, as now, pearls were highly prized and were commonly drilled and strung together in necklaces."<sup>119</sup>

Similarly, Tobit interpreted Isaiah's "streets of gold" in the same manner as could be found in Revelation. Fekkes explained:

First of all, Isa 54:11b begins the list of architectural features of the future Jerusalem, but both John and the author of Tobit have placed the street tradition last in their outline. Now while it may be granted that both

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and may also have been taken as a symbolic representation of the personified city as a wife gloriously adorned for her husband" (284).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 279.

authors could have come to a similar interpretation of Isa 54:11b independently (i.e., that the "stones" spoken of in 54:11b refer to the streets of the city), it is most unlikely that each would also have taken the first element in Isaiah's description and moved it to the end of their building inventories. It is more natural to assume that John's inclusion of the street motif and its position presuppose the interpretation of Isa 54:11b given in Tob 13:17a.<sup>120</sup>

Thus, Revelation followed Tobit's interpretation of some of Isaiah's terms.

Fekkes pointed out that various commentators interpreted these symbols based on whether they viewed Revelation's new Jerusalem as distinct from or symbolic of the community. He explained, "So some regard the gem motif as simply poetic hyperbole accenting the beauty and worth of the city generally or emphasizing its qualities of light and brilliance, whereas others relate it to the perfected saints as the spiritual building blocks of the eschatological community."<sup>121</sup> Despite Fekkes's acknowledgment that John's new Jerusalem may be both a metaphorical and a literal city, Fekkes focused on the metaphorical: the city was the people adorned with the people's faithfulness.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 285-286.

Thus, despite Fekkes's critique of Gundry, he shared the view of the church as the bride simultaneously in the present and the future. Fekkes wrote, "When viewed from the perspective of nuptial imagery, the glorious bridal attire and ornaments of the New Jerusalem reach back from the future into the present and serve as a symbolic testimony to the faithfulness of the earthly community."<sup>122</sup> Despite their similarities, Fekkes improved on Gundry's interpretation by adding a thorough analysis of the Jewish context of Revelation. Fekkes pointed out the scriptural precedents (both canonical and apocryphal) that John used as well as the intertextuality of Revelation itself and influence of Isaiah.<sup>123</sup> Fekkes' approach demonstrated the gestalt of combining the critical-literary approach with etymology.

JAN A. DU RAND

Like the previous scholars Fekkes and Gundry, Jan A. Du Rand also viewed Revelation's new Jerusalem as equivalent to the "church," i.e., the Christian people of God.<sup>124</sup> He explained,

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<sup>122</sup> Fekkes, "Bride," *JBL* 109, 2: 286-287.

<sup>123</sup> See also, David Flusser, "Hystaspes and John of Patmos" in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988, 390-453. Flusser developed the theory that Revelation was made up of fragments. He claimed that Revelation 11:1-2—two verses which said that the gentiles would only harm the courtyard, not the temple itself—was part of an early Jewish apologetic of the inviolability of the temple, probably from 37 BCE.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Gundry's description of the new Jerusalem being the church's "future selves and state" (Gundry, "The New Jerusalem" *Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 29, Fasc. 3 [Jul., 1987], 255).



[T]he believers are identified with the church and ... the church is to be seen as the new Jerusalem. The rhetorical interplay between the spatial transcendence in heaven and the temporal transcendence in the future, points all fingers to the new Jerusalem, which was not only a futuristic event but already a present reality!<sup>125</sup>

However, unlike Fekkes and Gundry, Du Rand contended that the church was actually, already, the new Jerusalem. This new Jerusalem-cum-church was simultaneously in heaven and on earth, in the present and the future. He maintained that Revelation's main objective was to encourage first century Christians with the promise that "they will descend from heaven at the end of days."<sup>126</sup>

However, while Gundry saw the new Jerusalem as a salve for a despairing church, and Fekkes found parallels to the bridal motifs of the new Jerusalem in comparative literature, Du Rand's overarching approach to the text of Revelation was as a soteriological narrative. The final descent of the new Jerusalem as a bride was foreshadowed by the earlier promises to the churches in Rev. 3-4. The visions of the heavenly temple in chapters 5 and 6 likewise

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<sup>125</sup> Jan A du Rand, "The New Jerusalem as Pinnacle of Salvation: Text (Rev 21:1-22:5) and Intertext," *Neotestamentica* 38, no. 2 (2004): 275–302, 279.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43048513>.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

foreshadowed the heavenly existence of the believers. The church as bride and the new Jerusalem descending coalesced in the final visions of Rev. 21-22. The appearance of the new Jerusalem culminated the salvation macro-narrative.<sup>127</sup>

Du Rand also argued that the book of Revelation placed itself within the larger narrative framework of the Hebrew Bible. He explained, "It finishes off the Bible story as a ring composition, concentrating on the new creation, the new paradise, the new temple, the pilgrimage of the nations and their rulers and the new covenant."<sup>128</sup> Here Du Rand identified an *inclusio*: just as Genesis began with the creation of the world and the garden of Eden, so Revelation ended with a creation of the new world and a new Paradise.<sup>129</sup> This literary and structuralist analysis gave context to the symbols within the text since their meaning could be derived from and tied to the origin story. A midrashic analysis would arrive at a

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<sup>127</sup> Using M. Eugene Boring's theory, Du Rand argued that there were three smaller story lines within a larger soteriological macro-narrative: 1, John's and the churches' story; 2, the victory of God/Christ; and 3, the cosmic (angelic) story. M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Westminister: John Knox Press, 1989).

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>129</sup> Gert Jordaan also saw the new Jerusalem as tied to creation, but instead of a return to the beginning, he saw the new Jerusalem as a reversal of creation. For example, in Genesis, God divided the seas to create the heavens and the earth, but in Revelation, the sea was "no more." Jordaan maintained that when Revelation's sea was dissolved the heavens and the earth became one with no division. Gert Jordaan, "Cosmology in the book of Revelation/Kosmologie in die boek van Openbaring" in *In die Skriflig* 47 (2) (2013):1-8. doi: 10.4102/ids.v47i2.698. .

similar conclusion—the end being tied to the beginning, however, without it being a literary inclusio or macro-narrative (as will be discussed in later chapters).

In addition to literary analysis, du Rand also used a critical-historical approach to decipher the symbols within Revelation. He looked to both canonical and non-canonical writings, mainly Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah of the Hebrew Bible, 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch and Qumran of the non-canonical writings, and John, 1 Peter, 1 Corinthians, and Galatians of the New Testament.

A question Du Rand sought to answer was where the descent of the pre-existent heavenly Jerusalem originated. He seemed to have found an explanation in early Jewish literature: “The descent from heaven remarkably corresponds with the idea of descent in 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch and Qumran as shown above.”<sup>130</sup> Here Du Rand diverged from his literary approach and used a historical-critical approach of looking at contemporary documents. He found the descent of the new Jerusalem in these non-canonical texts. Despite the possible influence from these texts, du Rand did not offer an additional explanation for how these texts developed the descent of a heavenly Jerusalem.

However, Du Rand did not find evidence of God as the temple in other early Jewish literature or in the Hebrew Bible. “The idea of the Lamb and God being the temple is unique to the new Jerusalem, although 3 Baruch and

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 298.

Yohanan confirm the idea of no temple.”<sup>131</sup> Du Rand did not find this conflation of God and the temple as a potential anti-temple polemic. Rather, Du Rand argued that the symbol of the temple was the new Jerusalem. He argued that the temple and Jerusalem were inseparable and that the early Jewish writings “present the expectation for the new Jerusalem with the focus on the temple.”<sup>132</sup> The closeness of the temple and Jerusalem meant that they could not be separated in studying the new Jerusalem. However, “the tradition has moved from the temple of God to God as the temple” in Revelation 21.<sup>133</sup>

The theological theme he proposed was that the new Jerusalem was the embodiment of the salvific destiny of the people of God. Since the new Jerusalem was described as God and his people, Du Rand asked, “[Was] the disappearance of the temple part of a Christian anti-temple polemic?”<sup>134</sup> Du Rand answered that it was not. Rather, God was the temple in the new Jerusalem.

What Du Rand did not answer was, how could God (and the Lamb) be the temple-cum-Jerusalem if the bride was also Jerusalem? This contradiction and multivalence of Jerusalem was neither solved nor even acknowledged in Du

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 276, 283.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 276

<sup>134</sup> Jan A. du Rand, “The New Jerusalem as Pinnacle of Salvation: Text (Rev 21:1-22:5) and Intertext,” *Neotestamentica*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2004): 275-302. New Testament Society of Southern Africa. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43048513>

Rand's multiple approaches to the new Jerusalem. He did explain each perspective, but side by side as though they were complementary. A midrashic approach could explain the multivalence of the new Jerusalem as will be considered in the following chapters.

Most of the literary scholars saw the new Jerusalem as a symbol that brought meaning, security, and hope to an oppressed people. They saw its transformation from a sacred space central to the Jewish people to an imaginary future sacred utopia for the new Christians. Gundry took each symbol literally—the poor would inherit jewels, the oppressed would rule, etc. Fekkes found influences on the symbols in Revelation through etymological comparison with Tobit and Aseneth. Du Rand teased out the narrative structure of Revelation locating the new Jerusalem as the salvific culmination of the eschatological and world narrative sagas.

Many of these literary scholars also iterated the rhetorical effect of the text for oppressed people today, finding the salvific message as having continuing relevance. For example, Schüssler-Fiorenza described its cathartic effect of Revelation's dramatic action "wherever a social-political-religious 'tension' generated by oppression and persecution persists."<sup>135</sup> Likewise, Du Rand and Gundry found the present-future symbiosis of the new Jerusalem symbol salvific

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<sup>135</sup> Schüssler-Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 199.

for John's first-century readers and today's readers. The new Jerusalem was a way to ease the dysphoria between their current state of oppression and their belief in their salvation by an all-powerful God. Thus, literary analysis provided the possibility of enhancing both the critical and the theological approaches to the text.

#### 4. POST-MODERN

The postmodern approach agrees with the literary approach that one could not confidently know history and that symbols and structure were the framework for understanding meaning, yet this methodology tends to go further in deconstructing the text. It may also use structural analysis, feminist theory, spatial theory, post-colonial theory and others. This approach is also often more critical of the morality of the text, especially in relation to its use among today's readers. Two authors will be considered here: Tina Pippin who criticized the misogyny of Revelation and Thomas W. Martin, who analyzed the environmental impact of the idea of Revelation's new Jerusalem.

##### TINA PIPPIN

In stark contrast to many of the scholars' positive opinions of Revelation, Tina Pippin drew negative conclusions about the ethics of Revelation. Her

postmodern approach utilized spatial theory: “As a postmodern reader of the Apocalypse I want to locate myself at the point on the textual map labeled ABYSS and enter the text from this place.”<sup>136</sup> She looked at the imagery of the new Jerusalem as a map which she read subversively or “against the grain” by entering it at the abyss. “This gaping hole/pit is a starting-point, an ending-point, a bottomless point and thereby no point at all on the map.... There is no authorial control over the depths of this abysmal space. John measures the heavenly city, but the pit is bottomless.”<sup>137</sup>

In focusing on the exterior of the map of Jerusalem, the abyss, Pippin subverted the map’s center. She reversed the positive meaning and read it “against the grain.” The positive place of the new Jerusalem now stood in sharp contrast to the negative non-space of the abyss. Pippin found this abyss as symbolic of the feminine cavernous vagina next to the phallic heights of the new Jerusalem.

According to Pippin, Jerusalem became an entirely male city, even the imagery of the bride was represented by 144,000 male virgins married to Jesus. God, the father, and his son, the lamb, were married to pure Jewish men. The whore Babylon was relegated to the vaginal abyss. The feminine was excluded

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<sup>136</sup> Tina Pippin, *Apocalyptic Bodies: The Biblical End of the World in Text and Image* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 65.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

except in a transgendered form as the male bride. Like a Shakespearean play, the women in the new Jerusalem were played by transvestite men. Pippin's reading of the text was more concerned with the audience today than Revelation's original audience. Pippin's reading of new Jerusalem mirrors other understandings of utopia as dystopia with a secret underbelly of horror or with someone paying the cost to maintain the utopia for the lucky ones.

THOMAS W. MARTIN

Another post-modern author, Thomas W. Martin, looked to the new Jerusalem for a paradigm for environmental salvation. He sought to subvert the idea of a new earth as a rationale for the destruction of the present earth. Martin found two visions of the new Jerusalem in Revelation: the first portrayed the destruction of the earth, but the second, portrayed a preserved earth.

In the second new Jerusalem, John was placed on a high mountain. Unlike in the first vision which encompassed the whole earth and its destruction, in the second vision, the mountain was the space from which the new Jerusalem was viewed. The mountain was part of the earth; thus, the earth was not destroyed. The new city did not contain all of the natural world. Martin wrote, "This contradiction of spaces within the narrative reveals an 'outside' resisting



even Divine construction.”<sup>138</sup> There was a tension in the text itself that resisted this first vision of an all-encompassing city. The high mountain was an outside space, a natural space, which was the foundation of the city.

Martin argued that this latter vision of the world with its “the city on a hill” was a better model for modern environmental ethics. This latter world still needed the earth; it needed the mountain for its foundation. Unlike the first vision with a new Jerusalem created after the destruction of the earth, the earth upon which the “city on a hill” stood was not a replaceable space. Thus, this latter city encouraged ethical conservation efforts of this earth.

Both of these post-modern authors stressed the significance of the idea of the new Jerusalem for modern society: Pippin argued that John’s new Jerusalem denigrated and excluded women, Martin argued that John had two new Jerusalem visions: one undermined preservation of the earth and the other promoted preservation of the earth. Pippin’s concerns about misogyny and Martin’s concerns about misogaia remind the scholar that readings do not exist in a vacuum. Many people today read the text and use it to decide on political, cultural, and ecological actions.

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<sup>138</sup> Thomas W. Martin, “The City as Salvific Space: Heterotopic Place and Environmental Ethics in the New Jerusalem,” *SBL Forum* 7, no. 2 (2009): <https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=801>

## 5. RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL THEORY

Religious theorists have often used postmodern, biblical-critical, and literary approaches to the text. Additionally, approaches from anthropology, sociology, apocalyptic theory, spatial theory, and psychology were also often employed. Many of the scholars previously mentioned could also be categorized as religious theorists, particularly, Adela Yarbro Collins, Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, and Tina Pippin. The two additional religious theorists described below do not add a lot to the discussion. Nevertheless, because of its interdisciplinary nature, it is within the religious theory approach that a Jewish midrashic approach is possible.

### GREGORY STEVENSON

Gregory Stevenson was concerned with the symbolic and cultural significance of the temple for its original audience of Revelation.<sup>139</sup> He reasoned that since both the gentile and Jewish Christians who were reading Revelation no longer worshiped at temples, there needed to be another explanation for the

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<sup>139</sup> Gregory Stevenson, *Power and Place: Temple and Identity in the Book of Revelation* (Beihefte Zur Zeitschrift Fur Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der alt ... Fur die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft) (New York; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 3. See especially, "The Temple and the Book of Revelation," 215-222 and "New Jerusalem: New Place," 267-272.

perpetuation of temple imagery in Revelation.<sup>140</sup> His solution was that, “As multifaceted and polyvalent institutions and symbols, temples expressed mediation, unity, identity, and access to divine power for justice, victory, mercy, and protection in both cultural contexts.”<sup>141</sup>

The heavenly temple was untouchable by the enemies of the Jews and the enemies of the Christians—whom Stevenson claimed were stepping into the identity of these Jews. He wrote, “As temples in antiquity were powerful forces for the construction and maintenance of group identity, so the temple symbolism in Revelation supports the identification of faithful Christians as the people of God, as Jews and inheritors of the covenant promises.”<sup>142</sup>

Stevenson did, however, focus on the significance of the destruction of the new Jerusalem for the Jewish community. Like the heavenly temple, Stevenson argued that the need for the symbol of the new Jerusalem was especially true in the aftermath of the Jewish War and Roman occupation of the city. He wrote, “A Jerusalem that could not be occupied or destroyed tapped into the Jewish hope that God would one day bring about the fulfillment of all of his promises to

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 276-277.

Israel.”<sup>143</sup> So at this time, the symbol of the temple was transformed and applied to a heavenly Jerusalem.

Stevenson treated the new Jerusalem as both a Jewish a Christian symbol. He described the Christians as the new Jews, inheriting their promises. This supersessionist perspective was anachronistic and did not adequately reflect John’s Jewish perspective.

JOHN J. COLLINS

John J. Collins also weighed heavily the effect of catastrophe on the theology of the Jewish people—first with the Babylonian exile and destruction of the first temple, then with the Roman destruction of the second temple and city. He found that not only did the major diasporas affect the worldviews of the people, but their disappointment in restoration attempts also affected them. Using sociology, apocalyptic theory, and comparative religion, Collins sought to understand how the new Jerusalem became an apocalyptic hope.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 267.

<sup>144</sup> John J. Collins, “Jerusalem and the Temple in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature of the Second Temple Period” in *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 159-177.

Collins argued that Ezekiel “inaugurated a tradition of speculation about an ideal temple and city.”<sup>145</sup> Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord depart to a mountain east of Jerusalem. After which, Ezekiel saw a vision of slaughter in Jerusalem of people who did not bear a mark on their foreheads. Collins explained, “Ezekiel here acknowledges an ancient belief that a city could not be captured so long as its patron deity was in it.”<sup>146</sup> Thus, according to Ezekiel’s theology, the temple was destroyed because God was not in the temple protecting it and the city.

Additionally, while Collins wrote that Ezekiel’s hope for a new city with a temple was typical of Jewish apocalyptic literature, he also cited many counterexamples. Isaiah 65 described a new heaven and a new earth without mentioning a temple and Revelation specifically described the new Jerusalem without a temple.<sup>147</sup> Another counterexample for Collins was the *Animal Apocalypse* which described the new Jerusalem without a tower. In this metaphor, the tower was probably the temple. Collins argued that this description was an example of dissent against the temple.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, Collins argued that Daniel may have also rejected the Maccabean cleansing of the temple since the

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 162-163.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 163.

dates of the eschatological temple restoration were extended past the time of the Maccabean restoration.<sup>149</sup>

Nevertheless, the Qumran community still adhered to the ideal of the temple cult. Collins wrote: “If the Essenes were unhappy with current temple practice, this did not mean that they did not value temple cult in principle. They had a strong priestly ideology, and consequently their exile from the temple presented them with a considerable problem.”<sup>150</sup>

Collins iterated three ways that the Qumran community responded to the problem of temple impurity. First of all, they regarded themselves as a spiritual temple. Secondly, they looked to the heavenly temple.<sup>151</sup> In this alternative cult Collins explained that “they recited their songs about the heavenly temple, where they participated in their imagination. This procedure is in fact typically apocalyptic. When the actual empirical world is out of joint, the apocalypses imagine an alternative universe where everything is in order.”<sup>152</sup> With a third response, the Qumranites held out hope for a new, enlarged, and pure temple. Collins pointed out that unlike in Ezekiel’s vision, in the Qumran vision the city of Jerusalem would share the sanctity of the temple.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 168-169. Here, Collins was referencing the *Temple Scroll*.

According to Collins, despite the dissatisfaction with the second temple, its destruction in 70 CE was cataclysmic. Collins wrote, “No event in Jewish history, down to the Holocaust in the last generation, was so traumatic as the destruction of the temple.”<sup>154</sup> There were several ways of compensating for the loss of the second temple. Collins described one reaction as the vision of a greater, more beautiful city—according to the fifth Sibylline Oracle and *4 Ezra*. Another reaction Collins described was the imagining of a heavenly city, such as was found in the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*. This city was described as Paradise or as the original garden of Eden which was preserved with God in heaven. Collins maintained that Revelation went further: God could not be restrained by a mere temple when the heavens itself could not contain him. Therefore, the temple was just a symbol of the divine presence, and thus, was “ultimately dispensable.” Collins wrote that the prophet of Patmos would have no temple in the new Jerusalem because “the only adequate fulfillment of apocalyptic hopes would be a city where the role of the temple was filled by the actual presence of God.”<sup>155</sup>

Collin’s conclusion was similar to Briggs’ theological argument that Ezekiel’s generation was “not far enough along the revelatory timeline to cope with the idea that the temple institution, the very heart of their religious life, was

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

to be altogether abandoned.”<sup>156</sup> However, Collins did not see the idea of God’s presence as a solely Christian idea. In fact, the idea of God being with the people in the last days can be found in the descriptions in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah, just not as a replacement for the lost temple.

## CONCLUSION

Scholars of the last fifty years disagreed in four major areas over the significance of John’s new Jerusalem. 1, They found different identifications for the new Jerusalem: whether as a group of people, a heavenly city, a millennial city, an eschatological city, or some combination thereof. 2, They found different reasons for there not being a temple in the new Jerusalem: the temple was obsolete for Christians, the city was the temple, God was the temple, no temple was a Christian innovation, no temple was found in other early Jewish texts. 3, Scholars also disagreed about the social utility of the image of a new Jerusalem both for its original audience and for today’s believers. 4, Scholars disagreed over the Jewishness of John’s new Jerusalem vs. novel Christian developments.

1, Views diverged over the identification of the new Jerusalem. Many scholars argued that in John’s symbolic narrative Jerusalem was no longer a city

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 105.



but had become a group of people (Gundry, Fekkes, Du Rand). However, some saw a multivalence in the new Jerusalem: it was a bride/community and a city/temple (McKelvey) or a millennial city and an eternal city (Ford) or an ambiguous combination of the above (Schussler-Fiorenza).

2, Views conflicted over the significance of the missing temple in the new Jerusalem. Some saw this description as an anti-Jewish polemic (Lee) or a Christological transformation of Jerusalem (Briggs). Some, however, found this idea in Jewish sources (Ford, Yarbro Collins, Flusser). One saw it as a response to the catastrophic loss of the temple (John Collins). Some argued that the city itself was the temple (McKelvey, Yarbro Collins).

3, Views clashed over the social implications of the new Jerusalem idea. Pippin interpreted the final city not as a utopia but as a chauvinistic dystopia. Martin saw the millennial form of the city as a potential ecological vision. Gundry, Fekkes, Du Rand explained the social use of the image of a heavenly Jerusalem as hope for salvation. John Collins, Stevenson, Deutsch saw the city as a way to answer the theodicy of the day--the contradiction between God as all-powerful and their experience of oppression.

4, Scholars of the last 50 years were influenced by previous theologians who held canonical and dogmatic views as well as anti-Judaic views. While today's scholars have agreed that anti-Semitism should have no place in

scholarship or society in general, some still have unintentionally perpetuated anti-Judaic biases. Part of the problem is a lack of awareness of the problem of anti-Judaic influence. While the more blatant anti-Judaism have been rejected by current scholars, the systemic cultural supersessionist biases have not been thoroughly examined and rooted out. That people (for the most part) were no longer anti-Semitic allowed some to not perceive the continuing problems of anti-Jewish bias and anti-Jewish theology.<sup>157</sup> This is problematic for its own sake but also led to false conclusions concerning the new Jerusalem symbols. As a Jewish writer, John of Patmos was steeped in first-century Jewish thought. Even though many of the scholars covered here recognized John as a Jewish hierophant, some of them, at the same time, still also interpreted him Christologically—often being unduly influenced by a supersessionist theological approach. This especially became problematic when they, like many theologians, contrasted the Christian faith with Judaism in order to assert the superiority of Christian revelation. To correct this biased heritage, the modern scholar must steep themselves in first-century Jewish apocalyptic thought. More than that,

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<sup>157</sup> William Arnal, "The Cipher 'Judaism' in Contemporary Historical Jesus Scholarship" in *Apocalypticism, Anti-Semitism and the Historical Jesus*, John S. Kloppenborg and John W. Marshall, eds., (London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2005), 24-54. Arnal argued that the accusation of anti-Semitism was used by those who were Christians to invalidate arguments they disagreed with and he argued that anti-Semitism was no longer a problem within Jesus scholarship.

though, the modern scholar must not have a bias against Judaism nor be looking for Christian superiority.

One approach that resolves many of the differences among scholars is the midrashic approach. This approach is not only pro-Jewish but explains how John's new Jerusalem could have so many identities: bride, people, city, temple, God. The following chapters will go into detail on how the midrashic approach situates John's new Jerusalem amongst first century Jewish thinking. Moreover, kerygmatically, the midrashic approach also allows for flexibility in interpretation for future hopes of a better world while at the same time it diluted the immediacy and absoluteness of the theological idea that prophecies come true exactly, making the midrashic approach by far the most effective way to view and explore the concept of John's new Jerusalem.

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## CH. 2

### THE JERUSALEM ABOVE IN MIDRASHIC TRADITION

The five approaches to John's new Jerusalem covered in the last chapter offered insights into John's visions of the new Jerusalem. They covered literary structure, influences from the Hebrew Bible, similarities to apocalyptic writings, and problematic nature for today's culture; however, the five approaches had a gap in their insight. The issue lay in the failure of the approaches to consider John's Jewish mentality. Specifically, they did not take into consideration the underlying Jewish methods of development that would have given life to the idea of the new Jerusalem.

Many scholars partially explained John's ideas by finding similar concepts in other first-century apocalyptic literature. However, John borrowing apocalyptic ideas did not explain how these ideas came to be. In other words, the scholars cited in the previous chapter do not have a plausible theory for how John developed a heavenly Jerusalem; they did not provide an explanation for the methodologies he used to interpret scripture; or, if he did indeed borrow the ideas, how the people he borrowed from developed the ideas.

However, there is a sixth approach that explains the inspiration for the new Jerusalem: the midrashic approach. The midrashic approach, like the apocalyptic approach, still allows John to have borrowed ideas. More than that, though, the midrashic approach explains how the idea of a heavenly Jerusalem and its descent developed.

While the comparison to apocalyptic visions did little to explain John's visions, they did situate John in the first century among apocalypticists. Similarly, in this chapter, midrashic traditions on the new and/or heavenly Jerusalem will be considered as a basis for locating John's new Jerusalem visions among early midrashists' visions of the heavenly Jerusalem. The advantage to locating John among midrashists is that they have a much more transparent process of deriving their interpretations and visions than the apocalypticists.

Four particular midrashic traditions concerning either a heavenly Jerusalem or heavenly sanctuary will be examined. These four traditions are found in a variety of written sources but call back to oral traditions from earlier Jewish midrashic communities. Some of these traditions are preserved with a single extant written midrash and others are preserved in several extant midrashim.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Pilchan Lee seemed to be of two minds on the influence of rabbinical sources (Pilchan Lee, *The New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation: A Study of Revelation 21-22 in the Light of its Background in Jewish Tradition*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). He compared ideas from OT and Jewish texts but did not theorize the processes of influence; however, in Lee's note 15 on p 208, he described the position of other scholars on this matter. He wrote that Neusner was skeptical of use of rabbinic sources but also said, "the simplest possible hypothesis is that the attributions of sayings to named authorities may be relied upon in assigning those sayings to the period, broadly defined, in which said authorities flourished" ("Neusner, Jacob. "The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism: Yavneh (Jamnia) from A.D. 70 to 100" In *Band 19/2. Halbband*

The following four midrashic traditions overlap with elements of John's visions of the new Jerusalem. They may have influenced John's ideas or John may have influenced them. Most likely, they were both drawing from the same pool of thought. The direction of influence is not what is important; rather, the ability to understand John's ideas and how he derived them is what is significant. These four midrashic traditions help to explain the characteristics of Jerusalem as they appeared in John's visions.

These four midrashic traditions act as a window into the cosmographical and theological background of John's vision of a heavenly Jerusalem. Examining the biblical verses and methods of interpretation used by these four traditions to describe the heavenly Jerusalem may be the key to understanding how John derived his ideas of a descending heavenly Jerusalem at the end of time.

Succinctly, the first midrashic tradition located the heavenly Jerusalem above the earthly one. Arguably in Revelation, John located the heavenly Jerusalem

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*Religion (Judentum: Palästinisches Judentum [Forts.]* edited by Wolfgang Haase, 3-42. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110839043-002>," 14). Additionally, Lee wrote that the scholar "A I Baumgarten argued for the historical significance of the rabbinic documents (1995) and that "W. S. Green ... suggested the possibility of reaching their ideas as follows: 'if we cannot claim access to a master's language, perhaps we nevertheless can claim to have possessed formalized but accurate representations of *ideas* and *positions* held by him' (1978, 81)" (Lee, *ibid*). Additionally, in the same note, Lee wrote, "Even though the biographical reconstruction of masters at Yavneh is considered as impossible at the worst, it is agreed by I A Baumgarten, W S Green and J Neusner that ideas of Yavnean masters can be traced back. This agreement provides a methodological legitimacy for this study, because the aim of this study is not to pursue the biographical reconstruction of historical figures such as Yohanan and Eliezer but simply to trace back what kind of ideas was proposed in the name of Yohanan or Eliezer with regard to the Temple, whether by the masters themselves or by their schools, who represent the Yavnean movement in order to know the position of the Yavneans about the Temple" (Lee, *ibid*).

above the holy mountain of Zion. The second tradition described how the heavenly Jerusalem was created at the same time and on the same place as the earthly one. John's vision restored that original status by one Jerusalem assuming the place of the other Jerusalem. The third tradition argued that the destinies of the heavenly and earthly Jerusalems were shared. Since John's heavenly Jerusalem became the earthly Jerusalem, their destinies were also shared. The fourth tradition described heavenly elements that were created in primordial times and were preserved with God. Correspondingly, in John's new Jerusalem, many of these heavenly primordial elements still existed. When looked at in more detail, each of these traditions adds to our understanding of early Jewish cosmography revealed in John's new Jerusalem.

1ST TRADITION. LOCATIONS OF THE TWO JERUSALEMS: MEKILTA D'RABBI YISHMAEL 15:17:4B; J. BERAKOT 35; REVELATION 21:2-3, 10

The first midrashic tradition is of a heavenly Jerusalem. This tradition based the existence of a heavenly Jerusalem on the proof text of Exodus 15:17. The interpretation of Exodus 15:17 as signifying a heavenly Jerusalem can be found in several midrashim including Mekilta and J. Berakot 35 and may in fact be the background for the heavenly Jerusalem in the book of Revelation.

Exodus 15:17 was the penultimate line of the Song of Moses in which Moses said,

תבאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך

You will bring it and plant it on your inherited mountain,

מכון לשבתך פעלת יי מקדש אדני כוננו ידיך

a place you made for your dwelling, Lord, a sanctuary of the Lord your hands formed!<sup>159</sup> (Exodus 15:17)<sup>160</sup>

In the context of this passage, “it” referred to the people of Israel and “your inherited mountain” referred to Jerusalem.<sup>161</sup> Thus, this verse can be translated as, “You will bring the people of Israel and plant them on your inherited mountain, on the place you made for your dwelling—the sanctuary that your hands formed.”

According to biblical critics, the original intent of parallelism in the Hebrew Bible signified equivalent meanings. Thus, “the place you made for your dwelling” would equal and be reiterating “a sanctuary your hands formed.”<sup>162</sup> However, according to midrashic interpretation, such as found in the Mekilta and the Jerusalem Talmud, the parallel references in this passage must have been adding new information since God did not repeat himself.

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<sup>159</sup> “Place” or *mākōn* meant “fixed or established place (of God’s abode on earth; God’s house, extent of Mt. Zion, of God’s sanctuary), foundation (chiefly poetic), site of God’s house or abode, Mt. Zion, heavens” (BDB). *Mākōn* had the same root as *kōnēnū*, which was the polel form of the root *kūn*. The polel form of *kūn* meant to establish or make, but implied formation, such as with making a man in the womb (Job 31:5) (BDB).

<sup>160</sup> The final line was, “The Lord will reign forever and ever.” Exodus 15:17-18 implied that God himself would reign from his throne in his sanctuary in Jerusalem, on the hill where he would plant his people.

<sup>161</sup> In Exodus, this may have been a projection into the future for a Jerusalem-centric cult and nation; however, the “Song of Moses,” from which this verse was taken, was very old and likely was not referring to Jerusalem as the specific site. Jerusalem as the appointed place for God’s earthly residence was retrojected back into the text both by biblical editors and by late midrashic interpretations.

<sup>162</sup> The “place” and the “sanctuary” may have been referencing an earthly temple or referring to the sacred “inherited mountain.” If the latter, the mountain was made by God’s “hands” in creation, perhaps ordained as a particularly holy site.

Thus, the first midrash, found in Mekilta, used the principle of *ribbû* to interpret Exodus 15:17 as proof for a heavenly throne:

זה אחד מן המקראות שאומרים

This is one of the verses that says

שכסא של מטה מכון כנגד כסא של מעלה

that the throne which is below is established opposite

the throne which is above.<sup>163</sup>

This passage from Mekilta did not explain its reasoning; however, it implied the use of the midrashic principle of *ribbû*--that God did not repeat himself. With this principle in mind, the two parallel phrases in Exodus 15:17— “the place you made for your dwelling” and “a sanctuary your hands formed” —would be referring to different holy sites, both thrones. Throne, though, in this midrash seemed to be a synecdoche for the whole sanctuary. Thus, one throne would be the sanctuary below and one throne would be the sanctuary above—both made by God.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Mekilta, Bišelah, Parša 10 (massekta deširta). פרשה י 163

יהודה אבו־שמואל, מדרשי גאולה, פרקי, Quoted from Yehuda Even-Shmuel and Midrashei Geula, האפוקליפסי היהודית מחתימת התלמוד הבבלי ועד ראשית האלף השני

[Chapter of Jewish Apocalypse Dating from the Completion of the Babylonian Talmud until the Sixth Millenium] (Jerusalem: Musad Bialik, 2017), 11. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

This passage could also be found at “Mekilta d’Rabbi Yishmael” 15:17:4b at Sefaria.org [https://www.sefaria.org/Mekhilta\_d’Rabbi\_Yishmael.15.17?lang=bi]—however, their current translation did not match mine (5/30/22).

<sup>164</sup> The heavenly throne/sanctuary/Jerusalem was obviously made by God, but there were traditions that the eschatological sanctuary on earth also would be made with God’s hands, such as in Maccabees, DSS, Jesus, Paul. Cf. “No work of human construction could endure in a place where the city of the Most High was to be revealed” (4 Ezra/2 Esdras 10:54). The final construction of the temple would be the work of God’s own hands.

There is another midrash that also based the existence of a heavenly counterpart to the holy sites in Jerusalem on Exodus 15:17. In the Jerusalem Talmud, J. Berakot 35 identified a heavenly holy of holies located directly “opposite” or above the holy of holies below. Knowing where the holy of holies was located, whether in heaven or on earth, was important for the theme of this midrash, which dealt with the question of which direction people should pray.

העומדים ומתפללים בחוצה-לארץ הופכים פניהם כלפי ארץ־ישראל

The ones who stand and pray outside of the Land turn their faces toward the land of Israel...

העומדים ומתפללים בארץ ישראל הופכים פניהם כלפי ירושלם

The ones who stand and pray in the land of Israel turn their faces toward Jerusalem...

... העומדים ומתפללים בירושלם הופכים פניהם כלפי הר־בית

The ones who stand and pray in Jerusalem turn their faces toward the temple Mount...

...העומדים ומתפללים בהר־בית הופכים פניהם כלפי בית־קדשי הקדשים

The ones who stand and pray on the Temple Mount turn their faces toward the chamber of the holies [sic] of holies...<sup>165</sup>

לא־יזה בית קדש הקדשים

Where is this chamber of the holy of holies?

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<sup>165</sup> “House of the holy of holies” was a fuller term for “holy of holies,” found in the Hebrew Bible only in II Chronicles 3:8 and 3:10 (Emil G. Hirsh, “Holy of Holies”, *Jewish Encyclopedia* 1906). The rabbis here seemed to use “Holy [singular] of Holies,” and “Holies [plural] of Holies,” “House of the holy of holies,” and “House of the Holies of Holies” interchangeably. The plural of the first term in the construct “holies of holies” seemed to be unique to this passage.



ר' חיא רבא: כנגד קדשי הקדשים שלמעלו

Rav Hiyya Rabba, “Opposite the Holies of Holies which is above.”

ר' שמעון בן־חלפתא אמר: כנגד בית קדש־הקדשים שלמעלן

R' Shim'on ben Halaftha said, “Opposite the chamber of the holy of holies which is below.”

אמר ר' פנחס: לא פליגין: בית קדש־הקדשים דלמעלן מכוון כנגד בית קדש־הקדשים שלמעלן<sup>166</sup>

R' Pinḥas said, “There is no difference: the chamber of the holy of holies which is below is established opposite<sup>167</sup> to the chamber of the holy of Holies which is above:

מכון לשבתך מכוון כנגד שבתך<sup>168</sup>

‘The place for your dwelling’ [should read] ‘established opposite your dwelling.’”<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Yehuda Even-Shmuel and Midrashei Geula, מדרשי גאולה, פרקי האפוקליפסי, יהודה אבו־שמואל, מדרשי גאולה, פרקי האפוקליפסי, היהודית מחתימת התלמוד הבבלי ועד ראשית האלף השני [Chapter of Jewish Apocalypse Dating from the Completion of the Babylonian Talmud until the Sixth Millenium], (Jerusalem: Musad Bialik, 2017), 11.]

<sup>167</sup> The word R' Pinḥas used is *kəneged* (כנגד), which in biblical Hebrew meant “according to what is in front of” or “corresponding to.” This was the phrase used to describe Eve: “I will make him a help corresponding to him” (Gen. 2:18). The phrase usually denoted physical proximity but could also be used metaphorically. In midrashic Hebrew, *kəneged* could also be literal or metaphorical. In a discussion of Eve, it was said that if Adam were worthy she would be a helper, if not worthy she would be against him (*kənaggədo*). However, in this latter example, the rabbis changed the vocalization to make the substantive word a pi'el verb. In the above midrash, R' Pinḥas phrase could be metaphorical if taken out of context: the holy of holies below was *according to* the holy of holies above. In other words, those who built it based it on the heavenly dwelling. However, in context, R' Pinhas and the other rabbis were answering the question, “Where is this holy of holies?” The answer must be a physical location.

<sup>168</sup> Y. Berakot 35a-b ([https://www.sefaria.org/Jerusalem\\_Talmud\\_Berakhot.35a?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Jerusalem_Talmud_Berakhot.35a?lang=bi))

<sup>169</sup> Numbering of this passage was a little inconsistent: Even-Shmuel cited this passage as Berakot, *perek* 4, page 8, bottom of column b and top of column c; Sefaria cited it as Berakot 35a-b ([https://www.sefaria.org/Jerusalem\\_Talmud\\_Berakhot.35a?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Jerusalem_Talmud_Berakhot.35a?lang=bi)); Mechon Mamre cited this passage as page 15b, *perek* 4:5 (end) דף לה, ב פרק ד הלכה ה (<https://www.mechon-mamre.org/b/r/r1104.htm>); Tvee Zahavy cited it as Berakot *perek* 4:6 (Tvee Zahavy, *Yerushalmi Berakhot: The Talmud of the Land of Israel Tractate Blessings*, NP, 2010, 4:6 ll. D-G & 4:6 IVA-C; pgs. 193-195, [http://halakhah.com/yerushalmi\\_berakhot\\_tzvee\\_zahavy\\_2010.pdf](http://halakhah.com/yerushalmi_berakhot_tzvee_zahavy_2010.pdf)).

J. Berakot 35 described the intertwined hierotopy of the heavenly and earthly holy sites. It placed God's throne on the celestial plane directly above the terrestrial holy of holies.

R' Pinhas' reference, "place for your dwelling," *מכון לשבתך*, is a quote from Exodus 15:17. The brief reference assumes knowledge of the whole verse which (again) is:

פעלת " מקדש אדני כוננו ידיך תבאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך מכון לשבתך

R' Pinhas seemed to be interpreting the passage as:

You will bring [the people of Israel] and plant them on your inherited mountain [the earthly mount Zion] established opposite your [heavenly] dwelling, O Lord, the sanctuary you formed with your hands (Exodus 15:17).

As in the previous midrash in Mekilta, R' Pinhas used the principle of *ribbû* to prove that there was a heavenly parallel to God's earthly throne or the holy of holies. The first mention of a sacred place—"the inherited mountain"—seemed to be referring to the earthly Jerusalem which was established opposite God's heavenly dwelling. The final reference, "the sanctuary you formed with your hands" probably referred back to the "inherited mountain."

This was slightly different than the interpretation in the previous midrash which had "the sanctuary you formed with your hands" as the heavenly

sanctuary. Thus, turning toward the holy of holies below was the same as turning toward the holy of holies above.

R' Pinhas intertwined the holy residence of God with his interpretation of this passage.

The Mekilta used Exodus 15:17 to prove the existence of a heavenly throne above the earthly one in Jerusalem. Similarly, J. Berakot 35 described the increasing sanctity of the land and temple which culminated in the heavenly holy of holies in heaven. Thus, the heavenly and earthly holy spaces were more than mirror images of each other. The sacred cosmography of the early rabbis was made of ever-increasing sacred circles: outside the land, inside the land, outside the temple, inside the temple, the holy of holies below, the holy of holies above. The final circle switched from being two dimensional to three dimensional. It stretched up to the heavens as a column that rose to God's throne, the holiest of holies.

#### MIDRASHIC APPLICATION OF EXODUS 15:17 TO THE DESCENT OF JOHN'S HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

The previous midrashim, Mekilta and J. Berakot 35a, provided some parallel cosmographies and hierotopies to Revelation 21:2-3, 10. All three described a heavenly counterpart to the earthly holy sites. John described a vision of a heavenly Jerusalem in two places. Moreover, an examination of the proof text of Exodus 15:17 may illuminate the midrashic development of the heavenly Jerusalem descending to earth such as was found in Revelation.

In contrast to the previous two midrashim, instead of a heavenly throne, holy of holies, or sanctuary, John saw a heavenly Jerusalem, a city, a bride, and a tabernacle. Revelation 21:2-3 said:

καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καινὴν

And the city—the holy Jerusalem—is new!

εἶδον καταβαίνουσιν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ,

Look! Coming down out of the heaven away from the God,

ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς.

Prepared as a bride adorned beautifully for her husband.

καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου λεγούσης·

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying,

Ἴδοὺ ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων,

“Look! The tabernacle of God is with the people,

καὶ σκηνώσει μετ’ αὐτῶν,

And he will tabernacle with them,

καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται,

And they will be his people,

καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ’ αὐτῶν ἔσται

And he will be their God.”

The city was descending out of heaven so God could “tabernacle” with his people on earth. John’s designation of “city” rather than temple was perhaps not as significant a difference as would first be assumed since, for example, the earthly city of Jerusalem absorbed the holiness of the temple and holy of holies. Moreover, the double usage of the verb and noun “tabernacle,” signified the temple.<sup>170</sup> The main difference between a tabernacle and the temple was its nomadic ability.<sup>171</sup> The tabernacle, like the temple, had within it the holy of holies, which housed God’s presence. The tabernacle also had the cultic sacrifices, the priests, the Levites, and everything else the later temple would have.

John’s first vision did not specify where the heavenly tabernacle-city would land, but in John’s second vision there was a clue:

καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν,

And he carried me on the wind onto a great and high hill

καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλήμ

And he showed me the holy city Jerusalem

καταβαίνουσιν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ,

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<sup>170</sup> In many English translations, this nuance was lost. Often the less literal translation of the verb “dwell” instead of the verb “tabernacle” was used.

<sup>171</sup> John says the new Jerusalem does not have a temple even though he calls it a tabernacle, effectively, a nomadic temple. Some argue that the city itself is a type of temple, or holy of holies since it is cubiform and houses God. John’s explanation for a lack of a temple is that God himself is the temple.

Descending from heaven away from God.

ἔχουσαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ· (SBL Rev 21:10-11a)

having the Glory of God (Rev 21:10-11a)

Since John was placed by the angel on a high hill from where he could see Jerusalem's descent, this high hill was likely important.<sup>172</sup> John did not say which hill it was, but if he shared in the midrashic traditions, it would be mount Zion.

In Exodus 15:17, the location of the sanctuary was on God's "inherited mountain." John's vantage point on a high hill may have been alluding to the same mountain of Exodus 15:17. If so, John carried over the understanding of the previously discussed midrashim that this sanctuary-city was located קנג "opposite," meaning directly above, the earthly holy mountain.<sup>173</sup>

In contrast to the other midrashic readings of Exodus 15:17, John saw the heavenly Jerusalem not immobile in heaven but translocating to earth. Moreover, Exodus 15:17 may have been the source of this mobility. The proof text of Exodus 15:17 was clearly tied to a heavenly sanctuary in midrashic tradition. It

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<sup>172</sup> Alternatively, "Some commentators have identified the mountain as the mythical mountain-at-the-edge-of-the-world.[5] Mythical or not, it is real enough in the text and parses out textual space. The mountain reveals space set over against the universalized New Jerusalem. We cannot imagine a totalized cosmic city when there exists a wild untamed mountain large enough to dwarf it and provide a place from which it can be viewed as in miniature" (Thomas W. Martin, "The City as Salvific Space: Heterotopic Place and Environmental Ethics in the New Jerusalem," *SBL Forum* 7, no. 2 (2009): <https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=801>).

<sup>173</sup> The vantage point of John is on a "great and high hill"; rather than being underneath a descending Jerusalem. Because of midrashic similarities, though, it is likely John envisioned the new Jerusalem descending from its heavenly spot directly down to mount Zion. Maybe John was on a hill surrounding mount Zion such as the mount of Olives. However, since the city was so large, larger than the land of Israel, John could be on a far away mountain and still have a clear vantage point..

also stands to reason that John's portrayal of its mobility may have been a midrashic reading of Exodus 15:17.

This hypothetical midrashic interpretation of Exodus 15:17 hinges on a single letter: a *vav*. In context, this *vav* was a singular objective suffix and referred to the people of Israel,

תבאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך מכון לשבתך פעלת יי מקדש אדני כוננו ידיך

You will bring *it* [the people] and plant *it* [the people] on your inherited mountain, a place for your dwelling which you made, O Lord, a sanctuary you formed with your hands (Ex 15:17).

This verse described the return of the people to the land—the land of Jerusalem in particular. The people would dwell in the same place where God dwelled—his sanctuary on his holy mountain. This passage described God as forming the sanctuary with his hands. This idea of a God-built sanctuary implied that the earthly human-built sanctuaries were not the ones this verse was talking about.

Moreover, taken out of context, instead of God bringing “it”—referencing the people of Israel—to his inherited mountain, God could bring “it”—referencing the sanctuary—to his inherited mountain. In this scenario, Exodus 15:17 could read,

תבאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך מכון לשבתך פעלת יי מקדש אדני כוננו ידיך

You will bring “it” and plant “it” on your inherited mountain, a place for your dwelling which you made, O Lord, a *sanctuary* you formed with your hands.

As in the previous midrashim, this hypothetical interpretation uses the midrashic principle of *ribbû* to identify “a place for your dwelling” as God’s earthly residence and “a sanctuary you formed with your hands” as God’s heavenly residence; however, unlike the midrashic readings, the two places would no longer be “opposite,” *קנג*, because God’s heavenly sanctuary would become his only sanctuary.

In the book of Revelation, God would bring the heavenly sanctuary-city he formed with his hands and plant it on Mount Zion. In *y. Berakhot* 35a, praying toward the holy of holies below was the same as praying toward the holy of holies above. In Revelation, because there was only one holy of holies—God’s throne in the center of the new Jerusalem—there was also only one direction to pray. Unlike *y. Berakhot* 35a, in John’s vision, what was divided in creation would be united in the new creation; the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem will be one and the same.

## 2<sup>ND</sup> TRADITION: ARAKIM

The following midrashic tradition from Arakim helps to explain the logic in the unification of the two Jerusalems.<sup>174</sup> There were three main sections to this midrash: origin, temple cult, and restoration. In the origin section, God gave birth to the two temples on the foundation stone. In the temple cult section, the

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<sup>174</sup> Arakim was an Aramaic word for “lands” (Jastrow, s.v. “arakim.”) and was otherwise known as “In Wisdom the Lord Founded the Land.” (Cf. Jeremiah 10:11). Thus, Arakim was named for its opening verse from Proverbs 3:19: “In Wisdom the Lord Founded the Land.”



slaughter of the innocents on earth manifested as pure offerings in heaven. The third section promised a future restoration of both cities. This tradition, like the previous one, included a description of the location of the two sanctuaries but it also described more details of their interrelationship.

Arakim began with Proverbs 3:19, describing God's creation of the world with "Wisdom":

ה' בחכמה יסד ארץ

In wisdom Adonai founded the land,

כונן שמים בתבונה

He established heaven with understanding.

"Wisdom" was described elsewhere as God's companion at the time of creation, his first creation. Wisdom was alternately associated with Torah, the Word, or the Messiah.<sup>175</sup> In Proverbs, "Wisdom" was personified as a woman.<sup>176</sup> Moreover, Arakim interpreted the above passage from Proverbs as God himself (or herself) as the woman "Wisdom."

This passage continued by describing the creation process as similar to a woman giving birth. God's birthing room was "the place of the sanctuary," i.e., the heavenly Jerusalem. On that spot he first gave birth to the stone of foundation,

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<sup>175</sup> For "the Word" see the Gospel of John 1:1. For Torah, see the final section of this chapter on the primordial elements. See also Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004, especially sections 2 and 3.

<sup>176</sup> I.e., Proverbs 8:1

'*even šətiyyâ*, and on that stone he created the sanctuary below and the sanctuary above:

מכאן שהקב"ה ברא את עולמו כילוד אשה

From here [we derive] that the Holy One blessed be he created the world like a woman giving birth,

מתחיל מטבורו ומותח לכאן ולכאן, כך ברא הקב"ה כל העולם כולו

beginning from his naval and spreading out to here and there; thus, he created all the world in its entirety.

התחיל ממקום בית המקדש והומתח ממנו כל העולם לכאן ולכאן

He began from the place of the sanctuary and proceeded from it all the world to here and to there.

לפיכך נקראת אבן שתייה שממנה הושתת כל העולם

Therefore, it was called stone of foundation, which from out of her was founded all the world

ובה ברא הקב"ה בית המקדש של מטה ובית המקדש מלמעלה

And on her the Holy One created the sanctuary below and the sanctuary above,

זה לעומת זה

This corresponding to that.

שנאמר מכון לשבתך פעלת ה' מקדש ה' כוננו ידיך

As it is said, "A place for your dwelling you made, Lord, a sanctuary of the Lord your hands formed" (Exodus 15:17)

בית המקדש ומכון לשבתך זה כנגד זה

“A sanctuary” and “a place for your dwelling,” this corresponds to that.<sup>177</sup>

This midrash surprisingly seemed to posit that God himself birthed the two sanctuaries as twins. It described them as intertwined at the beginning of creation in their cosmogony as well as being intertwined in their source location: the foundation stone.

The twin births of the two temples not only connected them in their births and locations but in their continued states of being. Arakim continued with a current depiction of the state of affairs in heaven. It poignantly described the effect on heaven of the destruction of the sanctuary on earth:

בזמן שבית המקדש קיים היה כהן גדול מקריב ומקטיר בבית־המקדש של־מטה

In the time when the sanctuary stood a high priest used to sacrifice and offer incense in the sanctuary below

ומיכאל כנגדו עומד ומקריב בבית־המקדש של־מעלה

and Michael opposite him stood and would sacrifice in the sanctuary above.

וכשחרב בית־המקדש של־מטה אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למיכאל:

And when the sanctuary below was in ruins, the Holy One blessed be He said to Michael,

מיכאל! הואיל והחרבתי את ביתי ושרפתי את היכלי ושוממתי מקדשי והרסתי את־מזבחי

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<sup>177</sup> Midrash Arakim or “The Lord with Wisdom founded the Land.” This first portion is taken from “Arakim” at sefaria.org. [https://www.sefaria.org/Otzar\\_Midrashim%2C\\_The\\_Order\\_of\\_Arakim%2C\\_Introduction?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Otzar_Midrashim%2C_The_Order_of_Arakim%2C_Introduction?lang=bi)

“Michael! Since I destroyed my house and I burned my temple and laid waste my sanctuary and tore down my altar,

אל תקריב לפני לא בדמות שור ולא בדמות כבש ולא בדמות שעיר

do not sacrifice before me neither with the likeness of a head of cattle nor with the likeness of a sheep nor with the likeness of a goat.”

אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם! בניך-- מהתהא עליהם

He said before him, “Master of the world! Your children—what will happen to them?”

אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא

The Holy One blessed be he said to him,

הקרב תקרב לפני זכונותיהם ותפלותיהם

“You will surely sacrifice before me their pure ones and their prayers

ונשמתן של צדיקים שהן גנוזין תחת כסא הכבוד

and the souls of their righteous ones—they will be a treasure under the throne of glory

ותינוקות של בית־רבן ובהן אני מכפר עוונותיהם של ישראל

and infants of the great house, and with them I will atone for the sins of Israel”<sup>178</sup>

Strikingly, this midrash described God as taking responsibility for the destruction of the earthly temple: ““Michael! Since I destroyed my house and I burned my

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<sup>178</sup> Yehuda Even-Shmuel and Midrashei Geula, פְּרָקֵי הָאֲפֻקְלִיפִי, מדרשי גאולה, היהודית מחתימת התלמוד הבבלי ועד ראשית האלף הששי [Chapter of Jewish Apocalypse Dating from the Completion of the Babylonian Talmud until the Sixth Millenium], (Jerusalem: Musad Bialik, 2017), 11.

temple and laid waste my sanctuary and tore down my altar....” Moreover, like a mother, God birthed the temples into being and continued to be responsible for their continued existence.<sup>179</sup> This passage continued with “do not sacrifice before me neither with the likeness of a head of cattle nor with the likeness of a sheep nor with the likeness of a goat.”

Thus, what occurred on earth affected what occurred in heaven. There was a reciprocal relationship between the earthly and heavenly cults. God commanded Michael not to offer any more animal sacrifices before him either because animal sacrifices could no longer be offered in the Jerusalem temple.

However, sacrifices were still required. Thus, Michael asked, “Your children--what will happen to them [without sacrifice]?” God answered Michael,

You will surely sacrifice before me their pure ones and their prayers and the souls of their righteous ones—they will be a treasure under the Throne of Glory and infants of the Great House, and with them I will atone for the sins of Israel!

Thus, the heavenly cult changed alongside the earthly cult and became intertwined. Neither the heavenly temple nor the earthly temple continued to

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<sup>179</sup> Cf. 2 Baruch 7:1, “And after these things I heard this angel saying to the angels who held the torches: Now destroy the walls and overthrow them to their foundations, so that the enemies do not boast and say, ‘We have overthrown the wall of Zion and we have burnt down the place of the mighty God.’” 2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch, translated by AFJ Klijn, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, volume 1, edited by James H. Charlesworth, Garden City, New York; Doubleday & Co., 1983, 623. This passage like the above midrash lays the blame for Jerusalem’s destruction on heavenly beings.

accept animal sacrifices. Instead, the human sacrifices on earth were transposed to heaven and accepted as offerings in the heavenly temple.

The alteration of the heavenly cult may have been connected to the tragedy of the destruction of the second temple. The “souls of the righteous” may have been referring to those slain during the destruction of the temple in 70 CE and its surrounding battles.<sup>180</sup> The “pure ones” may have been referencing the babies and children who were slaughtered. Thus, this passage helped redeem the loss and tragedy since those who died were accepted as heavenly offerings which brought atonement for the people of Israel.<sup>181</sup>

This passage of Arakim continued, discussing the intertwining emotional flux of the two Jerusalems, in their alternating states of destruction and restoration:

שבעוד שהיתה שמחה זו מלמטה היתה שמחה זו מלמעלה,

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<sup>180</sup> There were other ideas of a transformed sacrificial cult. For example, in Leviticus Rabba was the erasure of *yēšer hāra'* (the evil inclination), sin, and sacrifice. According to Raphael Patai's reading, “All sacrifices and prayer will be abolished in the Messianic days, except for thanks offerings and thanksgiving prayers, because, as Isaac Judah Abrabanel (1437-1508) explained, in those happy days there would be no Evil Inclination and thus no sin” (Rafael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 247-248).

<sup>181</sup> Another midrash which reflected the midrashic tradition of a heavenly cult was found in Hagiga 12. This midrash described levels of heaven, seven in all. Jerusalem and the temple were located in the fourth. heaven, called *zəbūl*. Michael still offered the “souls of the righteous”; however, in this midrash it was as though Michael had always offered the souls of the righteous, never animals.

זבול--שבו ירושלם ובית-המקדש ומזבח בנוי

*Zəbūl*—in it is Jerusalem and the sanctuary and the built altar

ומיכאל השר הגדול עומד ומקריב עליו קרבן

and Michael the great prince stands and offers upon it sacrifice.

מה מקריב ... נשמתם של צדיקים

What does he offer? ... the souls of the righteous.

חגיגה י"ב: ובעין-יעקב שם

Hagigah 12b, “And the Well of Jacob is There.”

When there was still joy here below, there was joy here above;

עכשיו שמתאבלה זו מלמטה מתאבלה זו מלמעלה,

now that she mourns here below, she mourns here above,

וכיון שנבנית זו מלמטה נבנית זו מלמעלה

and it is established that when she is built here below, she is built here above,---

שנאמר הנבי שם את שבות אהלי יעקב ומשכנותיו ארחם ונבמתה עיר על-תילה וארמון על-משפטו ישב

For it is said, “Look, I am returning the captives of the tents of Jacob, and

I will have compassion upon his tabernacles, the city will be built upon

her *tel*, and a fortress upon its place of judgment will reside” [Jeremiah

30:18].

אהל לא נאמר אלא אהלי אחד למטה ואחד למעלה

It does not say tent but tents: one below and one above,

ומשקנו לא נאמר אלא משכנותיו משקן למעלה ומשקן למטה

and it does not say his tabernacle [*mīškan*] but his tabernacles

[*mīškənoṯ*]: a tabernacle above and a tabernacle below,

ונבנתה עיר על תלה זו ירושלים של-מטה

and “a city will be built upon her *tel*”—this is Jerusalem below,

וארמון על משפטו ישב זו ירושלים של-מעלה

“and a fortress upon its place of judgment will reside”—this is Jerusalem

which is above.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup>Yehuda Even-Shmuel, *Midrashei Geula*, פרקי האפוקליפסי היהודית, יהודה אבו־שמואל, מדרשי גאולה, פרקי האפוקליפסי היהודית, מחתימת התלמוד הבבלי ועד ראשית האלף הששי

[*Chapter of Jewish Apocalypse Dating from the Completion of the Babylonian Talmud until the Sixth Millenium*] (Jerusalem: Musad Bialik, 2017), 12. Midrash Arakim in the collection: Otzar

This passage demonstrated belief in a deep connection between the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries.<sup>183</sup> “She” likely referred to the feminine word city, *‘ir*, or the feminine word, Jerusalem, *yərūšalaim*, rather than the masculine words temple, *hēkal*, house, *bayit*, or sanctuary, *miqdaš*. This passage said that as “she” is rebuilt below, and “she” would also be rebuilt above. Thus, the whole city was rebuilt, not just the temple, both in heaven and on earth.

The proof text for these declarations is in Jeremiah 30:18:

שנאמר הנני שב את שבות אהלי יעקב ומשכנותיו ארחם ונבמתה עיר על-תילה וארמון על-משפטו ישב

For it is said, “Look, I am returning the captives of the tents of Jacob, and I will have compassion upon his tabernacles, the city will be built upon her *tel*, and a fortress upon its place of judgment will reside”

Since Jeremiah spoke of “sanctuaries” in the plural, the interpretation in Arakim was that there were two sanctuaries. Arakim identified one as the heavenly sanctuary and one as the earthly sanctuary. Likewise, since Jeremiah spoke twice about the rebuilding of the city—once as “a city will be rebuilt upon her *tel*” and once as “a fortress upon its place of judgment will reside”—Arakim concluded that there must have been two cities since, according to the midrashic principle of *ribbui*, God did not repeat himself. Thus, although in Jeremiah the two

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Midrashim (400-1200 CE). The version of this passage in Even-Shmuel’s collection was slightly different than the version on Sefaria, most notably, the Sefaria version did not have the final lines concerning Jerusalem below and above.

<sup>183</sup> Compare the intertwining of the status of the people and the holy place in Maccabees: “But the Lord did not choose the nation for the sake of the holy place, but the place for the sake of the nation. Therefore the place itself shared in the misfortunes that befell the nation and afterwards participated in its benefits” (2 Macc. 5:19-20a).



iterations were in parallel, Arakim argued that they were not referring to the exact same thing, but to two variations of the temple and two variations of Jerusalem.

In Arakim, the two temples began in the same place, birthed by God on the stone of foundation. The state of temples remained intertwined in their sacrifices and emotions. And although Arakim laid the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem at the feet of God, Arakim also said that God would restore Jerusalem.

The origin story of the two sanctuaries with their continued interrelationship is similar to the idea in quantum physics that two particles could become entangled. Even when they were (carefully) separated, these two quantum particles continued to share the same wavelength. Moreover, what happened to one happened to the other; this was called “spooky action at a distance.” Likewise, according to Arakim, what happened in one Jerusalem happened in the other. Each experienced the full spectrum of events and emotion of the other such as mourning, joy, future restoration, etc.

#### ARAKIM AND REVELATION: ENTANGLED SANCTUARIES

Each of the three parts of Arakim help illuminate John’s new Jerusalem: the shared foundation stone helps to explain the centrality of location for John’s new Jerusalem on the holy hill; the innocents being sacrificed came through in John’s heavenly martyrs; the future restoration of both cities become the future restoration of one city; the structure of the heavenly city descended to restore the earthly city.

In 'Arakim, the sanctuaries were born on the rock of foundation.

Somehow, one ended up on earth and one ended up in heaven. Strangely, they both seem to be on a singular rock of foundation. In Revelation, these two are umbilically connected since John sees the new Jerusalem in the sky. Likely, this view from the high hill is of Jerusalem directly above the earthly (destroyed) Jerusalem.

The symbol of the slaughtered Lamb may also stand for Jesus as God's martyr transformed into a heavenly offering. John was likely alluding to and interpreting passages from Isaiah 53. For example, Isaiah 53:7 says, כִּשְׂהָ לַטֹּבַח יוֹבֵל, "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter." Thus, John has an image of a slaughtered lamb. This lamb may have stood in for the temple sacrifice. For example, Isaiah 53:8b says, מִפְּשַׁע עַמִּי נִגַּע לֹם, "For the transgression of my people, he was stricken." Similarly, Isaiah 53:11b says, וְעֹנֵתָם הוּא יִסְבֵּל, "He will bear their iniquities." Thus, in addition to the martyrs in white in the new Jerusalem, the slaughtered lamb may have stood for a type of super martyr, even a messiah martyr.

The symbolism, however, between the people in the new Jerusalem and the Lamb had a lot of crossover. The people were called "the son" while unexpectedly, the Lamb was not called the son; however, as in Arakim, the people, including the Lamb, were martyrs and offerings. There was no continuing offerings, though, since God's wipes away suffering and death: "And there will no longer be death" (Rev 21:4). It seems, there was no longer death in the new Jerusalem, not just for people but for animals as well.

Both Arakim and Revelation referred to God's holy place in nomadic terms. In Arakim, the proof text called the sanctuaries "tents." In Revelation, the temple-city was called a "tabernacle" which was otherwise known as the "tent of meeting." In 'Arakim, God gave birth to twin sanctuaries while in Revelation, God gave birth to a singular new Jerusalem.

John's vision showed a development of Arakim's cosmography. In 'Arakim, the sanctuaries were located both in heaven and on earth, while in Revelation, the tabernacle-city moved from heaven to earth.<sup>184</sup>

### 3<sup>RD</sup> TRADITION. ESCHATOLOGY OF THE TWO JERUSALEMS: B. TA'ANIT 5A

In the midrash b. Ta'anit 5a, God was unmoored from Jerusalem. In contrast, the heavenly Jerusalem was anchored to the earthly Jerusalem. God was not anchored to either—at least not permanently because the Jerusalem above paralleled the Jerusalem below. Thus, when the people went into exile from Jerusalem, God also went into *galut* from Jerusalem above. Conversely, in the *geulah* when the people were restored to Jerusalem, God was also restored to the heavenly Jerusalem.

B. Ta'anit 5 based the parallel *galut* and *geulah* on an enigmatic passage from Hosea.

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<sup>184</sup> John's vision may be a marriage of the two Jerusalems. Jerusalem may be descending to her groom, Zion. Moshe Idel points out the kabbalistic interpretation of Zion as male and Jerusalem as female in both an eschatological and primordial coupling. Moshe Idel, "On Jerusalem as a Feminine and Sexual Hypostasis: From Late Antiquity Sources to Medieval Kabbalah" Memory, Humanity, and Meaning; Selected Essays in Honor of Andrei Pleşu's Sixtieth Anniversary. Edited by Mihail Neamţu and Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban. [Cluj:] Zeta Books, 2009, pp. 65-110, 13. [https://www.zefat.ac.il/media/3505/on\\_jerusalem\\_as\\_a\\_feminine\\_and\\_sexual\\_h.pdf](https://www.zefat.ac.il/media/3505/on_jerusalem_as_a_feminine_and_sexual_h.pdf) p. 13.

וא"ל רב נחמן לר' יצחק מאי דכתיב

Rav Nachman said to Rav Itsak, "What does it mean where it is written,

בקרבר קדש ולא אבוא בעיר

In your midst is holiness, and I will not come into the city?"

משום דבקרבר קדוש לא אבוא בעיר

"Because in your midst it is sacred, I will not come into the city" [Hosea 11:9].<sup>185</sup>

א"ל הכי א"ר יוחנן

He said to him that Rav Yohanan said,

לא אבוא ברושלם של מעלה עד שאבוא לירושלם של מטה

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<sup>185</sup> The midrashist of b. Ta'anit 5 took this verse from Hosea out of context; however, even in context, it was difficult to understand. Hosea 11:9 literally said, "בקרבר קדש ולא אבוא בעיר"; "In your midst is holiness, and I will not come into the city."

The context was that God changed his mind about destroying Ephraim and Jerusalem. Thus, if God did not come into "the city" of Jerusalem, it meant that God did not destroy Jerusalem. There were two biblical-critical ways of arriving at this interpretation: through interpreting the *bet* as the *bet* of antagonism or by interpreting *bə'ir* as "anger" or by interpreting. The *bet* of antagonism signified "against", i.e., come "against" the city to destroy it. The explanation, then, for why God would not come "against" the city to destroy it was because of its intrinsic holiness. As a verb בעיר, translated as to "burn, be "angry, or have fury." Thus, the JPS translation: "The Holy One is in your midst: I will not come in fury." They also critically emend the text to read 'abā'er, אבער, "I will not be angry." Biblical critics came to this explanation through contextual clues:

לא אעשה חרון אפי

I will not allow my anger to burn;

לא אשוב לשחת אפרים כי אל אנכי ולא-איש

I will not return to destroy Ephraim, because I am God and not a man (Hos 11:9).

This interpretation of בעיר as to "be angry" was probably also known by the midrashists because, even though they did not interpret the word as "angry" in this midrash, the subsequent midrashim spoke on other passages that concerned the word "to burn" or "to be angry," בער. Thus, the midrashists were aware of contextual readings, but they chose instead a polysemic *ribbū* intertextual reading.

“I will not come into Jerusalem above until I come to Jerusalem below.”<sup>186</sup>

ומי איכא ירושלים למעלה

And how is there a Jerusalem above?

אין דכתיב ירושלם הבנויה כעיר שחוברה לה יחדיו

Is it not written, “Jerusalem built up like a city unified together” [Ps. 122:3] (B. Ta’anit 5)<sup>187</sup>.

The basis for God’s refusal to enter the city was its intrinsic holiness.<sup>188</sup>

T B. Ta’anit 5 then argued for the existence of Jerusalem above using the midrashic principle of *ḥārīzā*:

אין דכתיב ירושלם הבנויה כעיר שחוברה לה יחדיו

Is it not written, “Jerusalem built up like a city unified together (Ps 122:3)?” (B. Ta’anit 5)<sup>189</sup>

Thus, “city” in Hosea 11:9 became two cities through *ḥārīzā* to Psalm 122:3.

Similarly to the previous midrash Arakim, the two Jerusalems were both created/built together and proceeded to be cosmically entangled with each

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<sup>186</sup> Yehuda Even-Shmuel and Midrashim of Redemption יהודה אבו־שמואל, מדרשי גאולה, פְּרָקִי האפוקליפסי היהודית מחתימת התלמוד הבבלי ועד ראשית האלף הששי

[portions of Jewish apocalypse from the closure of the Babylonian Talmud, and up to the beginning of the sixth millenium] (Jerusalem: Musad Bialik, 2017), 12 (partial text)

<sup>187</sup> Babylonian Talmud, n.d. William Davidson; online edition: *Koren Talmud Bavli*: <https://www.sefaria.org/Taanit.5a?lang=bi>

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Rashi and Ramban on Genesis 14. Both believed that the sanctity of Jerusalem predated the building of the temple by David and Solomon and even predated the binding of Isaac. In Gen 14, the problem was Abram worshipping another god: El Elyon with the priest Malkitzedek. Ramban and Rashi solved this problem by sanctifying Shalem (early Jerusalem) as God’s city.

<sup>189</sup> William Davidson, *Koren Talmud Bavli*: <https://www.sefaria.org/Taanit.5a?lang=bi>

other.<sup>190</sup> In Revelation, this entanglement goes even farther: the two cities become one “city unified together.”, the heavenly descends onto the location of the earthly city.

Since this midrash interpreted Hosea 11:9, ולא אבוא בעיר, as meaning “I will not enter Jerusalem above until I enter Jerusalem below,” it implied the destruction and restoration of the earthly Jerusalem.<sup>191</sup> Thus, according to b. Ta’anit 5, God went into exile from the heavenly Jerusalem while his people were in exile from the earthly Jerusalem. God would neither enter the Jerusalem above nor the Jerusalem below until Jerusalem’s restoration.<sup>192</sup>

#### JOHN AND TA’ANIT 5

John’s vision of the new Jerusalem shared six characteristics of the heavenly sanctuary in b. Ta’anit 5a: 1, Jerusalem was holy; 2, Jerusalem existed

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<sup>190</sup> The Septuagint translation added an explanation for this interpretation of twin cities. Instead of לה שחברה לה, “unified to her,” the Septuagint had the Greek equivalent of לה שחברה, “her (female) companion.” The loss of the *vav* made the passive verb (“unified”) into a noun (“her companion”). In other words, there was a sister-city to the earthly Jerusalem: ירושלם הבנויה כעיר “Jerusalem was built up like her companion [city] together.” This was similar to the phrase “united as one man” כאיש אחד חברים (Judges 20:11). This coincided with the midrashic interpretation of there being two cities (one above and one below) that were unified. Cf. also Sefer Eliahu, BHM 3:67, “Elijah said, ‘I see a beautiful and great city descend from heaven, built up, as it is written, “Jerusalem that art builded as a city that is compact together.””

<sup>191</sup> One translation interpreted this passage as: “I shall not enter Jerusalem above, in heaven, until I enter Jerusalem on earth down below” as “at the time of the redemption, when it will be sacred in your midst.” William Davidson Talmud, Koren Talmud Bavli, <https://www.sefaria.org/Taanit.5a?lang=bi>

<sup>192</sup> Several midrashim included the idea that God’s *šəḥīnā* or presence went into exile with them, i.e., Megilla 29a:4 עמהן גלו למצרים שכינה עמהן, and Mekilta 12:40:1b: “Whenever Israel is enslaved, the *Shekhinah* [God’s immediate Presence in the world], as it were, is enslaved with them” [Arthur Herzberg, *Judaism*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), cited as Mekhilta, Pisha 14, 210.]

in heaven; 3, Jerusalem was “built up like a city unified together”; 4, Jerusalem was restored on earth; 5, God’s presence was tied to a restored Jerusalem; and 6, God was separated from Jerusalem.

First of all both Jerusalems were holy. No one “unclean” could enter John’s new Jerusalem (Rev 21:27). Jerusalem being holy was not assumed elsewhere. For example, in Ezekiel, Jerusalem was not holy.

Secondly, both Jerusalems existed in heaven since John saw Jerusalem descending from heaven.

Thirdly, both Jerusalems were “built up like a city unified together.” While in B Ta’anit 5, the two Jerusalems were “built up together” separately, John’s heavenly Jerusalem descended and superimposed itself on the earthly space of Jerusalem. Thus, the two Jerusalems “were built up together” together!

Fourthly, both Jerusalems were restored on earth—albeit John’s restored earthly Jerusalem was the heavenly Jerusalem while b. Ta’anit had two restored Jerusalems.

Fifthly, God’s presence was tied to the restored Jerusalem(s). In both, God entered “Jerusalem above” when he entered “Jerusalem below”—albeit, again for John, they were the same.

Sixthly, God was separated from both heavenly Jerusalems. John described the new Jerusalem as descending from heaven “away from God.” Thus, “away from God” meant God was separated (or in exile) for a moment from the descending Jerusalem. He then came “into Jerusalem above” when he came “to Jerusalem below.”

In both Revelation and b. Ta'anit 5, "On earth as it is in heaven," became "in heaven as it is on earth."<sup>193</sup>

#### 4<sup>TH</sup> MIDRASHIC TRADITION. THE PRIMORDIAL ELEMENTS: MIDRASH TEHILLIM 90:2 AND MIDRASH TEHILLIM 93:2

The final midrashic tradition to be discussed is different than the others. While the other three traditions focused on space, this one focused on time. It answered the question, what were the elements that existed in primordial time? Primordial elements were important to John's and other midrashic visions of the new Jerusalem because end-time mythology often resembled primordial mythology; both ends of time were spaces outside of mundane (historical) time. Thus, midrashic traditions concerning Jerusalem as a primordial element were relevant for Jerusalem as an eschatological player.

Two especially detailed midrashic traditions of primordial elements were Midrash Tehillim 90:2 and Midrash Tehillim 93:2.<sup>194</sup> Both came from Shocher Tov, the first from the S. Buber edition on Psalm 90:2; the second from the Narbone edition on Psalm 93:2.

They each described seven primordial elements. The chart below placed the two versions of the midrashic tradition of primordial elements side by side with the second midrash re-ordered to facilitate comparison to the first one.

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<sup>193</sup> Cf. "Introduction: 'In Heaven as It Is on Earth'" by Ra'anan S. Boustán and Annette Yoshiko Reed in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities*, Boustán and Reed, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1-15.

<sup>194</sup> Some of the other midrashim on primordial elements: Tanchuma Buber, Nasso 19:1; b. Nedarim 39b; Midrash Lekah Tov, Gen 3:24:8; B. Rabba 1:4; Ein Yaakov Nedarim 4:6; Pes. 54a:9



Midrash Tehillim 90:2 (יב), S. Buber edition<sup>195</sup> (original order)

Midrash Tehillim 93:2, Narbone edition<sup>196</sup> (reordered)

<p>אלפים שנה לעולם שבעה דברים קדמו התורה וכסא־כבוד וגן־עדן וגיהנום ותשובה ובת־המקדש של־מעלה ושם־משיח</p> <p>Seven elements<sup>197</sup> preceded the world (by) two thousand years: The Torah, the Throne of Glory, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, Repentance, the sanctuary above, and the name of the Messiah.</p>	<p>נכון כסאך מאז. זה אחד משבעה דברים שעלה במחשבה – ואלו הן בריאתו של עולם קודם</p> <p>“Your throne is established from then....” This is one of the seven elements which arose in thought before his creation of the world and these are them:</p>
<p>התורה כתובה באש שחורה על אש לבנה ומנחת על ברכיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא</p> <p>[1] The Torah is written with black fire upon white fire and rests upon the knees of the Holy One blessed be He,</p>	<p>והתורה שנאמר ה' קנני ראשית דרכו</p> <p>[3] And the Torah, as it is said, “The Lord acquired me [at] the beginning of his way” (Prov. 8:22).</p>
<p>והקדוש ברוך הוא יושב על כסא־הכבוד</p> <p>[2] And the Holy One blessed be He sits upon the Throne of Glory...</p>	<p>כסא הכבוד שנאמר נכון כסאך מאז</p> <p>[1] Throne of Glory—as it is said, “Truly your throne is from old.” (Ps 93:2)</p>
<p>גן־עדן מימינו</p> <p>[3] The garden of Eden is on his right</p>	<p>[no Gan Eden]</p>
<p>וגהנם משמאלו</p> <p>[4] and Gehenna on his left,</p>	<p>גיהנם שנאמר כי ערוך מאתמול תפתה</p>

<sup>195</sup> יהודה אבו־שמואל, מדרשי גאולה, פְּרָקִי האפוקליפסי היהודית מחתימת התלמוד הבבלי ועד ראשית האלף השני

Yehuda Even-Shmuel, *Midrashei Geula, Chapter of Jewish Apocalypse Dating from the Completion of the Babylonian Talmud until the Sixth Millenium* (Jerusalem: Musad Bialik, 2017), 12. This text was also in Shocher Tov, [מזמור צ'יב]. It began with Psalm 90:2, תשב אנוש עד דכא. This midrash could be found as “Midrasch Fragmente” identified as Psalm 90, in בית המדרש: בו *Bet Ha-midrash*, Dr. Ad. Jellinek, Brüder Winter vorm., ed., (Herzfeld & Bauer., 1873), p. 164. (available in Hebrew only at books.google.com).

<sup>196</sup> “Midrash Tehilim: Composed in Narbone,” *Sefaria*, [https://www.sefaria.org/Midrash\\_Tehillim?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Midrash_Tehillim?lang=bi).

<sup>197</sup> דברים *dēbarim*. *Dabar* was usually translated as “word,” “thing,” or “matter.” In this context, “element” was a more appropriate translation.

Midrash Tehillim 90:2 (יב), S. Buber edition<sup>195</sup> (original order)

Midrash Tehillim 93:2, Narbone edition<sup>196</sup> (reordered)

	[7] Gehenna, as it is said, “Because Taphteh was prepared from yesterday” (Is. 30:33).
ובת־המקדש מתקן לפניו [5] And the sanctuary is directly before him,	בית המקדש שנאמר כסא כבוד מרום מראשון. [5] The sanctuary, as it is said, “The throne of glory above is from the beginning” (Jer. 17:12).
ושם משיח חקוק על אבן יקרה על־גבי המזבח [6] And the name of the messiah is inscribed upon a precious stone upon the curves of the altar,	ושמו של מלך המשיח שנאמר לפני שמש ינון שמו. ולמה נקרא שמו ינון שהוא עתיד לינון ישיבי עפר [2] And the name of the king messiah—as it is said, “Before the sun, Yinnon was his name” (Ps. 72:17). And why was his name called Yinnon? Because he in the future would turn those who sleep in the dust into his offspring.
ובת־קול מכרזת שובו בני אדם [7] And a divine voice <sup>198</sup> is proclaiming, “Repent, children of Adam!”	התשובה שנאמר בטרם הרים יולדו...תשב אנוש עד דכא [6] Repentance, as is said, “Before the mountains were born... ‘Repent, human, until [you are] pure” (Ps. 90:2-3).
[no Israel]	וישראל שנאמר זכור עדתך קנית קדם [4] And Israel, as it is said, “Remember your congregation you acquired from old” (Ps.74:2).

These two midrashim overlapped in six out of seven of their primordial elements. The six elements they shared were the sanctuary, the throne of God, the name of the Messiah, the Torah, Gehenna, and repentance. While both have

<sup>198</sup> Literally, “daughter of a voice.” This term, which meant a voice from heaven, was well known in early rabbinic material such as in Tosefta Sotah 13:2: “they received communications from God through the medium of the *bat-qol*.” See also Pikei Avot 6, “Every day a heavenly voice (*bat qol*) goes forth from Mount Horeb.”

Gehenna, only one had Gan Eden. Instead of Gan Eden, Midrash Tehillim 93:2 had Israel.

However, these two primordial elements, Israel and Gan Eden, shared a connection from the proof text for Israel in Midrash Tehillim 93:2:

זכור עדתך קניית קדם

Remember your congregation you acquired from old (Ps 74:2).

The word translated “from old” קדם also translated “from the East,” a description of the garden of Eden:

נִטָּע יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים גֵּן־בְּעֵדֶן מִקְדָּם

The Lord planted Gan Eden from the East

Using *hariza* of the word קדם in these two verses connected them and their context. Thus, the “congregation” (Israel) would tied closely to Gan Eden, i.e. “Remember your congregation (Israel) you acquired from the East (Eden)” (Ps 74:2).

Moreover, the context for the Israel proof text conflated the people and the holy location of Zion which itself was connected to Eden:

זָכַר עֲדֹתֶיךָ קְנִיית קָדָם

Remember your congregation (Israel) which you purchased (from) old (Eden)

גְּאֻלְתָּ שְׁבֵט נַחֲלֹתֶךָ

Which you redeemed, a tribe of your inheritance

הַר־צִיּוֹן זֶהוּ שְׁכֵנֶת בּוֹ

Mount Zion in which you tabernacle.

This proof text conflated all three: the congregation of Israel, Mount Zion, and Eden.<sup>199</sup>

S. BUBER EDITION ON TEHILLIM 90:2

In the first midrash, seven primordial elements made up a sacred heavenly cosmography.<sup>200</sup> These elements illustrated God's celestial abode; with God sitting on his throne, reading a Torah on his lap that was written with black fire on white fire, with Gehenna on his left, the garden of Eden on his right, and the altar and sanctuary in front of him. The altar was decorated with a precious stone on which was written the name of the messiah and God himself (through a diminutive voice) was telling the people to repent. The preamble to this midrash placed this image and its elements on an eternal plane, existing for two thousand years before creation. This ante-hexameron picture was how heaven looked even before the creation of the world.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> In this passage Mount Zion is the place where God "tabernacles." Tabernacle is the verbal form of what later became the word for God's presence: *šekinah*.

<sup>200</sup> This midrash began on p. 155 with a disagreement between Rabbi Yehuda and R' Nahmyah on how many days it took God to create the world. The former says 6; the latter 1. בית המדרש: בו נקהלו לעמוד על נפשם מדרשים קטנים ישנים ומאמרים שונים יקרים *Bet Ha-midrash*, Dr. Ad. Jellinek, Brüder Winter vorm., eds., (Herzfeld & Bauer., 1873.)

<sup>201</sup> Each primordial element was centered around God and the direction he faced. If this orientation was mirrored on earth, God would be sitting on the ark of the covenant as his throne, with the Torah in the ark below him, facing east towards the altar. This parallelism falls apart when trying to locate Gehenna, which was located to the left in heaven but to the right on earth if it was the valley, *gei*, of Hinnom. The location instead was probably based on the association of good with the right, i.e. son of my right hand, and bad with the left, i.e. sinister. A similar association was found in the story of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46). Jesus judged the goats and they went to eternal fire on his left. He rewarded the sheep and they went to their inheritance of eternal life in the kingdom on his right. It may also have been that the valley of Hinnom was located more to the north in the first century since its exact location was disputed. As for the idea that the garden of Eden was located to the right (or south), Silwan was

Thus, in addition to the divergence in the seventh element, the two midrashim also diverged in their idea of how anthropomorphic God was. The first midrash was anthropomorphic and concerned with “cardinal” directions, which were based on the way God was facing, and had the elements surrounding him. The second midrash was transcendent without anthropomorphizing God or the heavenly residence.

#### THE NARBONE EDITION OF TEHILLIM 93:2

“Your throne is established from eternity,” נכון כסאך מאז, was the jumping off point for the second midrash, the Narbone edition of Tehillim 93:2 which led to the question, “What else was established from eternity?” The answer was based on the number seven. Seven as a holy number first occurred in the creation story. Thus, seven items already existed at the creation.<sup>202</sup>

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located to the south of Jerusalem and was an ancient location for royal tombs. Burial places in Jerusalem were associated with the place of resurrection and Paradise. This was also true of the cemetery on the Mount of Olives located to the east. Another possible explanation for the garden of Eden was that the valley of Hinnom (which was also to the right) was transformed into Paradise in the eschaton. For example, Ezekiel described the river of life flowing from God’s throne to the south, down the Kidron Valley, to the Dead Sea, reviving it (Ezekiel 43:1). Instead of the Dead Sea being a location of death, it became a symbol of restoration and resurrection. The desert became a new garden of Eden with a river of life flowing through it—with the tree of life on its banks.

<sup>202</sup> Psalm 93 used the word מאז “from then” to refer to primordial time. The other words and phrases used in the proof texts of this second midrash to denote primordial time were: לפני שמש “before (in time or place) the sun,” ראשית “beginning,” קדם “antiquity; east,” מראשון “from the beginning,” בטרם הרים “before (in time) the mountains,” and מאתמול “from yesterday.” Some of these were easier to explain than others. Those with the same word of creation, “beginning”, connoted the first words of Genesis. “Before the sun” and “before the mountains” point to a time before they were created as well. Israel being established from antiquity, קדם, here meant not only in historical time with the patriarchs but in prehistorical time before the creation. This replaced the garden of Eden from the first midrash. “Yesterday,” מאתמול, was also used to refer to primordial time. In this instance, in Isaiah 30:33, it was a place of judgment for Assyria that was pre-established, before a literal yesterday. Tophet was a place of sacrificing children, south of Jerusalem and the variant, Taphteh, was also a place of burning and of judgment. The midrashist argued that Taphteh was equivalent with Gehenna and was established in primordial

While the first midrash described God anthropomorphically, this second midrash was more abstract. In the first midrash, the Torah was resting on God's knees, seemingly so he could read it. The second just said,

והתורה שנאמר ה' קנני ראשית דרכו

And *the Torah*—as it is said, ‘The Lord established me at the beginning of his way’ (Proverbs 8:22a).

In the context of Proverbs 8:22, “me” referred to “Wisdom.”

The latter half of Proverbs 8:22 called “Wisdom” קדם:

קדם מפעליו מאז

the first of his works of old (Proverbs 8:22b).

“Wisdom” had many connotations in Late Antiquity including its equation with Torah.<sup>203</sup> “Wisdom” or the Torah was God’s first creation, a semi-divine being which helped God with creation.

In addition to the Torah, both midrashim had a “sanctuary above.”<sup>204</sup> Biblical prophetic writings located a divine sanctuary in the eschaton as a rebuilt place. In contrast, the location of the sanctuary for both midrashim was located in transcendent space, already built.

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times. In a similar way that “the day,” *hayyōm*, referred to the future day of the Lord, as well as the world to come, “yesterday” referred to the time before this world.

<sup>203</sup> This equation was also found in Genesis Rabba 1:2 & 5 and Rashi on Genesis 1:1 (*Jewish Study Bible*, second edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014 [2004], 1451n).

<sup>204</sup> In two different Hebrew words that mean “above”: *mārōm* and *šel-mə’ālāh*.

The tradition regarding primordial elements argued that these items were there before the creation of the world. The second midrash created an origin story for the elements, while the first one stated that the elements were primordial but did not explain how they came to be. While this midrashic tradition did not explicitly name the heavenly Jerusalem, elements associated with Jerusalem were named: the throne of glory, the sanctuary above, and the garden of Eden.<sup>205</sup>

This midrashic tradition implied that the primordial elements were eternal, indestructible, and part of God's holy place in heaven, a heaven that would endure forever. While other midrashic traditions united the heavenly and earthly temples and Jerusalems in location or entanglement with each other, this one projected Jerusalem's elements back into primordial time. Another way to look at the primordial elements is that they were more than prototypes for sacred spaces on earth; they were the originals of which all others are manifestations.

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<sup>205</sup> But cf. 2 Baruch 4:2-6: "Or do you think that this is the city of which I said, *On the palms of my hands I have carved you?* It is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with me, that was already prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise. And I showed it to Adam before he sinned. But when he transgressed the commandment, it was taken away from him—as also Paradise. And after these things I showed it to my servant Abraham in the night between the portions of the victims. And again I showed it to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed him the likeness of the tabernacle and all its vessels. Behold, now it is preserved with me—as also Paradise." " 2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch, translated by AFJ Klijn, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, volume 1, edited by James H. Charlesworth, Garden City, New York; Doubleday & Co., 1983, 622.

Cf. also 2 Esdras 10:25-27 where Jerusalem appeared as a woman mourning the loss of her children and then became a shining celestial city.

## COMPARISON TO JOHN'S NEW JERUSALEM

John described the new Jerusalem as having many primordial elements. Two elements were fairly clear: the throne and the 12 tribes of Israel. Five were less clear but still very likely: Eden, Gehenna, the Sanctuary, and the Messiah, and the Torah. One element was probably missing: repentance. Thus, while John did not make a list of 7 elements, he likely had 7 elements.

### 1. TORAH

John did not use the word Torah and he did not describe a Torah on lap of God. John did, however, have a companion for God: the Lamb. The verse that identified the Torah in the midrash above was Proverbs 8:28, "The Lord acquired me at the beginning of his way." This is the verse that was the basis for the anthropomorphization of Wisdom in many Jewish traditions. Thus, the Lamb might be the Torah in John's new Jerusalem.

Two times John described his Jerusalem visions as "words that are faithful and true."

Καὶ ἔειπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ· ἰδοὺ ἔκαινα ποιῶ<sup>1</sup> πάντα καὶ λέγει<sup>τ</sup>· γράψον, ὅτι οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ<sup>τ</sup> εἰσιν. καὶ ἔειπέν μοι· ἔγγοναν

And he that sits on the throne said, Look! I am making all things new. And he said, Write! For these words are faithful and true. And he said unto me, They have come to pass (Rev 21:5-6a).



Καὶ εἶπέν μοι· οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοί, καὶ ὁ κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν προφητῶν ἀπέστειλεν τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει. καὶ ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ταχύ. μακάριος ὁ τηρῶν τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου (NA28 Rev 22:6-7).

And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true.” The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show to his servants the things which must quickly come to pass. Look! I am coming<sup>206</sup> quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book (KJV Rev 22:6-7).

Not only were the spoken words “faithful and true,” but they were written down in a book of prophecy—just as other prophetic books were written. Thus, the larger definition of Torah as the words of God whether in the canon or outside of it may apply here. John’s vision itself may be the Torah.

Perhaps, the closest John’s end-time vision had to the Torah were the books that were opened during the judgment day, particularly the book of life. While the description of the book of life is not in the latter two visions of the new Jerusalem, they were in John’s vision which immediately preceded them.

Καὶ εἶδον **θρόνον** μέγαν λευκὸν καὶ τὸν καθήμενον ἐπ’ αὐτόν, οὗ ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου ἔφυγεν ἡ γῆ καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ τόπος οὐχ εὐρέθη

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<sup>206</sup> ἔρχομαι, I am coming,

αὐτοῖς. καὶ εἶδον τοὺς νεκρούς, <sup>□</sup>τοὺς μεγάλους καὶ τοὺς μικροὺς<sup>ᾠ</sup>,  
ἐστῶτας ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου. καὶ **βιβλία** ἠνοίχθησαν, καὶ ἄλλο βιβλίον  
ἠνοίχθη, ὃ ἐστὶν τῆς ζωῆς, καὶ ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ ἐκ τῶν γεγραμμένων  
ἐν ᾠ τοῖς βιβλίοις<sup>ᾠ</sup> κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν. καὶ ἔδωκεν ἡ θάλασσα τοὺς  
ᾠ νεκροὺς τοὺς ἐν αὐτῇ<sup>ᾠ</sup> καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ἄδης ᾠ ἔδωκεν τοὺς ᾠ νεκροὺς  
τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς<sup>ᾠ</sup>, καὶ ᾠ ἐκρίθησαν ἕκαστος κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ᾠ αὐτῶν. καὶ ὁ  
θάνατος καὶ ὁ ἄδης ἐβλήθησαν εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός. <sup>□</sup> <sup>τ</sup> οὗτος ὁ  
ᾠ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερός<sup>ᾠ</sup> ἐστὶν, ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός<sup>ᾠ</sup>. καὶ εἴ τις οὐχ εὐρέθη ἐν  
ᾠ τῇ βίβλῳ<sup>ᾠ</sup> τῆς ζωῆς γεγραμμένος, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός.  
(Rev. 20: 11-13 NA28)

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face  
the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for  
them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the  
books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of  
life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in  
the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which  
were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them:  
and they were judged every man according to their works. And death  
and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And  
whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake  
of fire (Rev 20:11-13 KJV).

The books or βιβλία were not the Mount Sinai Torah scrolls but they were God's personal scrolls. They were God's own writing. In the particular scroll, the "book of life," those who followed God's Torah were granted eternal life.

The book of life was a transformation of the Torah at mount Sinai to the "world to come":

הַעִידֹתִי בְכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ

I call upon heaven and earth to witness against you:

הַחַיִּים וְהַמּוֹת נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ הַבְּרָכָה וְהַקְּלָלָה

I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing

וּבַחֲרַתְּ בְּחַיִּים לְמַעַן תַּחֲיֶה אֶתְּךָ וְזַרְעֶךָ

choose life, so that you will live, you and your seed.

לְאַהֲבָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁמֹעַ בְּקוֹלוֹ וּלְדַבְּקָה־בּוֹ

To love the Lord thy God, to listen to his voice, and to cleave to him

כִּי הוּא חַיֶּיךָ וְאֶרְךָ יָמֶיךָ

for he is your life, and the length of your days:

לְשִׁבֹת עַל־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר לְתַת לָהֶם

To dwell upon the earth which the Lord swore to give to your fathers: to

Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob (Deut 30:19-20).

“For he is your life, and the length of Your days” using *ribbui*, meant “For he is this life and the length of your days [of the next life].” Thus, John’s book of life was the eschatological Torah from Sinai.

John had many Torah adjacent descriptions in his visions, without specifically using the word Torah. He had a companion to God, he had prophetic words, and he had the book of life.

## 2. THRONE—YES

An easier primordial element to identify in John’s new Jerusalem is the throne of God. God sits on the throne in both of John’s visions of the new Jerusalem as well as in the vision immediately preceding them.

In John’s first vision of the new Jerusalem, he described God as speaking from his throne:

καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ ἑθρόνου λεγούσης·

ἰδοὺ ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ἑσκηνώσει μετ’ αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἑἴλασι αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς ἑμετ’ αὐτῶν ἔσται [αὐτῶν θεός] (NA28 Rev 21:3).

And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God (KJV 21:3).

In this first vision, God's throne was still in heaven. While the new Jerusalem was descending away from him, there was an outside perspective. The voice from the throne, said, "Behold!" Even though there was a throne in heaven, the new Jerusalem also had God's throne.

In John's second vision of the new Jerusalem, John reiterates twice that God's throne is within the new Jerusalem:

Καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι ποταμὸν Ἵδατος ζωῆς λαμπρὸν ὡς κρύσταλλον,  
ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου (NA28 Rev  
22:1).

And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (22:1 KJV)

καὶ πᾶν κατάθεμα οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι. καὶ ὁ θρόνος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου ἐν αὐτῇ ἔσται, καὶ οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ ἑλατρεύσουσιν αὐτῷ (NA28 22:3)

And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him (KJV 22:3).

The first mention of throne described an Edenic paradise watered from the mouth of God's throne. The second mention of throne described a temple cult of the people serving God around his throne. In this second mention, the throne acted as the holy of holies, but in the original primordial element aspect. The throne was the original holy of holies of which the holy of holies on earth was a copy.

Unlike the throne of God, Eden was not named specifically, but John did name and describe elements from Eden: Tree of Life and the lack of the curses: peace, no death, no toil, no mourning.

Moreover, despite not being named specifically, John's new Jerusalem seemed to be based on the primordial Garden of Eden. The midrashists above viewed the Garden of Eden as paradise before the curse. Likewise, John's new Jerusalem appeared as a prelapsarian Eden. There were no elements from the curses nor any elements that could lead to the curses. There was no Tree of Knowledge, there was no woman, there was no snake. These details of John's reimagining of Eden will be discussed more in the following chapters.

#### 4. GEHENNA—YES (PIT; LAKE OF FIRE AND SULFUR)

John did include Gehenna in his end time vision; however, it did not exist in the new Jerusalem. Rather, in the vision immediately preceding John's visions of a new Jerusalem, Gehenna was thrown into the lake of fire:

καὶ ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ᾅδης ἐβλήθησαν εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός. □

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.

In the cosmography of the earthly Jerusalem, the valley of Gehenna laid outside of the city as an actual place. In John's vision, Gehenna was mobile. It could be thrown. Thus, John's Hades or Gehenna was similar to the primordial elements that were not located on earth but existed in heaven with God in a more fluid space.

#### 5. SANCTUARY—YES

The sanctuary was another primordial element. God created his sanctuary before creation. In Revelation, the city was also the sanctuary since, for one, it was called a tabernacle, another word for sanctuary.

#### 6. MESSIAH –YES

The messiah had two potential identifications in John’s new Jerusalem: the Lamb and God’s people. The messiah may be the slain Lamb as a reference to the messianic passage of Isaiah 53. The messiah may also be “the son” in John’s new Jerusalem who were the people of God.

#### 7. REPENTANCE—MISSING

There was not a voice calling for repentance in John’s vision, but there was a voice:

καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου

I heard a great voice out of the throne (Rev 21:3a).

This was similar to the beginning of the following verse:

ובת־קול מכרזת שובו בני אדם

And a divine voice<sup>207</sup> is proclaiming, “Repent, children of Adam!”

(Midrash Tehillim 90:2 (יב), S. Buber edition)

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<sup>207</sup> Literally, “daughter of a voice.” This term, which meant a voice from heaven, was well known in early rabbinic material such as in Tosefta Sotah 13:2: “they received communications from God through the medium of the *bat-qol*.” See also Pikei Avot 6, “Every day a heavenly voice (*bat qol*) goes forth from Mount Horeb.”

These two passages described the voice of God calling out, either as “great” or as the “daughter of a voice.” Thus, a voice came from the throne out of heaven, not Jerusalem, in John’s vision. Moreover, the voice did not proclaim, “Repent!”

#### 8. ISRAEL—YES

Israel occurred in John’s new Jerusalem most clearly as the 12 tribal gates. Israel also occurred as the son. This was likely a reference to the son or seed of Israel getting to inherit the promised land which, in Revelation, is Jerusalem.

Thus, John included many primordial elements in his new Jerusalem since the new Jerusalem originated in heaven with God. These prefabricated items came to earth within the supernal city. Despite being called new, these items were from old,  $\text{דָּרָב}$ . John included 7 primordial elements in his vision of the supernal Jerusalem: the throne of God, the Torah, the Messiah (as either Lamb or “seed”), the sanctuary (as tabernacle), the 12 tribes of Israel, Eden, and Gehenna. He did not include repentance.

#### INTERTWINED SACRED SPACES

Some may have argued that Jerusalem was a *pied-à-terre* for God, an earthly resting place, while his true home was in heaven.<sup>208</sup> But that was not exactly what was going on in these midrashic traditions. Instead, heaven and

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<sup>208</sup> Peter Schäfer used this phrase to describe God’s throne of judgment located in the West in the Book of Watchers (I Enoch 14). “In Heaven as it is in Hell: The Cosmology of *Seder Rabba di-Bereshit*” in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities*, Ra’anan S. Boustan and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 233-274, esp. 255.



earth were intertwined: heaven reflected earth and earth reflected heaven. They were in a sense the same thing. According to Arakim, both sanctuaries were born on the stone of foundation. When separated to their respective realms of heaven and earth, they remained intertwined (much like entangled quantum particles that continued to affect each other even when separated). Thus, according to b. Ta'anit 5, God himself would not enter one without the other. In a similar vein, according to j. Berakot 35 and Mekilta, God's heavenly throne was anchored opposite the earthly holy of holies. They placed God's throne on the celestial plane directly above the terrestrial holy of holies. According to midrash Tehillim 90:2 (S. Buber) and midrash Tehillim 93:2 (Narbone), elements of Jerusalem were with God even in primordial times. Thus, these midrashic traditions described the intertwined hierotopy of the heavenly and earthly holy sites.

Midrashists were able to develop the characteristics of the heavenly Jerusalem because of the elevated significance of the Hebrew scripture as a closed canon. Through skillful legerdemain, the midrashists combined meanings from one word in scripture to the same word in another portion of scripture, adding layers and significance to a passage. They were able to take parallel descriptions of the earthly Jerusalem and "prove" that it also existed "above," as well as in primordial time and in eschatological time.

Understanding the midrashic development of the heavenly Jerusalem can help reveal the underlying meaning of John of Patmos' vision of the heavenly Jerusalem in the book of Revelation. Although these midrashic traditions were not codified in writing until later, it is extremely probable that earlier oral versions

of these traditions influenced John's cosmological hierotopy. Thus, we could start to extrapolate where John derived his ideas. This could be done by studying midrashic traditions of a heavenly Jerusalem, but we could even further understand how John developed his ideas by studying midrashic methodology.

In this chapter, we considered the idea that John borrowed midrashic cosmographies, but also that he developed his own (or reflected an unknown strain of ) mobile/malleable cosmography. John envisioned a moving tabernacle, descending from its place in heaven onto the earth. The main proof-text for the heavenly Jerusalem for several of the midrashic traditions was Exodus 15:17. This same proof text was also explained as a possible proof-text for the heavenly Jerusalem's mobility as found in John's visions.

The following chapters will explain in more detail the midrashic structure within John's visions of the new Jerusalem. It will explain how, like the midrashists, John elevated the significance of the Hebrew scripture using *ribbû*, midrashic *ḥāṛzā*, and Torah primacy. Viewing John's visions as midrashic will uncover new and surprising elements that were not apparent when they were approached solely as an apocalyptic writing.

## CHAPTER 3

NEW JERUSALEM TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY: REVELATION 21:1-  
22:7, 17

Revelation 21:1<sup>209</sup>

Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν  
καινήν· ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ  
πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν, καὶ ἡ θάλασσα  
οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι.<sup>210</sup>

And I saw a new heaven and a new  
earth<sup>211</sup>

For the first heaven and the first  
earth went away<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Translation was mine. A literal translation was given here, to aid in finding significant Hebraisms.

<sup>210</sup> The Greek text was from the Society of Biblical Literature Greek New Testament..

<sup>211</sup> The opening *ḥārīzā* of John's new Jerusalem visions of Gen. 1:1 with Is 65:17-18a.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ  
In the beginning God created the heaven  
and the earth (Gen 1:1)

כִּי־הֵנִי בּוֹרֵא שְׁמַיִם חֲדָשִׁים וְאָרֶץ חֲדָשָׁה וְלֹא  
תִּזְכָּרְנָה הַרְאשֹׁנוֹת וְלֹא תִעָלְיָה עַל־לֵב:

For look! I am creating a new heaven  
and a new earth and the beginning things  
will not be remembered and they will not  
arise in the mind (Isaiah 65:17-18a).

The *ḥārīzā* of these two verses set the tone for the visions of the new Jerusalem. Isaiah's emendation that "the beginning things will not be remembered" created a cipher for understanding why John's new creation was different from the Edenic creation.

<sup>212</sup> *Hariza* to Isaiah 65:17b: "and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind." See also Rev 22:3, "And every cursed thing will not exist again." Thus, the Edenic curses were forgotten.

And the sea existed no longer.<sup>213</sup>

21:2

καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ  
καινήν εἶδον καταβαίνουσιν ἐκ τοῦ  
οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ,  
ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην  
κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς.

And the holy city, Jerusalem  
anew,<sup>214</sup>

<sup>213</sup> In John's vision, the two Jerusalems were united—not just "on earth as it is in heaven" but heaven literally on earth.

Thus, Genesis was reversed: In Genesis chapter 1, the earth and the heaven were separated by the water of the firmament. Here they become one with no separation. This new creation was modeled on the original creation of Genesis, but as the binary opposite: instead of God dividing the land from the sky, he united them.

In Genesis's creation, water or "the deep" (*t'hom*) symbolized primordial chaos which God uses as material with which to make heaven and earth (similar to how Marduk used his enemy Tiamat in the Babylonian creation myth the Enuma Elish).

The sea in the original creation myth stemmed from Babylonian motifs of battle against the great sea monster such as Tiamat or Rahab. In this new creation, the monster is not just conquered but no longer exists. The sea is one of "the former things [that] shall not be remembered" (Is 65:17).

The water of the second death appeared in Revelation 21:8, but disappeared with John's new Jerusalem visions.

<sup>214</sup> An allusion to Isaiah 65:18: "But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create

I saw descending out of the heaven  
away from the God,<sup>215</sup>

Being made ready as a bride, being  
beautifully adorned for her man.<sup>216</sup>

21:3

καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ  
θρόνου λεγούσης· Ἴδου ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ  
θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ

---

for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing,  
and her people a joy.”

<sup>215</sup> This Jerusalem existed in heaven with  
God. This cosmography reflected  
midrashic cosmography of a heaven which  
reflected the earth, as well as primordial  
heavenly elements preserved with God.

The descent of the heavenly Jerusalem was  
a midrashic reading of Exodus 15:17:

תבאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך מכון לשבתך פעלת  
” מקדש אדני כוננו ידיך ”

You will bring “it” and plant “it” on your  
inherited mountain, a place for your  
dwelling which you made, O Lord, a  
sanctuary you formed with your hands.

Midrashic tradition read this verse with *ribbui*  
as proof of a heavenly sanctuary (Mekilta  
d’Rabbi Yishmael 15:17:4b; J. Berakot 35).  
The synonyms “place” and “sanctuary”  
were read as two different holy sites: one  
in heaven and one on earth. John’s  
descent of a new Jerusalem reflected a  
reading of this verse as not just proof of a  
heavenly sanctuary, but of its descent to  
mount Zion.

<sup>216</sup> The new Jerusalem bride was like the  
Sabbath bride. Both brides symbolized  
God’s presence descending to be with the  
people.

כדר' חנינא דאמר ר' חנינא

It is like what R. Hanina would say  
concerning what he would say [at twilight  
on Shabbat],

σκηνώσει μετ’ αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ  
αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ’  
αὐτῶν ἔσται,

And I heard a loud voice from the  
throne saying,<sup>217</sup>

“Look! The tabernacle of God is with  
the husbands!<sup>218</sup>

And he will tabernacle with them,<sup>219</sup>

בואו ונצא לקראת כלה מלכתא

“Come and go out to greet the bride, the  
queen!”

ואמרי לה לקראת שבת כלה מלכתא

and some say, “...to greet the *Sabbath*,  
the bride, the queen!” (Bava Kama  
32a:22: -32b:1)

This bridal Jerusalem symbolized the sacred  
space and sacred time of the last day--the  
eternal Sabbath with God. Berakhot 57b  
said, “שבת--אחד מששים לעולם הבא.” “The  
Sabbath is one sixtieth of the world to  
come.”

<sup>217</sup> The voice from heaven echoed other  
occurrences: God’s speaking in the  
thunder at Mount Sinai, God’s speaking to  
create the world in Genesis, and the *bat  
qol* speaking “Repent!”—a primordial  
element in the midrashic tradition (Shochoer  
Tov: Midrash Tehillim 90:2 and Midrash  
Tehillim 93:2).

<sup>218</sup> The city of Jerusalem was the tabernacle  
which housed God. Tabernacle alluded to  
the mobile sanctuary of the wilderness  
described in mainly in Exodus. Here the  
mobile aspect of the tabernacle allowed it  
to move from heaven to earth.

<sup>219</sup> “He will tabernacle” was a reinforcement  
of the significance of “tabernacle.”  
Tabernacle, *miškan*, signified God’s  
presence, *shekhinah* since they were  
different forms of the same root.

“Tabernacle” was also an allusion to the last  
chapter of Zechariah where the gentiles go

And they will be his people,

And he will be their God.”<sup>220</sup>

21:4

καὶ ἐξαλείψει πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν  
ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ  
ἔσται ἔτι· οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ  
οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι. τὰ πρῶτα  
ἀπῆλθαν.

And he will wipe away every  
teardrop from their eyes, <sup>221</sup>

And there will no longer be death

Nor crying out

Nor painful labor;

---

up to Jerusalem in the eschaton to worship  
God for Sukkot.

<sup>220</sup> An allusion to Ex 29:45: “I will tabernacle  
among the sons of Israel, and will be their  
God.”

<sup>221</sup> A continued allusion to Isaiah: “no more  
shall be heard in it the sound of weeping  
and the cry of distress” (Is 65:19b).

<sup>222</sup> A *hārīzā* of Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning  
God created,” and Isaiah 65:17b: “and the  
beginning things shall not be remembered  
or come into mind.” (See also the note 4.)

This *hārīzā* reversed the curses of Genesis.  
God cursed Adam and Eve with death,  
painful toil, and painful birth labor. In the  
new Eden, there was eternal life, no  
painful toil, and no painful childbirth.

<sup>223</sup> Eden was not newly created since Eden  
was preserved with God in heaven in its  
pristine “new” state according to midrashic  
tradition:

The beginning things went away.<sup>222</sup>

21:5

Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ  
θρόνῳ· Ἴδου καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα. καὶ  
λέγει· Γράψον, ὅτι οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι  
πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν.

And the One Sitting on the Throne  
said, “Look! I am making everything  
new”<sup>223</sup>

And he said,

“Write!”<sup>224</sup>

For these words are Trustworthy and  
True.”<sup>225</sup>

Seven elements preceded the world (by)  
two thousand years: The Torah, the  
Throne of Glory, the Garden of Eden,  
Gehenna, Repentance, the sanctuary  
above, and the name of the  
Messiah....The garden of Eden is on his  
right (Midrash Tehillim 90:2 (ב'), S. Buber  
edition, Shochoer Tov).

<sup>224</sup> “Write!” signaled a prophetic utterance,  
such as in Habakkuk 2:2--A type of  
prophetic writing developed in the 6<sup>th</sup>  
century as something that was meant to be  
read by others (see also, Jeremiah 36:28).  
The author of Revelation was writing in the  
prophetic apocalyptic style, but also the  
expository style, such as Peshet  
Habakkuk, in which the writer interpreted  
the prophecy of Habakkuk according to  
contemporary events. The author of  
Revelation did not explain prophetic books  
in order as a *peshet*; rather, he  
midrashically intertwined the Genesis  
creation account to the prophets.

<sup>225</sup> The phrase “These words are  
Trustworthy and True” were the beginning  
of an *inclusio* which concluded in

21:6

καὶ εἶπέν μοι· Γέγοναν. ἐγὼ τὸ Ἄλφα  
καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος. ἐγὼ  
τῷ διψῶντι δώσω ἐκ τῆς πηγῆς τοῦ  
ὑδατος τῆς ζῶης δωρεάν.

And he said to me,

Revelation 22:6. The *inclusio* format indicated that the editor of Revelation saw the intervening passage as a separate and whole vision.

As an allusion to the garden of Eden, this signified that God’s words were true while the serpent’s words were false.

<sup>226</sup> An allusion to the seventh day when God finished creating the heavens and the earth.

וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צְבָאָם:  
וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

The heavens and the earth were finished  
And God finished on the seventh day  
(Gen 2:1-2a).

However, using midrashic analysis the word “finished” was read as “bride” since both words have the root *cll*. Thus, a midrashic reading of Gen 2:1-2a was:

The heavens and earth were a bride  
And the seventh day was a bride (Gen  
2:1-2a).

Thus, with midrashic polysemy, John’s union of heaven and earth in the bridal form of Jerusalem would be a reading of Gen 2:1. The Sabbath as a bride would be a reading of Gen 2:2a. The new Jerusalem as Sabbath bride would reflect both readings.

<sup>227</sup> Another clue that this creation was a midrash on the first creation: as God created at the beginning, so he created at the end.

God also was the Beginning and the End. He infused the first creation with his presence in the Garden of Eden; he

“It has been done.”<sup>226</sup>

I am the Alpha and the Omega,  
The Beginning and the End,<sup>227</sup>

I will give to the thirsty<sup>228</sup> out of the  
flow of water of life for free.”<sup>229</sup>

infused the last creation with his presence in/as the *miškan*/tabernacle.

<sup>228</sup> The “thirsty.” Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Mt. 5:6). Those who thirst for the water of life will attain eternal life in this new Eden.

<sup>229</sup> “Water of life”—may symbolize the water which sprang up when Moses struck the rock to quench the thirst of the Israelites. In contrast to the bitter water, he found fresh water—in Hebrew “living” water. It may symbolize the rivers in the Garden of Eden. The “flow” of water may symbolize the flow of blood from Jesus on the cross: “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many” (ESV Mk.14:23). And to the Samaritan woman at the well, “Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water... The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (ESV Jn 4:10, 14). This water may also be a binary opposite to the lake of fire which hades and death were thrown into (Rev 20:14).

This river was a *hāritzā* of the rivers flowing from God’s throne in Ezekiel and the rivers and Tree of Life in the garden of Eden.

וְעַל-הַנָּחַל יַעֲלֶה עֵלֶי-שִׁפְתוֹ מַיָּה וּמַיָּהוּ כָל-עֵץ-  
מִמָּקֶל לֹא-יִבֹּל עָלָיו וְלֹא-יָתֵם פְּרִיָּו לְחֹדֶשְׁשֵׁינּוּ בְכֹר  
כִּי מִיַּמֵּיו מִן-הַמִּקְדָּשׁ הַמָּה יֵצְאִים יְהוּי וְהָיָה  
פְּרִיָּו לְמִאֲכָל וְעָלָיו לְתִרְוָה:

And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit

21:7

ὁ νικῶν κληρονομήσει ταῦτα, καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός

“The conquering one<sup>230</sup> will inherit these things and I will be to him God and

He will be to me Son.”<sup>231</sup>

every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.” (ESV Ezek 47:12).

Ezekiel did not call the trees the Tree of Life, but John of Patmos connected this passage to the Tree of Life in Eden.

<sup>230</sup> The sons of Israel received their inheritance when they “conquered” the promised land. Although the conquering ones in this verse inherited the promised land, they were not military conquerors. These conquering ones were martyrs—those who held firm in “sanctifying the name” of God.

In contrast to Adam and Eve who did not conquer the temptation of the serpent and inherited death, the conqueror in Revelation remained faithful to God’s commandments and inherited life.

According to Revelation, the “conqueror” [martyr] inherited the promised land, received the Edenic eternal life, and became God’s “son.”

This first century Jewish view of conqueror as martyr also occurred with the stories of Jesus. Jesus entered Jerusalem as a victorious king riding on a donkey (Zech. 9:9; Mt 21:5) only to go to his death as a martyr—one who “sanctified the name.” Like Jesus, the conqueror in Rev became God’s “Son.” Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the land”

21:8

τοῖς δὲ δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις καὶ ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ φονεῦσι καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμάκοις καὶ εἰδωλολάτραις καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ψευδέσιν τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, ὃ ἐστὶν ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος.

“But the cowardly and unfaithful<sup>232</sup>

(Mt.5:5). In this case, the meek conquered through martyrdom and inherited the new Jerusalem promised land.

<sup>231</sup> Becoming God’s son was kingly and messianic phrasing, such as in 2 Sam 7:14s and Ps 2:7.

אָמַר אֵלַי בְּנִי אַתָּה אֲנִי

He said to me, “My son you are, mine” (Psalm 2:7).

אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לּוֹ לְאָב וְהוּא יִהְיֶה לִּי לְבָן

And I will become his father and he will be my son (2 Sam 7:13-14a).

“Son” was also an allusion to the promises to the “seed” or son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:

וְהוֹצֵאתִי מִיַּעֲקֹב זָרַע וּמִיהוּדָה יוֹרֵשׁ הָרַי

I will bring out of Jacob as seed, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains;

וְיִרְשׁוּהָ בְּחֵינֵי וְעַבְדָּי יִשְׁכְּנוּ-שָׁמָּה

and my chosen ones shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there (Is 65:9).

<sup>232</sup> The cowardly and unfaithful in the Garden were Adam and Eve. Unfaithful by eating the forbidden fruit. Cowardly by hiding from God.

Instead of “sanctifying the name” (or *qiddush hashem* in the early Jewish ideal) by standing firm in the face of martyrdom, they “profaned the name” (or *hillel hashem*) of God by saving their own lives



And the abhorrent and murderers<sup>233</sup>

And licentious<sup>234</sup>

And those who practice divination,<sup>235</sup>

Slaves of idols

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(perhaps sacrificing to the Roman emperor an idol).

<sup>233</sup> *Pikuah nefesh*: the three sins one could not commit to save a life were murder, idolatry, and fornication.

כל עבירות שבתורה אם אומרין לאדם עבור ואל תהרג יעבור ואל יהרג חוץ מעבודת כוכבים וגילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים

All transgressions that are in the Torah, if one says to a man, "Transgress and you will not be killed," then transgress and do not be killed, except for the transgressions: idol worship, forbidden sexual relations, and shedding of blood (Sanhedrin 74a).

In the biblical text, Cain was the first murder; however, in midrashic tradition, the snake and Eve brought death to all.

דָּבַר אַחַר חַוָּה, חַוָּה לָהּ אָדָם הָרָאשׁוֹן כַּמָּה דוֹרוֹת אַבְדָּה.

[Another matter: "Eve",] the first man "showed" (חָוָה) her how many generations she had made lost (Gen Rabba 20, 11).

<sup>234</sup> Adam and Eve were licentious in the Garden with demons according to Genesis Rabba 20, 11:

ר' סימון אָמַר אִם כָּל הַיּוֹצֵר, אִמֵּן שֶׁל כָּל הַחַיִּים,

Rabbi Simon said, "the mother of all living" means "of all living beings,"

דָּאָמַר ר' סימון:

For Rabbi Simon said:

כָּל מֵאָה וְשָׁלְשִׁים שָׁנָה שֶׁפָּרָשָׁה חַוָּה מֵאָדָם

All one hundred and thirty years that Eve was separated from Adam [Albek "Adam separated from Eve" צוה],

הָיוּ רוּחוֹת הַזְּכָרִים מִתְחַמְמֵין מִמֶּנָּה, וְהָיָא יוֹלְדָת מֵהֶם,

And all who are false,

Their portion is in the sea<sup>236</sup> of fire and sulfur;

there were male spirits who were warmed from her and she gave birth from them,

וְרוּחוֹת נְקֻבוֹת מִתְחַמְמוֹת מֵאָדָם, וּמוֹלִידוֹת מִמֶּנּוּ while the female spirits were warmed by Adam and they bore from him.

<sup>235</sup> Eve with the serpent

<sup>236</sup> In Hebrew, sea and lake are both *yam*.

This sea is reminiscent of the Dead Sea, the likely spot of Sodom and Gomorrah. This salt sea or dead sea contrasted with living or fresh water. The sea that was no more in Revelation 21:1 reappeared here as an abyss of judgment. The judgment occurred in the vision preceding John's Jerusalem visions; however, this abyss may reflect the midrashic idea of a primordial and thus eternal Gehenna:

אלפים שנה התורה וכסא-כבוד וגן-עדן וגיהנום ותשובה ובת-המקדש של-מעלה ושם-משיח

וגוהנם משמאלו...

Seven elements<sup>236</sup> preceded the world (by) two thousand years: The Torah, the Throne of Glory, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, Repentance, the sanctuary above, and the name of the Messiah.... and Gehenna on his left (Midrash Tehillim 90:2 (יב), S. Buber edition, Shochoer Tov).

נכון כסאך מאז. זה אחד משבעה דברים שעלה – ואלו הן בריאתו של עולם במחשבה קודם

"Your throne is established from then...."

This is one of the seven elements which arose in thought before his creation of the world and these are them:

הנהם שנאמר כי ערוך מאתמול תפתה

Gehenna, as it is said, "Because Taphteh was prepared from yesterday" (Is. 30:33) (Midrash Tehillim 93:2, Narbone edition, Shochoer Tov).

This is the second death.<sup>237</sup>

21:9

Καὶ ἦλθεν εἷς ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων  
τῶν ἔχόντων τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας, τῶν  
γεμόντων τῶν ἑπτὰ πληγῶν τῶν  
ἔσχατων, καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ' ἐμοῦ  
λέγων· Δεῦρο, δεῖξω σοι τὴν νύμφην  
τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου.

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<sup>237</sup> Adam and Eve experienced the first death and were banished from the garden. The transgressors in the new creation were banished from the new Eden. Thus, despite the promise of the Tree of Life and water of life, there were some who did not get to partake. Just as there was death in the first creation, there is death in this second creation.

<sup>238</sup> 7 is a repeated number in both the new creation vision and the Genesis 1 creation.

<sup>239</sup> “Come!” This is reminiscent of God commanding Abraham, “lekh lekha” or “Get yourself up!” God then showed Abraham the Land he would inherit—that is, what his descendants would inherit. Here the angel of God is showing John of Patmos what God’s people (the “son,” the conqueror) would inherit. The Land here was metonymically the holy city Jerusalem. Instead of the holiness of Jerusalem bleeding into the surrounding Land of Judea/Israel, the whole Land became Jerusalem.

<sup>240</sup> In John’s second vision of the descending Jerusalem bride, she was called the “wife of the lamb.”

“Lamb” was an allusion to the martyred messiah in Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53:7 says, כִּשְׂהָ לְטֹבַח יוֹבֵל; “He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter.” Isaiah 53:8b says, מִפְּשַׁע עַמִּי נִגַּע לָם “For the transgression of my people, he was stricken.” Isaiah 53:11b

And one of the 7 angels,<sup>238</sup>

Having the 7 full bowls

Of the 7 plagues

Of the eschaton

Came and spoke with me saying,

“Come!<sup>239</sup> I will show you the bride,  
the wife of the Lamb.”<sup>240</sup>

says, וְעוֹנֵתָם הוּא יִבְרָא “He will bear their iniquities.”

Thus, the conqueror and son was the martyred people of God and the lamb was a super-martyr of God. They both replaced the sacrifices of the temple:

*Zəbūl*—in it is Jerusalem and the sanctuary and the built altar

ומיכאל השר הגדול עומד ומקריב עליו קרבן  
and Michael the great prince stands and offers upon it sacrifice.

מה מקריב ... נשמתם של צדיקים  
What does he offer? ... the souls of the righteous.

חגיגה י"ב: ובעין יעקב שם

Hagigah 12b, “And the Well of Jacob is There.”

בזמן שבית המקדש קיים היה כהן גדול מקריב  
ומקטיר בבית-המקדש של-מטה

In the time when the sanctuary stood a high priest used to sacrifice and offer incense in the sanctuary below

ומיכאל כנגדו עומד ומקריב בבית-המקדש של-מעלה

and Michael opposite him stood and would sacrifice in the sanctuary above.

וכשחרב בית-המקדש של-מטה אמר לו  
הקדוש ברוך הוא למיכאל:

And when the sanctuary below was in ruins, the Holy One blessed be He said to Michael,

מיכאל! הואיל והחרבתי את ביתי ושרפתי את היכלי ושוממתי מקדשי והרסתי את-מזבחי

21:10

καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι ἐπὶ  
ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν, καὶ ἔδειξέν  
μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλήμ  
καταβαίνουσας ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ  
τοῦ θεοῦ,

And he carried me on the wind<sup>241</sup>

Onto a great and high hill<sup>242</sup>

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“Michael! Since I destroyed my house  
and I burned my temple and laid waste  
my sanctuary and tore down my altar,

אל תקריב לפני לא בדמות שור ולא בדמות  
כבש ולא בדמות שעיר

do not sacrifice before me neither with  
the likeness of a head of cattle nor with  
the likeness of a sheep nor with the  
likeness of a goat.”

אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם! בניך-- מה-תהא  
עליהם,

He said before him, “Master of the world!  
Your children—what will happen to  
them?”

אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא

The Holy One blessed be he said to him,

הקרב תקרב לפני זכונותיהם ותפלותיהם

“You will surely sacrifice before me their  
pure ones and their prayers

ונשמתן של צדיקים שהן גנוזין תחת כסא הכבוד  
and the souls of their righteous ones—  
they will be a treasure under the throne  
of glory

ותינוקות של בית-רבן ובהן אני מכפר עוונותיהם  
של ישראל

and infants of the great house, and with  
them I will atone for the sins of Israel”

(Midrash Arakim or “The Lord with  
Wisdom founded the Land”).

<sup>241</sup> Wind also meant spirit. The final verse of  
this inclusio (22:6) spoke of “God of the  
spirits of the prophets.” Spirit/wind was one

And he showed me the holy city  
Jerusalem<sup>243</sup>

Descending from heaven

Away from God...<sup>244</sup>

21:11

ἔχουσας τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ· ὁ  
φωστὴρ αὐτῆς ὅμοιος λίθῳ  
τιμιωτάτῳ, ὡς λίθῳ ἰάσπιδι  
κρυσταλλίζοντι·

of the ways God spoke to the prophets;  
here, it was how he spoke to John of  
Patmos.

“Wind” was allusion to Genesis where the  
wind of God hovered over the face of the  
deep waters before he created light.

<sup>242</sup> In first century cosmology, the heaven  
was in the sky. The higher you were, the  
closer you were to heaven. Additionally,  
the holy mountains of God became unified  
in this cosmology: Mt. Zion became Mt.  
Moriah—the place of the near sacrifice of  
Isaac. Moreover, additional holy events  
and places became associated with Mt.  
Zion such as the place of Adam’s grave  
and the crucifixion of Jesus. Here, the new  
Jerusalem or God’s heavenly throne  
became one with the earthly Mt. Zion.

<sup>243</sup> Showing the Land on a high hill was also  
reminiscent of Moses on Mt. Nebo (Deut.  
34:1-6). According to early midrashim and  
other early Jewish texts, Jerusalem existed  
from before creation along with paradise,  
the messiah, repentance, the Torah.

<sup>244</sup> The descent of Jerusalem was a  
repetition of Revelation 21:2, but instead of  
an inclusio, this was an alternate version of  
the story—signifying two sources.

Instead of having the people rebuild the  
tabernacle, God provided it.

Having the Glory,<sup>245</sup>  
Her splendor like a precious stone,  
As jasper, a crystal-clear stone...<sup>246</sup>

21:12

ἔχουσα τεῖχος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν,  
ἔχουσα πυλῶνας δώδεκα, καὶ ἐπὶ  
τοῖς πυλῶσιν ἀγγέλους δώδεκα, καὶ  
ὀνόματα ἐπιγεγραμμένα ἃ ἔστιν τῶν  
δώδεκα φυλῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ·

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<sup>245</sup> “Glory” was another word for God’s presence. The tabernacle-city-people had the glory of God like Moses’s face reflected God’s glory. In kabbalistic cosmogony, God made space outside of himself for matter and he imbued it with the divine sparks—likewise, the new Jerusalem had God’s glory, it was imbued with his essence (homoiousia).

<sup>246</sup> Following this initial appearance, which elsewhere applied to God, was a description of the material of the city.

According to Genesis, the rivers in Eden came from lands with precious metal. Similarly, the visions of God’s throne in Ezekiel described it as precious stone. Tobit and DSS interpreted Isaiah as describing the throne with precious stones (Jan Fekkes, 1990, 279).

<sup>247</sup> Like the wall around the garden of Eden and the perimeter of the tabernacle/temple/Land of Israel. Cf. also the significance of the wall in the epic of Gilgamesh.

<sup>248</sup> Gates were openings/perforations/transparent places in the wall. The gates of Jerusalem were entrances to paradise, God’s presence, the holy of holies. Like the Edenic gate, angels protected the entrance, but God’s people were no longer cursed and barred.

Having a great and high wall,<sup>247</sup>

Having 12 gates<sup>248</sup>

And in the gates:

12 angels,<sup>249</sup>

And names written,<sup>250</sup>

Which are of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel...<sup>251</sup>

21:13

<sup>249</sup> Angels, cherubim, seraphim, lamassa, etc. guarded entrances to holy spaces to keep out enemies.

<sup>250</sup> Names written on the material of the city and later on the foreheads of God’s worshipers/servants signified several things. 1, God remembered the people. His promises were remembered and fulfilled. 2, God’s name resided in the city of Jerusalem, in the temple (i.e., I Kings 21:7, “In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever”). Since the name of God resided in the temple, names written signified God’s eternal existence.

<sup>251</sup> Other than 7, 12 was the other significant number. John of Patmos used 12 for the 12 tribes of Israel, 12 gates, the 12 disciples, and 12 foundation stones. The 12 tribes symbolized a future restoration of all of Israel. It referred to biblical promises rather than first century reality since this time there were mainly 3 tribes: Judeans, Levites, and Benjaminites.

12 tribes was an allusion to the 12 sons of Jacob (Genesis) as well as the 12 tribes’ inheritance of the land (Exodus, Leviticus, Joshua). Here, the promises were fulfilled—they inherited the eschatological and primordial promised land.

ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς πυλῶνες τρεῖς, καὶ  
ἀπὸ βορρᾶ πυλῶνες τρεῖς, καὶ ἀπὸ  
νότου πυλῶνες τρεῖς, καὶ ἀπὸ  
δυσμῶν πυλῶνες τρεῖς·

Out of the east: 3 gates<sup>252</sup>

Out of the north: 3 gates

Out of the south: 3 gates<sup>253</sup>

Out of the west: 3 gates...

21:14

καὶ τὸ τεῖχος τῆς πόλεως ἔχων  
θεμελίους δώδεκα, καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῶν

δώδεκα ὀνόματα τῶν δώδεκα  
ἀποστόλων τοῦ ἀρνίου.

And the wall of the city:

Having foundations

And upon them:

12 names of the 12 apostles of the  
Lamb.<sup>254</sup>

21:15

Καὶ ὁ λαλῶν μετ' ἑμοῦ εἶχεν μέτρον  
κάλαμον χρυσοῦν, ἵνα μετρήσῃ τὴν

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The 12 sons of Israel were messianic. They were the son/seed who conquered. They reigned with God. The gates were the entrances to the new Jerusalem, perhaps the consummation entrance of bride, and thus to unity with the *šekinah*, the presence of God.

Thus, the tribes and the angels determined who entered Paradise. They made up part of the city and they determine the boundaries of the city. Gentiles entered but only through them.

<sup>252</sup> East was the primary direction of the ancient Near East, like north is for many today. East was the direction of the rising sun, where life began. In Hebrew there were two words that meant east: *mizrah* (the rising [of the sun]) and *qedem* (ancient time, front). Looking forward locatively in Hebrew meant looking at one's past temporally. This was the opposite of the English, where looking forward signified looking to one's future. In Hebrew one can see what has happened as though it were in front of you, but what has not yet happened was not visible as though it were out of sight behind you.

East was also the direction of the garden of Eden entrance from where cherubim with

flaming sword guarded the way to the Tree of Life Gen. 3:24.

<sup>253</sup> John of Patmos arranged the gates counterclockwise starting with east. In contrast, these four cardinal directions in Ezekiel ran clockwise starting north (48:31-34). In Numbers, the tribes encamped around the tabernacle starting in the east as in Revelation, but clockwise as in Ezekiel (Numbers 2:3-34 ).

Tribal gates to the temple were in the *Temple Scroll* 38-41 and to the city were in the *New Jerusalem Scroll*. A striking characteristic of John's new Jerusalem was that once the person was inside the walls of the city, there was no further division. In other apocalyptic descriptions of the new Jerusalem, there was an ever-increasing holiness the further one went into the temple complex.

<sup>254</sup> The passage referring to the 12 foundations of the wall being the 12 apostles seems like an addition to perhaps an original non-Christian text since the stones usually represent the 12 tribes of Israel. As foundation stones for their respective tribe, each should be placed under the tribe's gate.

πόλιν καὶ τοὺς πυλῶνας αὐτῆς καὶ τὸ  
τεῖχος αὐτῆς.

And the one speaking with me was  
holding a gold measuring rod so that  
he could measure the city and her  
gates and her wall.<sup>255</sup>

21:16

καὶ ἡ πόλις τετράγωνος κεῖται, καὶ τὸ  
μῆκος αὐτῆς ὅσον τὸ πλάτος. καὶ  
ἐμέτρησεν τὴν πόλιν τῷ καλάμῳ ἐπὶ  
σταδίους δώδεκα χιλιάδων· τὸ μῆκος  
καὶ τὸ πλάτος καὶ τὸ ὕψος αὐτῆς ἴσα  
ἐστίν.

And the city was laid out squarely:<sup>256</sup>

And her length was just as the width.

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<sup>255</sup> The angel measuring the city emulated  
the angel measuring the temple in Ezekiel.  
In this passage, however, the city was  
itself the temple while in Ezekiel only the  
temple was holy and worth measuring.

Ezekiel's angel measured the new temple  
but not the new Jerusalem; the DSS' new  
Jerusalem was larger than Ezekiel's, the  
new Jerusalem in Revelation was larger  
still.

<sup>256</sup> The holy of holies was also square or  
cubical. Ezekiel' wall around the temple  
was also square.

Proportional just like the cardinal directions  
of the gates; no compromise for other  
territories or natural borders; like the holy  
of holies is square; like God's Merkavah is  
square with the four creatures facing four  
directions and only moving in those four  
directions (Ezekiel)]

And he measured the city with the  
rod:

12 thousand stadia:<sup>257</sup>

The length and the width,

And her height is equal.<sup>258</sup>

21:17

καὶ ἐμέτρησεν τὸ τεῖχος αὐτῆς ἑκατὸν  
τεσσεράκοντα τεσσάρων πηχῶν,  
μέτρον ἀνθρώπου, ὃ ἐστὶν ἀγγέλου.

And he measured her wall:

144 cubits<sup>259</sup>—

Human measure which is of  
angels<sup>260</sup>

21:18

<sup>257</sup> Ezekiel's Jerusalem had a circumference  
of 6 miles, the *New Jerusalem Scroll's*  
Jerusalem 60 miles, and Revelation's  
Jerusalem 6000 miles (or 1400 miles  
squared). Twelve again being the number  
of the tribal inheritance of the land. The  
multiplication of 12 signified eschatological  
abundance.

<sup>258</sup> "And her height is equal" seemed almost  
an afterthought or a gloss; however, the  
astronomical height signified the height of  
heaven. Thus, the massive height was a  
reimagining of a heaven on earth.

<sup>259</sup> Math play: 12 x 12 = tribal inheritance  
(like 7 x 7 = jubilee year). 7 was the  
number of original creation, 12 the new  
creation—4+3 becomes 4 x 3.

<sup>260</sup> Perhaps since angels lived in heaven  
and were not restricted to the ground, this  
expression meant that they could measure  
high heights much more easily.

καὶ ἡ ἐνδὼμησις τοῦ τείχους αὐτῆς  
ἴασπις, καὶ ἡ πόλις χρυσίον καθαρὸν  
ὅμοιον ὑάλῳ καθαρῷ·

And the material of her wall: jasper

And the city: pure gold similar to  
pure glass<sup>261</sup>

21:19-20

οἱ θεμέλιοι τοῦ τείχους τῆς πόλεως  
παντὶ λίθῳ τιμίῳ κεκοσμημένοι· ὁ  
θεμέλιος ὁ πρῶτος ἴασπις, ὁ  
δεύτερος σάπφειρος, ὁ τρίτος  
χαλκηδών, ὁ τέταρτος σμάραγδος, ὁ  
πέμπτος σαρδόνυξ, ὁ ἕκτος σάρδιον,  
ὁ ἕβδομος χρυσόλιθος, ὁ ὄγδοος  
βήρυλλος, ὁ ἕνατος τοπάζιον, ὁ  
δέκατος χρυσόπρασος, ὁ ἐνδέκατος  
ὑάκινθος, ὁ δωδέκατος ἀμέθυστος·

The foundations [12 disciples] of the  
city were adorned with every  
precious stone:<sup>262</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> foundation: jasper

The 2<sup>nd</sup> foundation: sapphire<sup>263</sup>

The 3<sup>rd</sup> foundation: chalcedony

The 4<sup>th</sup> foundation: emerald

The 5<sup>th</sup> foundation: sardonyx

The 6<sup>th</sup> foundation: carnelian

The 7<sup>th</sup> foundation: chrysolite

The 8<sup>th</sup> foundation: beryl

The 9<sup>th</sup> foundation: topaz

The 10<sup>th</sup> foundation: chrysoprase

The 11<sup>th</sup> foundation: jacinth

The 12<sup>th</sup> foundation: amethyst

<sup>261</sup> Partial repetition of 21:11—but here not just appearance, actual material; just as at Sinai God told Moses the materials needed to build the ark, tabernacle, and other accoutrements

<sup>262</sup> In Exodus 28:15 these stones filled the breastplate of the high priest and stood for the 12 tribes of Israel. Here they are in a different order and unless 21:14b is an interpolation, they represent the 12 apostles of Jesus. Of course, Jesus chose 12 apostles to represent the 12 tribes of Israel so here the 12 foundation stones can in a way represent both.

Parallel to Sinai's description of materials but elevated and even more precious. At Sinai the people donated their jewelry. Here, God provided. In the Torah, the

stones of the priestly breastplate determines the will of God. Perhaps in the new Jerusalem, since the city was surrounded by the priestly breastplate, the people of the city symbolized the priest.

<sup>263</sup> Compare the Isaiah peshar of the Dead Sea Scrolls: "*And I will lay your foundations with sapphires* (Is.54:11c). Interpreted, this concerned the Priests and the people who laid the foundations of the Council of the Community...the congregation of His elect (shall sparkle) like a sapphire among stones..." In Peshar Isaiah, the stones represented the people: first the community (sapphires), then the twelve chief priests (agate), then the chiefs of the tribes of Israel (carbuncles) (A.Y. Collins, "The Dream" 238-239).

21:21

καὶ οἱ δώδεκα πυλῶνες δώδεκα  
μαργαρίται, ἀνὰ εἷς ἕκαστος τῶν  
πυλώνων ἦν ἐξ ἐνὸς μαργαρίτου· καὶ  
ἡ πλατεῖα τῆς πόλεως χρυσίον  
καθαρὸν ὡς ὕαλος διαυγής.

And the 12 gates: 12 pearls<sup>264</sup> each  
one

Each of the gates was of a single  
pearl

And the wide plaza of the city: <sup>265</sup>

Pure gold like transparent glass<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Isaiah 54:12b: “I will make your... gates of stones of *‘qdḥ*.” The word, *קִדְחַ* (*‘qdḥ*), was a *hapax legomenon* which Tobit translated as “pearl” (Fekkes, 279).

<sup>265</sup> Plaza instead of the Greek word, street. In Hebrew the word came to mean “street” (*rehov* רְחוֹב) originally meant “plaza” or, literally, the “wide place.”

<sup>266</sup> One of the rivers of Eden, Pishon, came from the land of pure gold, “and the gold of that land is good” (Gen 2:11-12); in Revelation the streets were pure gold, and so good it was transparent as glass.

Tobit 13:16 interpreted Is 54:11 as streets of gold (Fekkes 281):

“For Jerusalem will be built[!] as his house for all ages. How happy I will be if a remnant of my descendants should survive to see your glory and acknowledge the King of heaven. The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and emerald, and all your walls with precious stones.

21:22

Καὶ ναὸν οὐκ εἶδον ἐν αὐτῇ, ὁ γὰρ  
κύριος, ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ναὸς  
αὐτῆς ἐστίν, καὶ τὸ ἀρνίον.

And a temple I did not see in her,  
For the Lord God Almighty is her  
temple,<sup>267</sup>

And the Lamb.<sup>268</sup>

21:23

καὶ ἡ πόλις οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχει τοῦ ἡλίου  
οὐδὲ τῆς σελήνης, ἵνα φαίνωσιν  
αὐτῇ, ἡ γὰρ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐφώτισεν  
αὐτήν, καὶ ὁ λύχνος αὐτῆς τὸ ἀρνίον.

The towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold, and their battlements with pure gold. The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with ruby and with stones of Ophir” (Tobit 13:16, NRSV).

<sup>267</sup> Eden did not have or need a temple, but “God walked in the garden at the time of the evening breeze” (3:8). In the new Eden, God tabernacled with his people in the new Paradise.

The city itself was the temple. It was called the “tabernacle”—the nomadic original desert temple. It was cubical like the holy of holies. Thus, Jerusalem took on the holiness of the temple and became the temple.

<sup>268</sup> While “and the Lamb” seemed like a later editorial addition, use of “lamb” for the messianic figure was an allusion to Isaiah 53. The Lamb being the temple, though, seemed to be an afterthought or editorial addition.



And the city does not need the sun  
nor the moon to give light to her,<sup>269</sup>

For the Glory of God illuminated her,

And her lamp: the Lamb<sup>270</sup>

21:24

καὶ περιπατήσουσιν τὰ ἔθνη διὰ τοῦ  
φωτὸς αὐτῆς· καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς  
φέρουσιν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν εἰς  
αὐτήν· And the gentiles<sup>271</sup>

will walk by her Light,<sup>272</sup>

And the kings of the earth bring their  
glory into her<sup>273</sup>

21:25

καὶ οἱ πυλῶνες αὐτῆς οὐ μὴ  
κλεισθῶσιν ἡμέρας, νύξ γὰρ οὐκ  
ἔσται ἐκεῖ,

And her gates will not close by  
day,<sup>274</sup>

<sup>269</sup> A *hārīzā* to the fourth day of creation in  
Genesis 1 and Isaiah 60:19:

לֹא־יְהִי־לָךְ עוֹד הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְאֹר יוֹמָם וְלַנֶּגֶה הַיָּרֵחַ  
לֹא־יֵאָר לָךְ

The sun will no longer be for you daily  
light and brightness of the moon will not  
give light for you.

יְהִי־לָךְ יְהוָה לְאֹר עוֹלָם וְאֱלֹהֶיךָ לְתִפְאֶרֶתְךָ

The Lord will become your light of the  
world and your god will become your  
glory (Is. 60:19).

The midrashic *ribbui* interpretation of this  
*hārīzā* developed the two descriptions of  
God being the new light as God and the  
Lamb being the new lights.

This was both an imitation and reversal of  
the Genesis Creation account. In Genesis,  
God created the greater and lesser lights  
in the sky to illuminate the earth; in  
Revelation, God was the light.

Moreover, the lights were “beginning things”  
that were “not remembered”—perhaps  
because of the temptation to worship  
them.

<sup>270</sup> Again, “and her lamp: the Lamb” seemed  
like a later editorial addition but in this case  
reflected a *ribbui* reading of Isaiah 60:19-  
20. In the passage in Isaiah, light and lamp  
may seem like synonyms but midrashically  
would mean different things.

לֹא־יְהִי־לָךְ עוֹד הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְאֹר יוֹמָם וְלַנֶּגֶה הַיָּרֵחַ  
לֹא־יֵאָר לָךְ

The sun will no longer be for you daily  
light and brightness of the moon will not  
give light for you.

יְהִי־לָךְ יְהוָה לְאֹר עוֹלָם וְאֱלֹהֶיךָ לְתִפְאֶרֶתְךָ

The Lord will become your light of the  
world and your god will become your  
glory (Is. 60:19).

<sup>271</sup> The nations/gentiles in the first century  
were interpreted as a sign of the final days:  
ie, Zechariah’s prediction that the gentiles  
will go up to Jerusalem for *sukkot*—  
tabernacles, recalling the tabernacle in the  
wilderness and here entwined with God as  
the tabernacle.

<sup>272</sup> As Abraham and Enoch walked with God

<sup>273</sup> Reversal of the Babylonian conquest as  
well as the Roman conquest where the  
gentile kings took the “glory” (or holy relics  
and treasures) out of the Jerusalem  
temples.

<sup>274</sup> The gates opening by themselves in  
Yoma 39b (of the Babylonian Talmud) was  
interpreted as a prophecy of destruction.  
Here, the gates remain open, yet  
Jerusalem was protected.

Jerusalem was perforated and stayed  
perforated—the windows were for light to  
shine out; the jewels of the foundations  
allowed light to shine through like a giant

For night will not exist there<sup>275</sup>

21:26

καὶ οἴσουσιν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν  
τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰς αὐτήν.

And they will bring the glory and the  
splendor

Of the nations into her<sup>276</sup>

21:27

καὶ οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν πᾶν  
κοινὸν καὶ ποιῶν βδέλυγμα καὶ  
ψεῦδος, εἰ μὴ οἱ γεγραμμένοι ἐν τῷ  
βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἁρνίου.

And will not go into her:

Anything unclean

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stain glass pedestal; the gates were made of pearls—treasure/glory of the sea; and unlike the Garden, the entrance was not blocked.

<sup>275</sup> A day without night would be an eternal day. Thus, this was the ultimate Day—the Day of the Lord, the eschatological Sabbath. The day of the Lord described both the final day of judgment and the paradisiacal aftermath.

Also, in Jewish measurement of time, day followed night, so the last night would have already occurred. Since this was the final day, there would be no more days and thus no more nights.

Additionally, there would be no creatures of the night, no Lilith, no demons, etc.

<sup>276</sup> The kings of the earth brought wedding presents. The kings were subjugated under the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven spread to encompass

And one who does abomination,

And falsehood,

Since they are not ones written in

The book of the life of the Lamb.<sup>277</sup>

22:1

Καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι ποταμὸν ὕδατος  
ζωῆς λαμπρὸν ὡς κρύσταλλον,  
ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ  
θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁρνίου And he showed  
me a river of water of life<sup>278</sup>

Shining as crystal

Coming out of the throne of God

And the Lamb

the whole earth just as in the Lord's prayer: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," but there was no longer a separation of heaven and earth. Thus, it was on earth as it was in heaven because earth was heaven in John's new creation. Moreover, the 70 nations in the family of nations from Genesis existed in the new creation as though there were no expulsion from the Garden, as though the world were as it was meant to be from the beginning.

<sup>277</sup> "Written in the book of life" is a Jewish phrase used today for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The Lamb was the primary martyr. The people written in the book were the martyrs of the first century who sanctified God's name.

<sup>278</sup> Unlike in Ezekiel's vision, this river stayed within the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

22:2

ἐν μέσῳ τῆς πλατείας αὐτῆς· καὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ξύλον ζωῆς ποιοῦν καρποὺς δώδεκα, κατὰ μῆνα ἕκαστον ἀποδιδούν τὸν καρπὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὰ φύλλα τοῦ ξύλου εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν.

In the middle of her wide plaza and the river

from here and from there:<sup>279</sup>

<sup>279</sup> The grammar in Greek is also awkward

<sup>280</sup> Preserved with God in Eden, one of the primordial elements (Midrash Tehillim 90:2 (יב), S. Buber edition, Shocher Tov).

As in the garden of Eden, according to midrashic tradition, created on the third day.

ר' לוי ב'שם ר' חמא ב'חנינא אָמַר, שְׁלֹשָׁה בְרִיּוֹת הָיָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בּוֹרָא בְּכָל יוֹם וַיּוֹם, בְּאֶחָד בְּרָא שָׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ וְאֹרֶחַ. בְּשֵׁנִי, רָקִיעַ וְגִיּוֹהַנִּים וּמַלְאָכִים. בְּשִׁלְשִׁי, אֵילָנוֹת וְדִשְׁאֵיִן וְגַן עֵדֶן. R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama b. R. Hanina: The Holy One, blessed be He, created three objects on each day: on the first, heaven, earth, and light; on the second, the firmament, Gehenna, and the angels; on the third, trees, herbs, and the Garden of Eden (Genesis Rabba XI, 9).

<sup>281</sup> The multiplication of the fruits of the Tree of Life were due to a *hānizā* of the Tree of Life in Genesis with Ezekiel's description of the fruit trees on the river coming from the temple:

Tree of Life<sup>280</sup>

Making 12 crops<sup>281</sup>

with each month bearing fruit<sup>282</sup>

and the leaves of the tree: for the care of the gentiles<sup>283</sup>

22:3

καὶ πᾶν κατάθεμα οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι. καὶ ὁ θρόνος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἄρνιου ἐν αὐτῇ ἔσται, καὶ οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ λατρεύσουσιν αὐτῷ,

וְעַל-הַנָּחַל יַעֲלֶה עַל-שְׂפָתָיו מַזְהָה וּמִזְהָה כָּל-עֵץ מִאֲכָל

Upon the river will rise up upon its banks from there and from there every edible tree.

לֹא-יָבֹל עָלָיו וְלֹא-יִתֵּן פְּרִי'וֹ לְחֹדֶשִׁי'וֹ; בְּכֹר כִּי מִיָּמֵינוּ מִן-הַמִּקְדָּשׁ הַזֶּה יֵצְאוּ

Its leaves will not wither, and its fruit will not cease to be new; it will bear early fruit because its waters come out from the sanctuary.

וְהָיָה "וְהָיָה" פְּרִי'וֹ לְמִאֲכָל וְעָלָיו לְתִרְוָפָה: ׀

It will be that its fruit will be for eating and its leaves for healing.

(Ez. 47:12).

<sup>282</sup> There were 12 months but only one day.

<sup>283</sup> There was a distinction between God's people and the gentiles. The crops were for the 12 tribes, while the leaves were for the gentiles. Nevertheless, all get to eat of the Tree of Life. The promise to Abraham's descendants was that all the families of the earth would be blessed though them.

Yoma 39b described Solomon's golden trees of the temple. They bore fruit in the seasons, but the gentiles caused them to wither. In the "future (hour of redemption)," though, the trees bloomed again .

And every cursed thing  
will not exist again<sup>284</sup>  
And the throne of God and the Lamb  
in her

It will exist<sup>285</sup>

And his slaves will serve him.<sup>286</sup>

22:4

καὶ ὄψονται τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, καὶ  
τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων  
αὐτῶν.

And they will see his face<sup>287</sup>

And his name: on their foreheads<sup>288</sup>

22:5

καὶ νύξ οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν  
χρείαν φωτὸς λύχνου καὶ φῶς ἡλίου,  
ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεὸς φωτίσει ἐπ’ αὐτούς,  
καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας  
τῶν αἰώνων.

And night will not exist again

And they do not have need

Of light of a lamp

And light of the sun<sup>289</sup>

Since the Lord God will shine on  
them

And they will reign forever and  
ever<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> “no more curses” was a *hārīzā* of  
Genesis 2-3 and Isaiah 65:17:

וְלֹא תִזְכָּרְנָה הַרְאִשׁוֹת וְלֹא תִעֲלֶינָה עַל-לֵב  
and the beginning things [i.e., curses] will  
not be remembered and will not come to  
mind.

The curses of Genesis no longer existed in  
John’s new Edenic Jerusalem. Moreover,  
there was no hint of them—nothing that  
would “come to mind”: no serpent, no Eve,  
no Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil,  
no stars, no sea.

<sup>285</sup> What did exist was a new king with  
faithful subjects rather than a colonial king  
who demanded allegiance to him.

Thus, the new Jerusalem kingdom was a  
great reversal of John’s current situation.

<sup>286</sup> Greek: slaves. The Hebrew equivalent  
meant servants or worshipers. It implied  
that the people had a “master.” “Master” in  
Hebrew was *ba’al* which also meant  
“husband.” The people were described in

the plural as slaves/servants/worshipers,  
or “mastered”/“married.”

<sup>287</sup> Like Moses on Mt. Sinai, they saw his  
face and did not die. This was part of the  
intimacy of marriage.

<sup>288</sup> Just as his name was on the temple.  
Also, like a golem, the letters of God  
brought life to creatures of clay. Also see  
note for 21:12. Signified ownership: a mark  
so no one else will hurt them or have  
relationship with her. Similar to the mark of  
Cain which prevented people from harming  
him. As the names of the tribes were  
written on the gates signifying a permanent  
place in the new Jerusalem, so God’s  
name on the people signified a permanent  
state of relationship with God.

<sup>289</sup> Reiteration of 21:23-24, thus the  
concluding part of the inclusio.

<sup>290</sup> God’s conquering martyrs or slaves  
became his kingly Sons reigning forever.  
In contrast, the first half of the inclusio

22:6

Καὶ εἶπέν μοι· Οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ  
καὶ ἀληθινοί, καὶ ὁ κύριος, ὁ θεὸς τῶν  
πνευμάτων τῶν προφητῶν,  
ἀπέστειλεν τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ δεῖξαι  
τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν  
τάχει·

And he said to me,

“These are the words,<sup>291</sup> Trustworthy  
and True,”<sup>292</sup>

And the Lord God of the spirits of the  
prophets sent out his angel<sup>293</sup>

To make known to his slaves  
that which must happen immediately

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described the gentile kings of the earth  
(see previous note).

<sup>291</sup> “Words” referred also to the Aramaic  
*memra* which was a name for God.

The Hebrew equivalent was *davarim* which  
meant things or words, but also signified  
keeping the commandments of God which  
protected one’s life and inheritance—when  
the people did not, they were attacked by  
foreigners and exiled from their Land.  
God’s servant-kings no longer had the  
potential to be exiled from the new Land.

<sup>292</sup> The final closing phrase of the inclusio  
which began in 21:5b. Thus, this phrase  
completed John’s main visions. Much of  
what came after were editorial additions.

<sup>293</sup> God communicated and acted through  
his angels, especially in first century  
Jewish interpretation—i.e., at Mt. Sinai and  
at creation.

22:7

καὶ ἰδοὺ ἔρχομαι ταχύ· μακάριος ὁ  
τηρῶν τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας  
τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου.

“And look! I come quickly!”<sup>294</sup>

Blessed is the one keeping the  
words<sup>295</sup>

Of the prophecy

Of this book.<sup>296</sup>

22:17<sup>297</sup>

καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἡ νύμφη λέγουσιν·  
Ἔρχου· καὶ ὁ ἀκούων εἰπάτω·  
Ἔρχου· καὶ ὁ διψῶν ἐρχέσθω, ὁ  
θέλων λαβέτω ὕδωρ ζωῆς δωρεάν.

<sup>294</sup> Expected imminently which is a  
characteristic of apocalyptic writings. Cf.  
also, Habakkuk 2:3, “For the vision is yet  
for the appointed time, and it declareth of  
the end, and doth not lie; though it tarry,  
wait for it; because it will surely come, it  
will not delay” (JPS).

<sup>295</sup> The word of God was divine in its own  
right—*memra, logos, protennoia*. Keeping  
the word or command of God  
demonstrated one’s acceptance of God’s  
covenant and that one was part of the  
people of God.

<sup>296</sup> Claiming status with other scriptures.

<sup>297</sup> 22:16-17a, 20-21 were  
interpolations/late editions (Josephine  
Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, The  
Anchor Bible 38 (Garden City, New York:  
Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975), 28).

And the spirit<sup>298</sup> and the bride say,  
“Come.” And the one who hears  
says, “Come.” And the one who is  
thirsting comes; the one who is  
desiring takes the water of life freely.

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<sup>298</sup> In Hebrew, spirit is *ruah*. Spirit implied  
God’s presence, his *šekinah*. Thus, if spirit  
and the bride were the same, they would

be equivalent to the Sabbath bride: the  
*šekinah* of God.

## CHAPTER 4

### JOHN'S NEW JERUSALEM MIDRASH ON CREATION: DAYS 1-6A

In the last chapter, we saw the midrashic traditions concerning a Jerusalem that existed in alternate space and alternate time. The alternate space of both the midrashic traditions and John's visions of Jerusalem was the heavens, the place directly above mount Zion. The alternate time in which Jerusalem existed was the primordial beginning and the eschatological end.

In the last chapter, we saw overlap between John's new Jerusalem visions and the midrashic traditions. Several midrashic traditions used the proof text from Exodus 15:17 as the basis for the existence of the heavenly Jerusalem. John might have also used Exodus 15:17 as a basis for the heavenly Jerusalem; but he may also have based the mobility of Jerusalem from heaven to earth on a midrashic analysis of that proof-text.

In the last chapter, the tradition of the primordial elements from midrashim had many overlapping elements with John's new Jerusalem. One element, in particular, Eden, has in itself many characteristics. In John's new Jerusalem, Edenic primordial elements may be the clue to John's divergence from Isaian visions of the end-time paradise. John may have developed the new Jerusalem as a new Eden.

John's process of transforming Eden into the new Jerusalem can be seen when applying the midrashic approach. To begin with, John's new Jerusalem

visions would have the three main interpretative elements of midrash discussed in the chapter 1: Torah primacy, *ḥārīzā*, and *ribbû*. Torah primacy points to the creation story of Genesis. The second characteristic, *ḥārīzā*, points to John's connection of the creation story to visions of Jerusalem in Isaiah and Ezekiel. The third characteristic, *ribbû*, points to John's development of the heavenly Jerusalem and its characteristics, just as the midrashic traditions did in chapter 3. Thus, the proof texts and their midrashic interpretation from Genesis, Isaiah, and Ezekiel will be considered as the basis for Edenic elements of John's new Jerusalem.

Using the midrashic lens points to John recreating Eden. Moreover, reading John's vision against Genesis's creation highlights where John imitates Eden and where he "improves" on it. In this chapter, the first 5 and a half days of Genesis's creation will be considered in relation to John's new Jerusalem.

#### 1. TORAH PRIMACY: A MIDRASHIC CIPHER

In midrash, the connection of two allusions is called a *ḥārīzā* and the opening *ḥārīzā* is an especially important one. In John of Patmos's opening verse of his new Jerusalem vision, he called it a "new heaven and a new earth."<sup>299</sup> The use of the phrase "new heaven and new earth" was an allusion to both the

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<sup>299</sup> Strack explained that "The Hagaddah in part followed closely the biblical text; frequently, however, the latter served as a peg upon which to hang expositions of the most divergent sort" (Hermann L Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud*, [Philadelphia: JPS, 1931], p 202).

According to Strack, "Each homily, or, as the case may be, each parasha, *piska*, opens with a number of proems (*pethiḥa* from *pathaḥ*), i.e. by joining the text to a verse, mostly outside the Pentateuch, preferentially from the Hagiographa" (Strack p 204).

John's *pethiḥa* joins the text of Genesis 1:1 to Isaiah 65:17. This seemed to be the "peg" on which he hung a quite "divergent" "exposition."



creation story of Genesis and to the new creation prophecy of Isaiah. Moreover, John's initial *hārīzā* creates a cipher through which to interpret his new Jerusalem visions.

A preeminent connection to Torah could arguably be made by

Revelation's similarity to Genesis 1:1:

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.

John's visions of the new Jerusalem began in Revelation 21:1, in which he said,

Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν·

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth

ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν

For the first heaven and the first earth went away<sup>300</sup>

John's allusion to Genesis described "a new" heaven and earth rather than "the" heaven and earth. Moreover, John described the original Genesis creation as going away. Thus, John's new heaven and earth replaced the previous one; however, In Revelation, the new heaven and earth were still based on the originals.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>300</sup> In these chapters, the biblical texts are taken from the scholarly digital editions: Society of Biblical Literature for the Greek text and the Westminster Leningrad Codex for the Hebrew text (Westminster is the online digital edition of the Leningrad Codex. The Leningrad Codex is the text used by Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia and is the basis for the translations by the Jewish Publication Society.). All translations of the biblical texts are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>301</sup> "To see God is a metaphor in Judaism to express a full awareness of the presence and power of God (cf. Job 33:26; Pss 10-11). It is an eschatological blessing (cf. 4 Ezra 7:91, 98; 1 En. 102:8; 1 Cor 13:12). It is also a full recovery from the fall, caused by Adam and Eve (cf. Ps 24:6; 5 Ezra 7:98). In such a way, the new Jerusalem "returns" to the garden of Eden to finish off God's goal for human beings" (Du Rand, 298).

## 2. ḤARĪẒĀ

Revelation also exemplified the second midrashic characteristic, *ḥārīzā*, since Revelation described not just creation, as in Genesis, but new creation, as in Isaiah. In Isaiah 65:17 God said,

כִּי־הִנְנִי בּוֹרֵא שָׁמַיִם חֲדָשִׁים וְאָרֶץ חֲדָשָׁה

For look! I am about to create new heaven and a new earth,

וְלֹא תִזְכְּרֶנָּה הַרְאִשׁוֹת וְלֹא תִעֲלֶינָה עַל־לֵב:

and the first things will not be remembered and they (plural fem) will not be lifted to the heart [or will not be brought to mind].

In addition to basing his vision on the Genesis creation account, John tied Genesis to the new creation in Isaiah. Thus, the exegetical background of the opening verse for John's visions of the new Jerusalem, Revelation 21:1, is a *ḥārīzā* of Genesis 1:1 to Isaiah 65:17.

John's point of connection between the two verses, seemed to be two things: the "creation of heaven and earth" and the shared root ראש, "beginning." In Isaiah, the root ראש took the form of a plural feminine noun: *ḥarī' šōnōt*. הראשונות. In Genesis, this root took the form of a feminine singular noun: *bərešīt*. בְּרֵאשִׁית. Although the two forms are slightly different, both words have the same root word: *ro*'s ראש which meant "head, first, or beginning."<sup>302</sup>

Because the Hebrew loses some accuracy when translated to English, the connection is easier to understand in Hebrew. To make it clearer in English,

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<sup>302</sup> BDB

Genesis 1:1 could be translated, “At *first* God created,” to show the similarity to Isaiah’s phrase, “the *first* things will not be remembered.” Alternatively, one could translate Isaiah 21:1 as, “the *beginnings* will not be remembered,” to show the shared root with Genesis’ more iconic translation, “In the *beginning* God created.”

The explication of what first things were included and what were forgotten in John’s new creation can be explained by application of midrashic *ḥāīzā*. John’s vision connected the root from Isaiah back to Genesis, explicating it. John related the forgotten “first things” not to what was good in creation but rather to what was bad in the first creation. The bad first things were the curses of Eden and what led to the curses. Thus, John’s vision of Eden-cum-Jerusalem lacked any negative aspects; it was a perfected Eden.

### 3. RIBBU

Moreover, if midrashic *ribbû* was applied to Isaiah 65:17, it would emphasize the disappearance of the first things. The first things being forgotten is reiterated in this verse: “and the first things will not be remembered and they will not arise to the mind.” The first mention of the “first things” is passive. The second is active. With the *ribbû* interpretation, they would have to signify different things. Perhaps, it would have been interpreted that the first mention signified remembrance and the second signified physical presence. Thus, if John was applying this verse to the new Jerusalem, then the first things would no longer exist in one’s memory nor in actuality.

However, John clarified which “first things would be forgotten.” In John’s new Edenic Jerusalem, the “first things” of Isaiah became: “And every cursed

thing will not exist again” (Rev 22:3). The disappearance of the curse and its effects in John’s visions is less obviously shared in Isaiah’s vision:

כִּי־אִם־שִׂישׁוּ וְגִלְלוּ עַד־עַד אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי בּוֹרֵא כִּי הִנְנִי בּוֹרֵא אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם גִּילָה וְעִמָּה מְשׁוֹשׁ:

וְגִלְתִּי בִירוּשָׁלַם וְשִׂשְׂתִּי בְעַמִּי וְלֹא־יִשְׁמַע בָּהּ עוֹד קוֹל בְּכִי וְקוֹל זְעָקָה

Therefore, rejoice and twirl in ecstasy for ever about what I am creating!

Because, see, I am creating Jerusalem ecstatic, and her people rejoicing.

I will twirl in ecstasy in Jerusalem, and I will rejoice with my people!

Never again will be heard in her a crying sound or screaming sound (Is 65:18-19).

In both Isaiah’s and John’s new creation, Jerusalem replaced Eden and both described an Edenic paradise with no more crying or screaming.

Isaiah’s passage continued with more Edenic descriptions, such as the “wolf laying down with the lamb;” however, John’s vision differed in this and other ways from Isaiah’s vision since there were no animals in John’s new Jerusalem. Nevertheless, John’s and Isaiah’s new world Jerusalem visions both have a restored Eden. The point they were restored to, though, may be different. Isaiah described an Eden with peaceful animals, with children, and with long life—and Eden before the curses albeit with mortality. John’s Eden described an earlier version of Eden before the creation of animals, before the creation of Eve, and with eternal life.

John seemed to develop his visions of the new Jerusalem through midrashic reading of the creation accounts in Genesis and the new creation descriptions in Isaiah. John did not just reiterate Isaiah or Genesis, he re-

interpreted them starting with his opening *ḥārīzā*. Rather than establishing Isaiah or Genesis as the final word on what the new creation would be like, John interpreted them in light of each other, using *ḥārīzā* and *ribbû* analyses. Through his analysis, John restored the good things of Eden and erased the bad things of Eden.

## PART 2: HEXAMERON DAYS 1-6A

Through this initial *ḥārīzā*, we see that John tied his new creation to the original creation. Since John used the creation account as his reference point, Genesis's creation could be examined systematically from day one to Shabbat in John's new creation. The first five and a half days of creation will be examined in this chapter, the setting of the universe: light, water, sky, land, plants, the celestial lights, and animals. The next chapters will complete the last day and a half—the actors and the dénouement of the new creation.

### DAY 1: LIGHT

In Genesis, the paradigm was established by the beginning of creation: order from chaos. Order, or the separation of elements, in Genesis, was what made each day “good”: light from dark, land from water, water from water. John's new creation was different: the bad elements were excluded altogether. Thus, in Genesis on the first day, God created light and separated it from darkness; but in Revelation, there was no darkness. In John's new creation, no night went with open gates of the city. No closure of gates implied no need to close the gates against enemies.

In Genesis, light first appeared in the place where there was *וַחֹשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹמוֹת* “darkness over the face of the deep” (Gen 1:2). In the beginning there was darkness until God created light. Moreover, in the Genesis account, in the beginning there was chaos: *תְהוֹ וַבְהוֹ tōhû wāwōhû* (Gen 1:2). On the first day of creation in Genesis God said:

*וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי־אֹר*

“Let there be light,” and there was light.

*וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאֹר כִּי־טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ*

God saw the light that it was good, and God made a separation between the light and the darkness.

*וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאֹר יוֹם וּלְחֹשֶׁךְ לַיְלָה*

God named the light “day” and the darkness he named “night.”

*וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד: פ*

There was evening and there was morning: day one (Genesis 1:3-5).

God not only created light but separated it, giving it order. The first day of creation was both the creation of light and the beginning of order.

Revelation presented a new take on the distinction between day and night.

*καὶ οἱ πυλῶνες αὐτῆς οὐ μὴ κλεισθῶσιν ἡμέρας,*

And her gates will not close by day,

*νύξ γὰρ οὐκ ἔσται ἐκεῖ,*

for night will not exist there (Rev. 21:25; cf. 22:5).

In John’s description of the new creation, there was no night at all.

Therefore, there was only day, only light, and no darkness. Thus, instead of the paradigm of creating order by separating the bad from the good, as in Genesis,

there was a new paradigm: only the good remained and the bad was vanquished. Thus, in Revelation, there was no more darkness since “night will not “exist” in this new divinely infused space.

Because there was no night, the gates in Revelation’s new Jerusalem did not close. Since the gates did not close, the nations could enter the city:

καὶ οἱ πυλῶνες αὐτῆς οὐ μὴ κλεισθῶσιν ἡμέρας,

And her gates will not close by day,

νύξ γὰρ οὐκ ἔσται ἐκεῖ,

For night will not exist there.

καὶ οἴσουσιν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν

And they will bring the glory and the splendor

τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰς αὐτήν.

Of the nations into her (21:25-26).

The idea in Revelation that the gates would not close meant more than just the absence of night—it implied that the people would never need to close Jerusalem’s gates against their enemies. In fact, there were no more enemies breaching the walls and conquering the city. Instead, the nations brought treasures, “glory and splendor,” into the city.

Interestingly, elsewhere in early Jewish tradition open gates implied weakness—a spot where enemies could infiltrate. For example, in the Talmud, gates opening by themselves was interpreted as a prophecy of destruction.

והיו דלתות ההיכל נפתחות מאליהן

And the doors of the Sanctuary opened by themselves

עד שגער בהן רבן יוחנן בן זכאי אמר לו

until Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai scolded them. He said to it,

היכל היכל מפני מה אתה מבעית עצמך

Sanctuary, Sanctuary, why do you frighten yourself?

יודע אני בך שסופך עתיד ליחרב וכבר נתנבא עליך זכריה בן עדוא

I know about you that you will ultimately be destroyed, and Zechariah, son of Ido, has already prophesied concerning you:

פתח לבנון דלתיך ותאכל אש בארזיך

“Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars”

[Zech. 11:1]<sup>303</sup>

In b. Yoma 39b, Jerusalem’s gates opened to portend the coming destruction. To protect itself, Jerusalem’s gates should have been shut against the Babylonian and Roman destroyers of the temples and cities.

In contrast, the new Jerusalem’s gates remained open without fear of destruction and calamity. Open gates did not mean that gentiles, kings, or nations would not enter the new Jerusalem. This new Eden would not be blocked off from humanity. The 12 angel guards of the 12 gates of the new Jerusalem allowed in the gentiles bearing gifts, but barred anything and anyone “accursed.” A more detailed examination of the “accursed” will follow in the next chapter, but briefly, cursed people may have been a commentary on the garden of Eden of Genesis where humans were first cursed.

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<sup>303</sup> b.Yoma 39b. Lebanon being an appellation for the Temple since the lumber in the construction of Solomon’s temple came from the cedar forests of Lebanon.



Additionally, the Garden of Eden account did not mention an entrance or exit until after the curse, when Adam and Eve were expelled. After the expulsion, the cherubim [the angel or angels] guarded the gate so no one could enter. In the new Edenic Jerusalem, angels also guarded the gates, keeping them open, but keeping out the accursed.

In the new Jerusalem of Revelation, the gates remained open, but Jerusalem would never again be destroyed. Gates needed to be closed against invaders, but in the new Jerusalem there was no more fear of invaders. Gates would also need to be closed at night, but in the new Jerusalem there was no more night, making closed gates no longer necessary. The bad was erased: night, enemies, and theft. Only the good remained: light, peacefully open gates, the glorious gifts of the nations.

#### DAY 2: WATER

On the second day of the Genesis creation account, God did not create water. The water already existed as primordial chaos. God created “good” order out of the chaotic waters by separating them. On day 2, God separated the waters in the heavens from the waters on the earth creating the firmament. In Revelation, however, there was no more water and, thus, no more separation between heaven and earth.

In Genesis, God separating the waters created the separation between heaven and earth.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי רָקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהִי מַבְדִּיל בֵּין מַיִם לַמַּיִם

God said, “Let there be an expansive firmament border<sup>304</sup> between the waters,” and there was a separation between water and water.

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַרְקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לַרְקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל  
לַרְקִיעַ וַיְהִי־כֵן:

And God made the expansive firmament border, and he separated the water below the strata from the water above the strata, and it was so.

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לַרְקִיעַ שָׁמַיִם

And God named the expansive firmament border “heaven.”

וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר, יוֹם שֵׁנִי:

And there was evening and there was morning: day two (Genesis 1:6-8).

In Revelation, this separation of heaven and earth with water was reversed:

Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν

For the first heaven and the first earth went away

καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι.

And the sea is not still (here) (Rev. 21:1).

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<sup>304</sup> The Hebrew word *rāqī‘a* is translated here as “expansive firmament border” and “strata.” BDB has two definitions for רָקִיעַ 1, an “extended surface” and 2, “the vault of heaven, or ‘firmament,’ regarded by Hebrews as solid, and supporting ‘waters’ above it” (The New Brown—Driver—Briggs—Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979, 956a).

Another interpretation of the disappearance of the sea was that the water of the firmament also disappeared. The disappearance of the firmament waters implied that the heavens and the earth became unified.

This implication was further buttressed by heaven coming down to earth as the new Jerusalem.

לוא-תקרת שמים ירדה

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down (Is 63:19b Jewish; 64:1a Christian).

John may have been taking this verse from Isaiah literally, as he seemed to do. This verse may have been a source for the descent of the heavenly Jerusalem along with Exodus 15:17 as discussed in the previous chapter.

Moreover, the argument that heaven and earth were unified in John's vision is additionally supported by the extraordinary height of the new Jerusalem which, in effect, reached to the heavens.

καὶ ἡ πόλις τετράγωνος κεῖται,

And the city was laid out squarely:<sup>305</sup>

καὶ τὸ μῆκος αὐτῆς ὅσον τὸ πλάτος.

And her length was just as the width.

καὶ ἐμέτρησεν τὴν πόλιν τῷ καλάμῳ ἐπὶ σταδίου δώδεκα χιλιάδων·

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<sup>305</sup> The holy of holies was also square or cubical; Ezekiel' wall around the temple was also square; Ezekiel also had God's Merkavah as square with the four creatures facing four directions and only moving in those four directions.

And he measured the city with the rod: 12 thousand stadia:<sup>306</sup>

τὸ μῆκος καὶ τὸ πλάτος καὶ τὸ ὕψος αὐτῆς ἴσα ἐστίν (SBL Rev 21:16)

The length and the width, and her height is equal (Rev 21:16).

Thus, according to John's vision, the new Jerusalem was six thousand miles high.

Moreover, another possible reason the sea no longer existed in the new creation was its association with chaos. The "deep" (δαιτη *tēhōm*) water especially symbolized primordial chaos. This primordial element was prominent in the Babylonian creation myth, the *Enuma Elish*, which formed the cultural background to the Genesis account. In the *Enuma Elish*, Marduk used the body of his vanquished enemy Tiamat to create the heavens and the earth. The name Tiamat was similar to the Hebrew word δαιτη *tēhōm* signifying that God too created the heavens and earth out of a primordial monster-god in Genesis. The Babylonian myth likely influenced the Genesis account, as well as the much later Revelation account.<sup>307</sup> However, in the new creation of the book of Revelation, the monster, that is, the sea, was not just conquered but no longer existed. Therefore, unlike in the Babylonian creation myth, and unlike in Genesis, in

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<sup>306</sup> Ezekiel's Jerusalem had a circumference of 6 miles, the *New Jerusalem Scroll's* Jerusalem 60 miles, and Revelation's Jerusalem 6000 miles (or 1400 miles squared). Twelve again being the number of the tribal inheritance of the land. The multiplication of 12 signifies eschatological abundance.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. Adela Yarbro Collins's dissertation, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, Wipf and Stock: Eugene, 2001 (Harvard Theological Review, 1976). Collins writes, "...there were a number of combat myths in circulation in the first century C.E." (58). She mentions, "the struggle of Baal with Yam" and "Marduk and Tiamat" among others (58). AY Collins argues that the general pattern of combat myths had an influence on Revelation, but that it is not relevant to her study whether there was "any particular theory of historical origin and interrelationship of the individual versions of the myth" (58).

Revelation, the victorious god did not form the heavens and the earth out of his conquered enemy. In Revelation, instead of separating the elements to create order out of chaos, chaos itself disappeared. Thus, John's new creation was created not exactly *ex nihilo* but with only the "good" primordial elements.<sup>308</sup>

The description of "no sea" in the new Jerusalem implied no more primordial chaotic waters. The first bad things were forgotten. Moreover, no waters meant the removal of the barrier of the waters of the firmament which previously separated heaven from earth. Thus, in John's new creation, there was no separation between heaven and earth.

#### DAY 3A: LAND

In Genesis, God continued to separate the waters on day 3.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְקוּוּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־מְקוֹם אֶחָד וַתִּרְאֶה הַיַּבְשָׁה וַיְהִי־כֵן:

God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered to one place and let the dry ground appear; and it was so.

וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לַיַּבְשָׁה אֶרֶץ וְלַמְקוֹנָה הַמַּיִם קָרָא יַמִּים וַיִּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב

God named the dry ground Earth and the gathering of the waters he called seas;

And God saw that it was good.

This passage described the appearance of dry land, named Earth. Unlike in today's understanding of both the land and the sea being the Earth, in both

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<sup>308</sup> However, this mythological sea existed before the Jerusalem visions in John's vision of the judgment day. Death and hell and the accursed ones were thrown into the sea of sulfur and fire in Revelation 21:8.

Genesis and Revelation only the land was the Earth. Moreover, in Revelation, there was no sea at all and the land was the promised land, not Israel, but the exponentially enlarged city of Jerusalem.

In Genesis, God promised to Abram that his seed would inherit the land.

This land was bordered by two bodies of water:

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כָּרַת יְהוָה אֶת־אֲבְרָם בְּרִית לֵאמֹר לְזַרְעֲךָ נָתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת מִנְהַר  
מִצְרַיִם עַד־הַנָּהָר הַגָּדוֹל נְהַר־פָּרָת:

In that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, "To your seed I give this land from the Egyptian river to the Great River, the river Euphrates."

(Gen 15:18).

In Exodus, this promise was reiterated but with three bodies of water.

The ancient land of Israel was bordered by seas and rivers: the Mediterranean, the Euphrates, the Red Sea, and the Nile.

וְשֵׁתִי אֶת־גְּבֻלְךָ מִיַּם־סוּף וְעַד־יַם פְּלִשְׁתִּים וּמִמִּדְבָּר עַד־הַנָּהָר

I will set your border from the water of reeds to the sea of the Philistines and from the wilderness unto the River (Euphrates)

כִּי אֶתֵּן בְּיַדְכֶם אֶת יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ וְגִרְשֵׁתֶמוּ מִפְּנֵיךָ:

because I will give into your hands the dwellers of the land and you will drive them from before your face (Ex 23:31).

Ezekiel 47 also lists the borders which include many bodies of water: the Mediterranean, the Jordan, the Dead Sea, the waters of Meribah Kadesh, and the Wadi of Egypt.

Each of these passages include a promise of the Land to the seed of Abram, a land bounded by water. In John's new Jerusalem, the land was not bounded by water since, for one, there are no more seas. Thus, the seed inherit the Land unbounded and unrestricted in size by the seas. Thus, the land of John's new Jerusalem was far larger than the land of biblical Israel, even in the most maximalist of promises.

In John's vision, Jerusalem is the new heaven and the new earth and the promised land. John may be materializing the promise in Isaiah:

ועַמְּךָ כֻלָּם צְדִיקִים

Your people shall all be tzadikim (righteous ones);

לְעוֹלָם יִרְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ

they shall possess the land forever (Is 60:21).

"Your people" are the people of God, the ones who inherit the promised land. In this case, they inherit the "forever" promised land in the world to come.

In Genesis, the waters separated heaven from earth; the gathered waters revealed the land. In the book of Revelation, this act of separating was reversed: heaven and earth united and there was no water to gather. In Revelation, the chaotic primordial seas no longer existed. Equally significant, this waterless land became and exponentially enlarged new Jerusalem. The land in the new creation encompassed where God's people and God himself resided. In John's new creation, the heavens were the earth and the earth was the new heavens. The transcendent became immanent since God and his residence descended to earth. In Genesis, God separated the elements and called them "good." In

Revelation, God made creation entirely good without separation. The erasure of the waters represented a desire to make the new creation curse-proof. The people were finally in their promised land with God as their king. The people were the *tzadikim* who inherited the land.

#### DAY 3B: GARDEN OF EDEN AND TREE OF LIFE

In addition to the creation of the land on the third day, Genesis described the creation of fruit trees. John's vision of the fruit trees in the new Jerusalem seemed to reflect one particular Edenic element: the Tree of Life. John's Tree of Life, however, was not identical to the Tree from the Garden of Eden. The changes could be explained through midrashic connection to Ezekiel as well as through reflection of the rabbinical idea that the Garden of Eden had a preternatural existence with God.

On the third day of creation, in Genesis 1:11-13, every kind of fruit tree is created:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תִּדְשָׂא הָאָרֶץ דְּשֵׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזֵּרְעֵה זֶרַע עֵץ פְּרִי עֵשֶׂה פְּרִי לְמִינֹהוּ אֲשֶׁר זָרְעוּ-בָהּ  
עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי-כֵן:

God said, "May the land sprout seed-bearing sprouts (grass), fruit-producing fruit trees, according to their species which is in their seeds upon the land, and it was so."

וַתֹּצֵא הָאָרֶץ דְּשֵׂא עֵשֶׂב מִזֵּרְעֵה זֶרַע לְמִינֵהוּ וְעֵץ עֵשֶׂה-פְּרִי אֲשֶׁר זָרְעוּ-בָהּ לְמִינֵהוּ וַיֵּרָא  
אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב:



And the land brought forth seed-bearing sprouts (grass) according to its species and trees making fruit which has its seeds within for their species and God saw that it was good.

וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר, יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי: פ

There was evening and there was morning: day three.

Rabbinical commentary placed the creation of the Garden of Eden on the third day.<sup>309</sup> For example, Genesis Rabba XI, 9 said:

ר' לוי בשם ר' חמא בְּחִינָא אָמַר, שְׁלֹשָׁה בְרִיּוֹת הָיָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בּוֹרָא בְּכָל יוֹם  
יוֹם, בְּאֶחָד בָּרָא שְׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ וְאוֹרָה. בְּשֵׁנִי, רָקִיעַ וְגִיהֶנֶם וּמִלְאָכִים. בְּשְׁלִישִׁי, אֵילָנוֹת  
וְדִשָּׁאִין וְגַן עֵדֶן.<sup>310</sup>

R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama b. R. Hanina: The Holy One, blessed be He, created three objects on each day: on the first, heaven,

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<sup>309</sup> Cf. 2 Baruch 4:2-6: "Or do you think that this is the city of which I said, *On the palms of my hands I have carved you?* It is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with me, that was already prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise. And I showed it to Adam before he sinned. But when he transgressed the commandment, it was taken away from him—as also Paradise. And after these things I showed it to my servant Abraham in the night between the portions of the victims. And again I showed it to Moses on Mount Sinai when I showed him the likeness of the tabernacle and all its vessels. Behold, now it is preserved with me—as also Paradise." 2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch, translated by AFJ Klijn, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, volume 1, edited by James H. Charlesworth, Garden City, New York; Doubleday & Co., 1983, 622.

<sup>310</sup> משה אריה מירקין [Bereishit Rabba], trans. into modern Hebrew and vocalized by Moshe Arie Mirqain, part 1, (Tel Aviv: Yavneh Publishing House, 1968), 80. Based on the unvocalized text by J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck, יהודה תיאודור וחנוך אלבק [Midrash Bereshit Rabba: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary], vol. 1, (Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1965), 96.

earth, and light; on the second, the firmament, Gehenna, and the angels;  
on the third, trees, herbs, and the Garden of Eden.<sup>311</sup>

In this garden of Eden grew the Tree of Life, meaning that not only were fruit trees created on the third day, but so was the Tree of Life.

John of Patmos' new Eden also had many kinds of fruit and the Tree of Life, but in contrast to both the Garden of Eden and Ezekiel's vision, in John's new Edenic Jerusalem, the many fruits and the Tree of Life were one and the same:

έν μέσῳ τῆς πλατείας αὐτῆς·

καὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ έντεῦθεν καὶ ἐκεῖθεν

In the middle of her wide plaza

and the river from here and from there.<sup>312</sup>

ξύλον ζωῆς

The Tree of Life

ποιοῦν καρποὺς δώδεκα,

Making 12 crops

κατὰ μῆνα ἕκαστον ἀποδίδουν τὸν καρπὸν αὐτοῦ,

with each month bearing fruit

καὶ τὰ φύλλα τοῦ ξύλου εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἔθνῶν.

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<sup>311</sup> *Midrash Rabba in ten volumes*, H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., H. Freedman, trans., (London: Soncino Press, 1961 (1939)), volume I, 86. Strack dates Gen Rabba to time of the Palestinian Talmud (Hermann L Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud*, [Philadelphia: JPS, 1931], 218).

<sup>312</sup> The grammar in Greek was also awkward but similar to the phrasing in Ezekiel (albeit in Greek rather than Hebrew).

and the leaves of the tree: for the care of the gentiles (22:2).

Revelation's Tree of Life produced 12 kinds of fruit, thus conflating the many fruit trees God created on the third day with the Tree of Life in the garden of Eden.

The multiplication of the fruits of the Tree of Life were due in part to a *ḥārīzā* analysis of Ezekiel's description of the fruit trees in his vision of the new Jerusalem:

וְעַל-הַנָּחַל יַעֲלֶה עַל-שְׂפָתוֹ מִזְהוֹ וּמִזְהוֹ כָּל-עֵץ-מֵאֵכֹל

Upon the river will rise up upon its banks from there and from there every edible tree.

לֹא-יִבּוֹל עֲלֵהוּ וְלֹא-יִתֵּם פְּרִיּוֹ לְחִדְשִׁיו יִבְרָךְ כִּי מִמַּיּוֹ מִן-הַמִּקְדָּשׁ הֵמָּה יֵוצְאִים

Its leaves will not wither, and its fruit will not cease to be new; it will bear early fruit because its waters come out from the sanctuary.

וְהָיָה 'וְהָיָה' פְּרִיּוֹ לְמֵאֵכֹל וְעֲלֵהוּ לְתִרְוָפָה: ׀

It will be that its fruit will be for eating and its leaves for healing.

(Ez. 47:12).

In Ezekiel's phrasing, "every edible tree" was a collective singular. The pronominal suffix "its," referred to the plural trees, which was also in the collective singular. However, this tree was taken non-collectively as a single tree in John's vision. This singular tree then would be none other than the quintessential tree, the Tree of Life. So, while Ezekiel had many trees on both sides of the river, Revelation altered that image to a single tree on both sides of the river. While in

Ezekiel there was “every edible tree,” in the Book of Revelation, there was only one tree; however, John’s new Jerusalem Tree of Life bore 12 kinds of fruit.

The number 12 had special significance, but it is unclear why John’s tree bore 12 kinds of fruit. The explanation in the text was that it was one kind for every month—despite time being somewhat different in this new Jerusalem since there was only one day. Also, the Jewish lunar/solar calendar did not always have 12 months, sometimes an intercalary month was added so there would be 13 months. Some Jewish communities, especially the Qumran community, did use a 12-month solar calendar. The 12-month Qumran calendar may have influenced John’s description; however, 12 was a theme in John’s visions so a perfect dozen of months aligned with John’s theology here without recourse to a sectarian solar calendar (but also without ruling it out). If anything, time was perfect in this new Jerusalem. God and the Lamb being the sun and the moon would mean that the calendar was perfect—no more tricky calculations to make the lunar calendar align with the solar.

While two people ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and brought curses to their descendants, in Revelation, these curses were no more: “And every cursed thing will not exist again” (Rev 22:3). Immediately preceding this verse is the description of the Tree of Life, effectively connecting the connotations of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. Thus, in John’s new Edenic Jerusalem, the good tree remained while the bad tree was forgotten.

Ezekiel did not specify who got to eat the fruit and benefit from healing from the fruit trees, but the implication was that it was the children of Israel. In

John of Patmos's description however, the leaves were specifically for the gentiles.<sup>313</sup> While gentiles could also be translated as "nations," which would include the people of Israel, one possible implication is that the fruit was for the tribes of Israel and the leaves were for the gentile nations.

There were many possible reasons why John would specifically have the leaves bless the gentiles. In the case of the gentiles, there was the promise to Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him and his seed. John seemed to imply fulfillment of all the promises to Abraham's, Isaac's, and Jacob's seed.<sup>314</sup> The second reason was John's reliance on Isaiah, who also had the nations/gentiles going up to Jerusalem to worship God.<sup>315</sup>

In John's new Eden, there was the Tree of Life but no Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. There was a new "beginning" without the potential for a new curse. The Tree of Life had its origin in the garden of Eden, but it also reflected an accretion of meaning. Rabbinical midrashim believed the Tree of Life was created on the third day, the same day as the creation of the garden of Eden. Genesis's 3<sup>rd</sup> day had fruit trees, but did not mention the Tree of Life in particular. Ezekiel also had a description of fruit trees which seem like more than mundane fruit trees. Thus, John's description of the Tree of Life bearing 12 fruits could be

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<sup>313</sup> Yoma 39b describes Solomon's golden trees of the temple that bear fruit in their seasons. However, unlike Revelation's leaves that heal the gentiles, in Yoma 39b, the gentiles cause Solomon's trees to wither. Nevertheless, Solomon's trees will bloom again in the "future (hour of redemption)"; however, it does not say if gentiles will benefit at that time.

<sup>314</sup> John called the people of God, "son." While in other books "son" may have had messianic implications, John never called Jesus "son." The term he used for Jesus was "Lamb." The meaning John imputed to "son" seemed to be "seed." The significance of "son" will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>315</sup> Is 2:2

explained as a midrashic *hānīzā* connecting the Tree of Life of Genesis to Ezekiel's eschatological trees. Additionally, John's Tree of Life likely reflected the midrashic extra-mundane significance of the supernal Tree of Life and the preexistent Garden of Eden in the celestial eternal sphere

#### DAY 4: SUN AND MOON

On the fourth day of creation in Genesis, God made the sun and the celestial lights. In the book of Revelation, God and the Lamb take the place of (and improve on) the sun and the lights. The dissolution of the heavenly sun and the moon is additional evidence that the heavens no longer were separate from the earth.

In addition to light being separated from darkness, which happened on day one, there were now specific light sources: the sun and the moon in Genesis; God and the Lamb in Revelation:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מְאֹרֹת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה

God said, "Let there be lights in the expansive firmament border of the heavens to separate between the day and the night

וְהָיוּ לְאֹתוֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וְלַיָּמִים וְלַשָּׁנִים

and may they be for signs and for seasons and for days years.

וְהָיוּ לְמְאֹרֹת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי-כֵן

And may they be for lights in the expansive firmament border of heaven to shine upon the land. And it was so."

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים

And God made two of the large lights:

אֶת־הַמָּאֹר הַגָּדֹל לְמַשְׁלַת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת־הַמָּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַשְׁלַת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֶת הַכּוֹכָבִים

the large light to rule the day and the small light to rule the night, as well as the stars.

וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל־הָאָרֶץ

God set them in the expansive firmament border to shine upon the land.

וְלַמְשַׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה וּלְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ

And to rule the day and night and to separate between the light and the darkness. וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב

And God saw that it was good.

וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר, יוֹם רְבִיעִי: פ

And there was evening and there was morning: day four.

In the beginning, in Genesis, God created the sun, moon, and stars to rule and to guide the seasons. These lights separated the light from the darkness, a separation God declared “good.” They were placed in the heavens, in the firmament. This was a location that was dissolved in Revelation since there was no longer a “sea” or water separating the heavens and earth. The heavens had descended to earth in the form of God’s home, the heavenly Jerusalem, unifying all the previously separated elements.

The role of the sun and the moon of the fourth day of creation in Genesis were taken over by God and the Lamb in Revelation’s new creation.

καὶ ἡ πόλις οὐ χρείαν ἔχει τοῦ ἡλίου οὐδὲ τῆς σελήνης, ἵνα φαίνωσιν αὐτῇ,

And the city does not need the sun nor the moon to give light to her

ἢ γὰρ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐφώτισεν αὐτήν, καὶ ὁ λύχνος αὐτῆς τὸ ἄρνιον.

for the Glory of God illuminated her, and her lamp: the Lamb (Revelation 21:23).

The rulers of the heaven-cum-earth were God and the Lamb, not, as in many religions, the sun, moon, and stars. Thus, one more prospective bad thing was dissolved: the worship of the sun, moon, and stars.

John seemed to have reached the transformation of the lights through a *ḥārīzā* with Isaiah's vision of the new creation:

לֹא־יְהִי־לָךְ עוֹד הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לְאֹר וְלַיָּרֵחַ לְאִיר לָךְ

The sun will no longer be for you daily light and brightness of the moon will not give light for you.

וְיְהִי־לָךְ יְהוָה לְאֹר עוֹלָם וְאֱלֹהֶיךָ לְתִפְאֶרְתְּךָ

The Lord will become your light of the world and your god will become your glory (Is. 60:19).

JPS translated the first line, “No longer shall you *need* the sun”; however, literally, it translates as “The sun will no longer be.” Although John wrote, “no longer need,” he seemed to be also saying the sun will “no longer be.”<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Cf. Is 60:1: קוֹמִי אֹרִי כִּי בָא אֹרְךָ וְכָבוֹד יְהוָה עָלֶיךָ זָרַח כִּי־הִנֵּה הַחֹשֶׁךְ יִכְסֶה־אֶרֶץ וְעֶרְפָּל לְאֻמִּים וְעָלֶיךָ יִזְרַח : יְהוָה וְכָבוֹדוֹ עָלֶיךָ יִרָא



Thus, in Revelation, John designated these two entities of light as God and the Lamb.

καὶ ἡ πόλις οὐ χρειάν ἔχει τοῦ ἡλίου οὐδὲ τῆς σελήνης, ἵνα φαίνωσιν αὐτῇ,

And the city does not need the sun nor the moon to give light to her,

ἡ γὰρ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐφώτισεν αὐτήν,

For the Glory of God illuminated her,

καὶ ὁ λύχνος αὐτῆς τὸ ἀρνίον.

And her lamp: the Lamb (21:23)

John interpreted Isaiah's description, "the Lord will become the light of the world" using the *ḥāṛīzā* and *ribbû* hermeneutics. The *ḥāṛīzā* hermeneutic tied Isaiah's description of God as the sun and moon to Genesis's description of the creation of the sun and moon. The *ribbû* hermeneutic, then, did not allow repetition, thus Isaiah must have been referring to two different entities.

While in Isaiah, God was both lights, in Revelation God was one light and the Lamb was the other light. While in Genesis, the sun and the moon lit up the heavens, in Revelation, God and the Lamb light up the new Jerusalem from within—although the new Jerusalem itself is part of the new heavens (combined with earth).

The identity of the Lamb as the lamp may have been a *hariza* to Is 62:1,

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upon you. For look! The darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will dawn upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.

למען ציון לא אֶחָשֶׁה

For Zion's sake will I not be quiet,

וּלְמַעַן יְרוּשָׁלַם לֹא אֶשְׁקֹט

and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be silent,

עַד־יֵצֵא כְּנֹגֶה צְדָקָה

until the righteousness goes out as brightness,

וְיִשׁוּעָתָהּ כְּלַפִּיד יִבְעָר:

and her salvation as a burning lamp.

“Salvation” in Hebrew is the feminine form of the name of Jesus. Thus, the Lamb being a lamp in the new Jerusalem may be an allusion to this verse.

John never mentioned Jesus by name as being in the new Jerusalem. Instead, he described a Lamb. The use of the term “Lamb” may be a *hārīzā* to Isaiah 53:7a,

נִגָּשׁ וְהוּא נִעְנֶה

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,

וְלֹא יִפְתַּח־פִּי

yet he opened not his mouth:

כַּשֶּׁה לְטֹבַח יוֹבֵל

he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter (KJV)

Thus, John’s closeness to the book of Isaiah likely influenced his depiction of a slain lamb in Revelation.

John of Patmos transformed the lights of Genesis into God and the Lamb using *ḥāīzā* and *ribbû* analyses of the passage in Isaiah. The two main lights which resided in heaven outside of earth in Genesis, became the illuminating entities of God and the Lamb who resided inside the new conjoined heaven-earth. The metaphoric language in Isaiah was made more physical, literal, and material in John's visions.

#### DAYS 5 & 6A: CREATURES

On day five and the first half of day six of creation in Genesis, God created the fish, birds, and animals. In Revelation, the new creation lacked an earthly sea in which the fish could reside. John's new creation also lacked heavenly water which created the sky for the birds to fly in.

Revelation's new creation also lacked animals. Other prophetic visions of paradise, such as Isaiah, described a new order of animals that did not fight or kill, the lion lay down with the lamb, much like prelapsarian Eden. John's new Jerusalem Eden seemed to reflect an even earlier version of Eden—before the creation of animals. Animals' association with the curse of Genesis may have been why they were not mentioned in Revelation—they were reminders of the bad "first things."

Revelation's differences with the Eden of Genesis: exclusion of dark from light, exclusion of the sea, and exclusion of animals, point to a negation of certain symbols in Genesis. A binary negation or a reaction to a text demonstrated influence from the text. Isaiah also created a new type of Eden. In Isaiah's paradise there were animals like in Eden and they were peaceful: there was no

serpent eating dust, no lion eating straw like an ox, and no wolf and lamb feeding together. This was not the case in Revelation's Eden in which there are no animals at all.

In Revelation, this negation of animals is likely because they were some of the bad "beginning things" that were "forgotten." First of all, animals were no longer needed for food in the new Edenic Jerusalem. While this was also true in the garden of Eden—animals were not eaten until after the flood—the animals were part of creation and thus had a role as an etiology of the world. The new Jerusalem could be reimagined without animals, thus there was no need for their etiology. Animals were not necessary for food since the Tree of Life gave all the food required. Similarly, in the first Eden the plants (not animals) were given to humankind for food. This final Eden seemed to do the same. The animals were superfluous and dangerous for the new Jerusalem.

Secondly, there was no longer a need for animals for sacrifice. There was no sacrifice in the garden of Eden. The first sacrifice and first death occurred after the curse: God sacrificed the first animals to make skins for Adam and Eve, Abel offered God the best of his flock, Cain killed Abel. In the new Jerusalem of Revelation, "Death is no longer" ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι—including animal death.<sup>317</sup> John's lack of sacrifice also paralleled early Jewish depictions of a transformed cult in the days to come. Leviticus Rabba predicted that "all sacrifices and prayer would be abolished in the Messianic days, except for thanks offerings and thanksgiving prayers, because, as Isaac Judah Abrabanel

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<sup>317</sup> "Death will no longer exist" (Rev. 21:3).

(1437-1508) explained, in those happy days there would be no Evil Inclination and thus no sin.”<sup>318</sup> John’s depiction of God’s servants before his throne also was similar to some early midrashim who described people killed on earth as offerings before God.

Thirdly, and probably most importantly, animals’ association with the curse of Genesis was another reason they did not persist. In Genesis, the serpent deceived Eve, Eve tempted Adam, and they received curses and mortality. In John’s effort to create a more perfect Eden, he eliminated elements that caused the expulsion from the garden, namely the cleverest of all the animals, the serpent. He also did away with the rest of the animals for safe measure. This time, there was no serpent who might bring death and destruction as he did in the first Eden. Revelation’s new creation was a do-over, containing nothing that could lead to a repeat of the first curse: *καὶ πᾶν κατάθεμα οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι* (“And every cursed thing will not exist again”) (Rev. 22:3).

In contrast, Isaiah’s vision described a new Jerusalem as a utopia where animals lived in peace with each other.

וְכִי הִנְנִי בּוֹרֵא אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם גִּילָה וְעַמָּה מְשׁוֹשׁ:

...for look I am creating Jerusalem rejoicing, and her people exulting!

וְגַלְתִּי בִירוּשָׁלַם וְשִׁשְׁתִּי בְעַמִּי וְלֹא־יִשְׁמַע בָּהּ עוֹד קוֹל בְּכִי וְקוֹל זַעֲקָה:

זָאֵב וְטֵלָה יִרְעוּ כְאֶחָד וְאַרְיֵה כִבְקָר, יֹאכַל־תְּבֵן וְנִחַשׁ עִפְרָ לַחֲמוֹ לֹא־יִרְעוּ וְלֹא־יִשְׁחִיתוּ:

בְּכָל־הָר קִדְשֵׁי אֱמֵר יְהוָה: ׀

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<sup>318</sup> Rafael Patai, *The Messiah Texts*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979) 247-248.

...A wolf and a lamb will graze together. A lion will eat grass like a head of cattle. A snake will eat dust as his food. They will not bring evil and they will not destroy anywhere on my holy mountain, says the Lord. (Is. 65: 19b, 25).

In Isaiah's vision, the animals would live in vegetarian peace. The serpent would still only get dust to eat, an allusion to the curse in Genesis; signifying powerlessness. No animals would harm the people in that holy place. Revelation differed from both the Garden of Eden and Isaiah's utopia in that there was no mention of a serpent or any animals. It was not enough to make the serpent powerless, in John's new Jerusalem the satanic serpent was "forgotten."

Moreover, there were no spaces for the animals to live: no sea for the fish and water animals, no sky for the birds, and no wild land for the wild animals. Each of these three places was associated with curses: sea with Tiamat, sky with the flood, and uncultivated land with demons. Domesticated animals, on the other hand, were associated with sacrifice in the temple, feasts, and wealth--yet, even these do not appear in John's new Eden.

Perhaps the reason for the lack of domestic animals is, again, the association with the curses of Eden. John's Revelation in a sense moves the new Adam back into prelapsarian and presapiential Eden, and even further back to before God formed Eve from Adam's body, and back before God tried to find a companion from the animals for Adam.

More than Isaiah's utopian vision of long life and peace, Revelation's Edenic Jerusalem vision was a new life free of pain, toil, and death. Unlike the

garden of Eden after the curses, John's Eden reflected the road not taken: eating of the Tree of Life rather than the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. John midrashically took Isaiah's reference to first things being forgotten and overlaid it with the creation account of Genesis. John erased the bad "beginnings" of Eden and preserved the good "beginnings." While John's first mention of a new heaven and new earth seemed to be an allusion to Isaiah, as he continued to describe this new creation it became clearer that the backdrop of his new creation was the Genesis original.

In Revelation lay an echo of the creation story of Genesis modified through midrashic *ḥāṛzā*, especially to Isaiah. Additionally, since John was not operating in a vacuum, these midrashic connections reflected rabbinical midrashic interpretations of his time. Moreover, as a Jew in the first century, John's visions and modifications also reflected the millennium of Jewish contemplation on what went wrong in the original creation.

Torah primacy, a characteristic of midrash, was arguably found in this first mention of a new heaven and new earth. John based his vision of a new heaven and earth on the paradigmatic creation story in Genesis, despite "the first heaven and first earth" going away. Thus, the exegetical background of Revelation 21:1--the opening verse for John's visions of the new Jerusalem—was a *ḥāṛzā* of Genesis 1:1 to Isaiah 65:17.

The *ḥāṛzā* connection between Genesis's creation and Isaiah's new creation was the main key to understanding how John derived his new Jerusalem vision. As in Isaiah's vision, John described the "first things" as going away.

John's interpretation of this phrase seemed to be that the bad elements of Eden were forgotten while the good elements remained. There were no more animals and no more sea because of the *ḥānīzā* interpretation of Isaiah's phrase, "the first things will be forgotten" as a reference to the bad first things of Genesis's creation. Thus, there was no more sea dividing the land, dividing the sky, separating heaven from earth, or being a source of chaos. While Isaiah's new Jerusalem was a utopian ideal, John's new Jerusalem seemed to be restoring a primordial and prelapsarian Eden.

Understanding the principle of *ribbû* elucidated how John interpreted passages from the Prophets. This principle demonstrated an interpretation of Isaiah in which God became the sun, and the Lamb became the moon. Likewise, this principle explained how the Tree of Life from Genesis was restored and modified using *ribbû* interpretations of Ezekiel.

By considering John's vision of the new Jerusalem midrashically and basing his vision on Genesis's creation stories and Isaiah's' new creation visions, the composition of Revelation can be elucidated.

John conflated characteristics of eschatological visions of Jerusalem from the Prophets with a perfected Eden, using midrashic legerdemain and a millennium of Jewish reflection on the first creation stories. The midrashic approach explained the transformation of the first five and a half days of the Genesis creation story into the new Edenic Jerusalem. The following chapters will further unravel how the midrashic approach explains the transformation of



Adam and Eve and the Sabbath from the Genesis account into the new  
Jerusalem account.

## CHAPTER 5

### JOHN'S NEW JERUSALEM MIDRASH ON CREATION: DAY 6B

There are two labels for the people who inhabit John's new creation: son and bride. There is also a label for the people who are barred from the new Jerusalem: transgressors. The significance of John's son, bride, and transgressors can be better understood through the lens of midrash—both the midrashic techniques and the midrashic traditions. Midrashic techniques explain the complicated connections to Hebrew scriptures which help define the labels of son, bride, and transgressors. Midrashic traditions help elucidate the way other Jews of Late Antiquity thought about the terms son, bride, and transgressors. John of Patmos's characters in the new Jerusalem are clarified when both midrashic techniques and midrashic traditions are considered.

The principle of Torah primacy would point to John's son, bride, and transgressors as a development of Genesis's Adam and Eve; however, these archetypes do not follow the chronology of the pair from the Genesis creation story. In Genesis, Adam and Eve first inhabit Eden, then Adam and Eve transgress and are expelled from Eden. Instead of this diachronic progression of Adam and Eve from included to excluded, in the final two chapters of Revelation, John envisioned concurrently the blessed ones who inhabited Paradise and the transgressors who were expelled from Paradise.

## SON

There were three main meanings associated with the word “son.” “Son” was reminiscent of Adam but was also a messianic title and reminiscent of the promises to Abram (as discussed in the last chapter) and to David. In Revelation, the promises to Abram and David found their fulfillment in the people who inherited the promised land, the new Edenic Jerusalem.

The key verse from John’s vision of the new Jerusalem that described the people of God as “son” was Revelation 21:7. This verse described the people as God’s own son, a title usually reserved for the messiah or the king.

John writes:

ὁ νικῶν κληρονομήσει ταῦτα,

The conquering one will inherit these things and

καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς

I will be to him God

καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός.

And he will be to me son (Rev. 21:7)<sup>319</sup>.

Some translations, such as the Annotated Jewish New Testament, translated υἱός as “children.” This was a more egalitarian translation but it obscured the echoes of the word “son.”<sup>320</sup> The word “son” was an echo of many ideas in the Hebrew Bible, especially, Adam (the first son of God), the messianic kingly

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<sup>319</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own

<sup>320</sup> The Buber-Rozenwieg *leitwort* method of translation maintains consistency in the words used so that one can “hear” the “echoes” of the Hebrew words used in the text.

connotations of the son of God, and the synonym for son: “seed.” Each of these three nuances of the word “son” influenced John’s description of the son in the new Jerusalem.

#### 1. SON AS NEW ADAM

First, “son” denoted a new Adam. In the Genesis Jahwist creation account, God formed the first male human out of the earth, essentially siring a son, whom he then gives the garden of Eden. Similarly, in the new creation, God’s “son” inherits the new Jerusalem, a new Eden. This new Edenic Jerusalem was enlarged to make up a massive part of the earth. Moreover, this new Adam did not succumb to temptation to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This new Adam was a “conqueror” who was given permission to eat from the Tree of Life.

#### 2. SON AS KING MESSIAH

Secondly, “son” denoted the messiah, the promised king, the son of David. John’s phrase, “I will be his father and he will be my son,” may be *ḥānāzā* of two messianic passages. One was Nathan’s prophecy to David, that one of his descendants, his “seed,” will reign forever and will build God’s house. The other was Psalm 2 which described a king reigning on Zion as God’s son.

Nathan’s monarchal prophecy to David described a time when Solomon, David’s heir, will build the First Temple. Because of the description of this kingdom as eternal, this prophecy was subsequently interpreted as a reference to an eternal messianic king and to an eternal Jerusalem.

כִּי יִמְלֵאוּ יָמֶיךָ וְשָׁכַבְתָּ אֶת־אֲבוֹתֶיךָ

When your days are filled up and you lie down with your fathers,

וְהִקְיַמְתִּי אֶת־זַרְעֶךָ אַחֲרָיִךְ

I will establish your seed after you

אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶיךָ וְהִכִּינֹתִי אֶת־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ:

Which will come forth from within you and I will establish his kingdom.

הוּא יִבְנֶה־בַּיִת לִשְׁמִי

He will build a house for my name,

וְלִכְנֹנְתִי אֶת־כִּסֵּא מַמְלַכְתּוֹ עַד־עוֹלָם:

And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה־לּוֹ לְאָב וְהוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי לְבֵן

I will become his father and he will be my son (2 Sam 7:13-14a).

In this passage, David's kingly descendent was described as both his "seed" and God's "son." John may have connected this passage to the new Jerusalem as a new "house for my name" which the new "son" builds for God's name.

In this passage, the king built God's temple, just as Solomon did.

Solomon, however, did not reign forever. But in Revelation, God as king built the new Jerusalem, and his "son" reigned with him forever.<sup>321</sup>

John's description of the people in the new Jerusalem as God's son was a *ḥarizah* to Psalm 2:

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<sup>321</sup> Similarly, Adela Yarbro Collins describes three types of new Jerusalem among the DSS: people, place built by God; place built by people ("The Dream of a New Jerusalem at Qumran," 231-254).

וְאֲנִי נִסְכַּתִּי מֶלֶךְ עַל־צִיּוֹן הַר־קֹדֶשׁ׃

I myself have installed my king upon Zion, my holy hill.

אֶסְפָּרָה אֶל חֵק יְהוָה

I will relate the decree of the Lord:

אָמַר אֵלַי בְּנִי אַתָּה אֵלַי

He said to me, “My son you are, mine” (Psalm 2:6-7).

This was similar to the passage in Revelation (mentioned above) where John wrote,

καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός

I will be to him God, and he shall be to me a son (21:7b).

John referred to the people in the new Jerusalem as “son.” As in Psalm 2, they were installed upon “Zion, my holy hill.”

Additionally, much like the son who reigned in Psalm 2, John described conquering sons as reigning in the new Jerusalem:

ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεὸς φωτίσει ἐπ’ αὐτούς, καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.

For the Lord God will shine upon them and they will reign forever and ever (Revelation 22:5).

In the full context of this verse, though, it is unclear if “they” referred to God’s people or to God and the Lamb.

καὶ πᾶν κατάθεμα οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι.

No longer will there be anything accursed,

καὶ ὁ θρόνος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου ἐν αὐτῇ ἔσται,

but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it,

καὶ οἱ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ λατρεύσουσιν αὐτῷ,

and his servants will worship him.

καὶ ὄψονται τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν.

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

καὶ νύξ οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσιν χρείαν ἰφωτὸς λύχνου καὶ

ἰφωτὸς οἴλου,

And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun,

ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεὸς φωτίσει αὐτούς,

for the Lord God will be their light,

καὶ βασιλεύσουσιν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων (NA28 Rev:3-5).

and they will reign forever and ever (ESV Rev 22:3-5).

“They” in this verse either referred to the servants or God and the Lamb. Since, in the previous verse God alone will be their light, “they” could be referring to the “they” who “need no light of lamp or sun.” Of course, God would also be ruling, and, since both God and the Lamb will be on the throne, “they” could be God and the Lamb ruling from the throne together.

Nevertheless, in Revelation, the “son” who “conquered” and “served” God could also be the kingly “son” of Psalm 2 who reigned. Interestingly, John did not describe Jesus with the word “son.” Moreover, evidence that the “son” referred to the people of Israel is reinforced by John’s reliance on Isaiah.

### 3. SON AS SEED

Isaiah often described the people of God as the “seed of Jacob.” “Seed” could be collective or singular; thus, it would make more sense to call the people of God the collective “seed” rather than the singular synonym “son.” Even so, John’s choice of the word “son” also implied “seed.” Thus, John was alluding to the biblical references of the “seed” of Abraham, Isaac, and/or Jacob.

וְהוֹצֵאתִי מִיַּעֲקֹב זֶרַע וּמִיְהוּדָה יוֹרֵשׁ הָרַי

I will bring out of Jacob as seed, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains;

וְיִרְשׁוּהָ בְּחִירָי וְעַבְדָּי יִשְׁכְּנוּ-שָׁמָּה:

and my chosen ones shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there (Is 65:9).

In this verse “seed” began as a singular reference to the “inheritor” but then became a collective reference to “my chosen ones” and “servants.” The “son” in John’s visions also is “an inheritor of my mountains,” also are “my chosen ones,” and also are “my servants,” and also “dwell there.”<sup>322</sup> Thus, John called the people of God “son” to express the promises made to the “seed” which find fulfilment in the new Jerusalem.

John calling the people of the new Jerusalem “son” signified three things. First, because John’s new Jerusalem was like a new Eden, the “son,” then, was like a new Adam. Secondly, “son” was a messianic title: “son” recalled the

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<sup>322</sup> Cf. Is 41:8, 42:1, 45:19



promises to King David that he would have a son (or seed) who would rule on the throne.

Thirdly, the use of the word “son” was an allusion to the word “seed” which recalled the promises to the “son” or “seed” of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. One of the many promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob was that their seed would inherit the land (of Israel). The “son” then in the new Edenic Jerusalem was not only a new Adam starting over but the “seed” who inherited all of the promises God made to his people, Israel, and the messianic “seed” who inherited the throne.

#### BRIDE

The “bride” was the female counterpart to the “son” in John’s visions. The “bride,” though did not live in the new Jerusalem; the “bride” was the new Jerusalem. The bride did not inherit the Tree of Life, the bride did not inherit the throne, the bride did not inherit the Land; the bride was the Land. As a bride, though, she was prepared for her wedding.

The identity of the “bride” may be multifaceted. First of all, unlike the “son” being connected to Adam; the bride was not connected to Eve. Perhaps the reason for this absence of a daughter was the negative connotations of Eve. One definition of “bride” was the people of Israel. The biblical prophetic books commonly used “bride” to describe the covenantal relationship between the people of Israel and God. Thus, in John’s description of the new Eden, the “son” and the “bride” may be the same thing: the chosen people of God. A second definition of bride will be considered in the following chapter: God’s presence. Two potential grooms will be considered here: the Lamb and God. In the

following chapter, a third potential groom will be considered, the son.

#### EVE'S DISINHERITANCE

Even though the new Jerusalem is like a new Eden, which meant that the people who populate it are like new Adams and Eves, the people are called “son” and “bride” rather than “son” and “daughter.” This may be because this new Jerusalem is not only new but an improved Eden, which meant the negative “first things” are “forgotten.” Eve, the daughter, was one of the negative first things.

One of the reasons the bride was not called the daughter in John's new Jerusalem may be because of Eve's association with the “fall” and the curses of the garden of Eden. The blame for listening to the serpent rested more heavily on Eve than Adam in early Jewish traditions.

For example, in Genesis Rabbah, Eve is not only blamed for listening to the serpent, she herself is conflated with the serpent.

ויקרא האדם שם אשתו חוה

The man named his wife Eve

נתנה כחוייתה ומצתתה [מירקין: ומיעצתן] כחוייה

She was given to him as an advisor, but she was found to be like a serpent

In this first example, Eve's name was compared to two other words. Eve's name *ḥawwāh* was compared with *ḥiwya*, an Aramaic word for serpent and *ḥawwah*, the Aramaic word for stating an opinion.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> This is connected to the word *ḥawwah* meaning to state an opinion (Freedman, 170 note 1).

This passage continued with another opinion on Eve. Not only did she lead Adam astray, but she lead all of humanity astray.

דָּבַר אַחַר חַוָּה, חִנָּה לָהּ אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן כַּמָּה דוֹרוֹת אַבְדָּה.

[Another matter: “Eve”,] the first man “showed” (חִנָּה) her how many generations she had made lost.

According to this opinion, Adam knew what Eve had done. Moreover, he showed her that she caused many generations to lose Eden. Many generations, though, was not forever.

This passage continued with a third opinion on Eve which is similar to the first: Eve was like the serpent.

וְרַבִּי אַחָא אָמַר חִוּיָּהּ חִוּיָּהּ וְאַתָּה חִוּיָּהּ דְּאָדָם<sup>324</sup>

R' Aha said, [as] the serpent was your serpent, [so] you were Adam's serpent.<sup>325</sup>

In the biblical account, Eve failed to overcome the temptation of the serpent and ate the forbidden fruit. Then, Eve offered the fruit to Adam. This rabbinical passage argued that Eve herself was the serpent for Adam. Just as the serpent offered the fruit to Eve, so Eve offered the fruit to Adam.

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<sup>324</sup> *Bereishit Rabba*, vocalized by משה אריה מירקין Moshe Arie Mirqain, part 1, (Tel Aviv: Yavneh Publishing House, 1968), 80. Based on the unvocalized text by יהודה תיאודור וחנוך אלבק J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary*, 3 Volumes (Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1965), vol. 1, 96.

<sup>325</sup> Genesis Rabbah 20, 11.

There were three plays on words with Eve's name in this midrash—none of them are from the biblical explanation. In the biblical text, Adam named his wife *ḥawwāh*, meaning “giver of life” as was explained in the biblical text, but in this midrashic passage there were three alternative and negative explanations. Two are plays on the word for “serpent.”

Eve's name *ḥawwāh* shared its root with *ḥiwyā*, an Aramaic word for serpent. The first explanation connected Eve's name with both the word for “advisor” and the word for “serpent.” The first explanation was that Eve was given to man to be “as his advisor” כחוויתה but was found to be “like his serpent” כחוייה. The second explanation for Eve's name was that Adam “showed her” תָּהַן לָהּ how many generations she made lost. The third explanation was that Eve was like a serpent for Adam: “the serpent was your serpent, but you were Adam's serpent” תְּהִיָּה סֶרְפִיךָ וְאַתָּה תְּהִיָּה סֶרְפִי. Again, this explanation tied the root of Eve's name to the name for serpent.

If this connotation of Eve with the serpent was shared by John, it would help explain why John only used the masculine “son” in his description of the people who populate the new Jerusalem, and not “son and daughter.” Thus, John has a new Adam in his new creation Paradise but not a new Eve.

In John's new Edenic Jerusalem, the son (Adam) had a redeemed role but, there was no mention of a daughter (Eve). Since, according to the the midrashic interpretation of Genesis 2, Eve and the serpent robbed humanity of Paradise and immortality, in Revelation's portrayal of the new Eden, Eve and the serpent (and other animals) no longer existed. Eve and the serpent were

reminders of the curse— “first things” that “went away”: τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν (Rev 21:4). The cypher *ḥāṛīzā* for John’s new Jerusalem was the eschatological passage in Isaiah connected to Genesis: “The first things will not be remembered and will not weigh on the heart” (Is 65:17). The “first things” or “beginnings” were the curse and the things associated with the curse, i.e., Eve, i.e., the daughter. Thus, there was no opportunity for John’s new Eden to be corrupted. Nevertheless, there was an acceptable female in this new Paradise: the “bride.”

#### THE BRIDE AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The “bride” in Revelation was an archetype of a pure type of woman, in contrast to the problematic Eve. This pure archetypal bride had the potential for either good or bad as a married woman: good, such as the exalted wife of Proverbs 39; or bad, such as the unfaithful wife often described by the prophets. Thus, Jerusalem as bride rather than Eve and rather than wife was uncomplicatedly good.

One possible identification of the Jerusalem bride was the people of Israel. In the Hebrew Bible and elsewhere, God’s people were most often identified with the moniker “Israel” or “the children of Israel”; however, occasionally, “Jerusalem” took the place of “Israel” in this label.

Just as the name “Israel” could mean either the land or the people, so too “Jerusalem” could mean either the city or the people. One difference, though, was the gender of these two terms. “Israel” was another name for Jacob (the male eponymous primogenitor of the Israelite people). “Jerusalem” and “city,” though, were exclusively female terms in.

In some prophetic texts the gender of Israel (the people) was changed to female by using a signifier such as bride, wife, or Jerusalem. For example, the prophet Isaiah switched back and forth between labeling the people of God as the male “seed of Jacob,” and the female “bride” or “wife” of God.

John’s designation of Jerusalem as a bride may be an allusion to Isaiah. The following passage in Isaiah described God making promises about Jerusalem and reassuring her that he would never stop loving her and protecting her. God would turn her into a crown of jewels, nations would flock to her bringing gifts, she would be lit from within, she would be named “new,” her sons would marry her, and God would rejoice as a bridegroom over her.

לְמַעַן צִיּוֹן לֹא אֶחְשֶׁה וּלְמַעַן יְרוּשָׁלַם לֹא אֶשְׁקֹט

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,

עַד-יֵצֵא כְנֶגְהָ צְדָקָה וְיִשׁוּעָתָה כְּלֶפֶיד יִבְעָר:

until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch.

וְרָאוּ גוֹיִם צְדָקָתְךָ וְכָל-מְלָכִים כְּבוֹדְךָ

The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory,

וְקָרָא לְךָ שֵׁם חָדָשׁ אֲשֶׁר פִּי יְהוָה יִקְבְּנוּ:

and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give [or engrave.

וְהָיִיתְ עֲטָרַת תְּפָאֶרֶת בְּיַד-יְהוָה

You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,

וְצִנּוֹף וְצִנּוֹף "וְצִנּוֹף" מְלוּכָה בְּכַף־אֱלֹהִים:

and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

לֹא־יֵאמָר לְךָ עֲזוּבָה וְלֹא־רָצָה לֹא־יֵאמָר עוֹד שְׁמָמָה

You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,

כִּי לְךָ יִקְרָא חֶפְצִי־בָּהּ וְלֹא־רָצָה בְּעוֹלָהּ

but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married;

כִּי־חֶפֶץ יְהוָה בָּךְ וְאַרְצְךָ תִּבְעֵל:

for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married.

כִּי־יִבְעַל בְּחוּר בְּתוּלָה יִבְעִלוּךָ בְּנֵיךָ

For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you,

וּמִשּׁוֹשׁ חֲתָן עַל־כֶּלֶה יֵשִׁישׁ עֲלֶיךָ אֱלֹהִים:

and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

כִּי לְךָ יִקְרָא חֶפְצִי־בָּהּ וְלֹא־רָצָה בְּעוֹלָהּ

because you will be named, My Delight is in Her, and your land,<sup>326</sup>

Married,

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<sup>326</sup> In this passage the land is a conflation of the people and one particular land, the promised land. In this passage God marries the land. //Adamah is cursed on account of Adam (Gen 3:17)—connection between person and land both in curse and in similarity of names.

Cf. Gershom Scholem describes an early Jewish view of *hieros gamos* as God marrying the female personification of the land, called "Edem," a combination of the words Eden and *adamah*. Adam is the symbol of the union of God and Edem. In *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, translated by Ralph Manheim, New York; Schocken Books, 1965, 164f. This idea plays on the theme found here of the conflation of land and people as well as the idea of God marrying the land/people.

כִּי־חֲפֹץ יְהוָה הָיָה וְאֶרֶץ תִּבְעַל:

for in her is the delight of the Lord and her land will be married

כִּי־יִבְעַל בְּחֹרֶב בְּתוּלָהּ יִבְעֲלוּךָ בְּנֵיךָ

For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you,

וּמְשׁוֹשׁ חַתָּן עַל־כִּלְיָהּ יִשְׂשׂוּ עָלֶיךָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ

and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (ESV Is. 62:1-4).

In this passage in Isaiah, Jerusalem represented five things: the city, the land, the people, the people's bride, and God's bride. The people and the land were linked in Isaiah's passage.<sup>327</sup>

Jerusalem as people signified all of the people of Israel. Jerusalem as city signified all of the land of Israel. Jerusalem as bride, though, had a dual meaning. Jerusalem was both the bride of the "sons" and the bride of God.

In Isaiah, God was not always a loving husband to his bride. Nevertheless, his anger was brief. Moreover, God promised to restore the people to the land and to himself. For example, Isaiah wrote,

כִּי בַעֲלִיךָ עֲשִׂיךָ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ

For your husband is your maker, the Lord of armies is his name.

וּגְאֻלְךָ קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ יְקָרָא:

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<sup>327</sup> The fluidity of people and land is taken further in the writings of Rav Kuk who argues that the land of Israel infuses the Jewish people with their Jewishness when they live on it. Kuk was the first rabbi of Palestine before Israel was created in 1948.



Your redeemer is called the holy one of Israel, God of all the land.

כִּי־כְאִשָּׁה עֲזַבְתָּהּ וְעִצְבוֹת הָיִים קִרְאַךָ יְהוָה

For like an abandoned wife, pained in heart, the Lord has called you—

וְאִשָּׁת נְעוּרִים כִּי תִמְאַס אֱמֶר אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

A wife of one's youth, because she was rejected, says your God.

בְּרִגְעַ קָטָן עֲזַבְתִּיךָ וּבְרַחֲמַיִם גְּדֹלִים אֶקְבְּצֶךָ:

For barely a moment I abandoned you, but with expansive compassion I will gather you back (Is. 54:5-7).

In this simile of the rejected wife, God assured the people of their restoration to the Land and to God.

Isaiah's depiction of the people as a bride affected the labels he used.

Since Hebrew words were usually either masculine or feminine, Isaiah included feminine words when describing the people of Israel. "Jerusalem" was a feminine word while "Israel" was either feminine or masculine. "Israel," moreover, had masculine connotations since it was another name for the male Jacob who bore 12 sons. These 12 sons in turn, created the 12 tribes of Israel. On the other hand, "Jerusalem" and "city" were exclusively feminine and "land" was almost exclusively feminine. In Isaiah's metaphors of the people as God's bride, Isaiah used the feminine term for the people: Jerusalem.

John was influenced by Isaiah's depictions; however, John often filtered Isaiah's images through midrashic interpretations of Eden. Like Isaiah, John described the people alternately as the singular or collective "son" which

corresponded to Isaiah's "seed" and the singular but collective "bride." Thus, both Isaiah and John described the people as male and female, not concurrently, but consecutively and alternately. In the female's relationship with God, she was the bride and God was the husband. In the male's relationship, he was the son and God was the father. These two people never had a relationship with each other and were not a human couple. Rather, they were part of a pair in which the other half was God.<sup>328</sup>

#### TRANSGRESSORS

John's list of transgressions overlapped in some ways with other lists of ancient transgressions, such as rabbinical sin lists and Pauline sin lists. John's list, did however, diverge from these ancient transgression lists in some areas. This could partly be explained by the idea that John was making a connection to the sins of Eden. This could also be explained through *ḥārīzā* to Isaiah who excluded the unclean and uncircumcised from the final Jerusalem. John seemed to develop his descriptions of who was excluded from the new Jerusalem through all three of these: ancient sin lists, Genesis, and Isaiah.

John specifically named eight types of transgressors who were excluded from the new Jerusalem:

τοῖς δὲ δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις καὶ ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ φονεῦσι

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<sup>328</sup> John did not seem to be influenced by Eden in this scenario unless one considered Adam's relationship with God before the creation of Eve. In the pre-Eve depiction, God showed Adam all the animals. Similarly, in Revelation, there was no Eve and no animals. There was just Adam and God. In the following chapter, the idea that God was the bride and Adam was the groom will be considered.

But the cowardly and unfaithful and the abhorrent and murderers<sup>329</sup>

καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμάκοις

And licentious and those who practice divination,

καὶ εἰδωλολάτραις καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ψευδέσιν

Slaves of idols and all who are false,

τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ,

Their portion is in the sea of fire and sulfur;

ὃ ἐστὶν ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος

This is the second death (Rev 21:8).

Each type of transgressor merited the inheritance of death. Like the original Adam and Eve, they were expelled from the new Paradise. Instead of inheriting the water of life and the Tree of Life of the new Eden, their portion was the water of death, outside of the new Jerusalem.

While possible that John borrowed this list of transgressors from another source; it was also possible he developed it through midrashic *hāriṣā* with Genesis. One supporting piece of evidence is the fact that John's list did not line up entirely with either extant writings of Paul or rabbinical writings. If John modified the standard sin list, the question then would be, what were the reasons? If the hypothesis that John was basing the new Jerusalem on Eden was applied here, each of these eight descriptions could be tied to transgressions of the first family in Genesis: 1, cowardly; 2, unfaithful; 3,

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<sup>329</sup> "Murderers" could be a reference to the first murderer: Cain.

abhorrent; 4, murderers; 5, licentious; 6, practitioners of divination; 7, slaves of idols; and 8, those who are false.

#### PAUL'S SIN LISTS

John's list of eight transgressors only partially overlapped with Paul's lists of transgressors. With one of Paul's lists, 1 Cor 6:9-10, only two of the nine transgressors overlap: the sexually immoral and idolaters. Paul's seven other examples of transgressors are different than John's: adulterers, homosexual offenders, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, slanderers, and swindlers," although the first two, "homosexual offenders" and "adulterers" might be included with the category of "licentious." With Paul's list of the "acts of the flesh" in Gal 5:19-21, four of the descriptions were like John's, including: sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry and witchcraft. Paul's other eleven transgressions were different: debauchery, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, and orgies.

#### RABBINICAL SIN LISTS

While there were many transgressions that were forbidden in rabbinical writings, there was one list of absolutely forbidden transgressions. There was a rabbinical principle that life must be preserved even if a transgression must be committed; however, there were certain transgression that must never be committed even if one must sacrifice one's life. *Pikuaḥ ha-nefeš* was the principle that one must rescue a life rather than die for a commandment. This was also described as "transgress and do not be killed" (יעבור ואל יהרג). This

principle was an interpretation of the verse: "You shall keep my decrees and my laws that a person will do and live by them, I am God." (Leviticus 18:5) Nevertheless, several commandments cannot under any circumstances be violated.

In Sanhedrin 74a (12), the rabbis discussed which commandments must never be transgressed, even to the point of sacrificing one's life. After this passage, they continued to discuss why these three categories cannot be violated and they also bring up other reasons for standing firm in the face of persecution to the point of death.

כל עבירות שבתורה אם אומרין לאדם עבור ואל תהרג יעבור ואל יהרג חוץ מעבודת  
כוכבים וגילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים

All transgressions that are in the Torah, if one says to a man, "Transgress and you will not be killed," then transgress and do not be killed, except for the transgressions: idol worship, forbidden sexual relations, and shedding of blood (Sanhedrin 74a).

#### JOHN'S SIN LISTS

The *pikuaḥ ha-nefeš* transgressions were similar to three of the eight forbidden sins from John's list of transgressors who did not inherit the new Jerusalem: slaves of idols, licentious people, and murderers. Idol worship described the activities of "slaves of idols." Forbidden sexual relations described the activities of "licentious people." Shedding of blood described the activities of "murderers."

#### IDOLATERS, COWARDLY, AND UNFAITHFUL

Keeping the background of *pikuaḥ ha-nefeš* in mind, it could follow that the category, “slaves of idols” was bundled together with two other transgressions from John’s list: the cowardly and the unfaithful. This was because according to some accounts from late antiquity, Jewish people were tested with idolatry. If they would not sacrifice to idols, they were killed. To uphold the commandment to not worship idols, they would need to be faithful and brave.

This situation could be compared to the garden of Eden: instead of “sanctifying the name” of God (*qidduš hašēm*) by standing firm in the face of temptation by the serpent, Adam and Eve cowardly and unfaithfully turned from God’s commandment and ate the forbidden fruit. “Sanctifying the name” described Jews in the early centuries who refused to bow down to idols or offer sacrifices but instead bravely and faithfully sacrificed their lives for the sake of God’s commandments. People who “profaned the name” were those who gave in to the oppressors and offered the sacrifice to idols, thus becoming the “slaves of idols” rather than the servants of God.

#### MURDERERS

John’s fourth transgression, murder, was also one of the three Jewish transgressions for which one must die rather than commit. The first murderer was usually identified as Cain, but rabbinical commentary also applied it to Eve. As noted in the earlier cited midrash, one of the explanations for Eve’s name was that she brought death to many generations:

דָּבַר אַחַר חַוָּה, חַוָּה לֵה אָדָם הָרִאשׁוֹן כַּמָּה דוֹרוֹת אַבְדָּה.

[Another matter: “Eve”,] the first man “showed” (הִנִּיחַ) her how many generations she had made lost.<sup>330</sup>

The explanation for Eve’s name in the biblical text was that she was the “mother of all the living” but the explanation for her name in the rabbinical texts seemed to be that she was the mother of all the dead. In rabbinical commentary, usually Eve received the blame more than Adam for bringing death to humanity. אָבְדָה meant to “cause to perish.” To make perish could have either meant to make “lost” from the garden of Eden or to make “perish” as in bring death.

#### LICENTIOUS

John’s fifth description, “licentious,” was also one of the three forbidden Jewish transgressions, even to the point of death. Licentious may not have been surprising as a description for the garden of Eden since, in the Catholic tradition, sexual intercourse was considered the forbidden fruit. However, in the Jewish tradition, sexual intercourse between husband and wife was not considered “licentious,” but there were other categories of sexual intercourse that were considered fornication and were forbidden to the point of death. If John was connecting “licentious” to the garden of Eden, it would not be between Adam and Eve but instead to the rabbinical tradition of forbidden sex in the garden.

What may be surprising was the rabbinical idea that there were spirits or demons who had sexual relations with Adam and Eve. Genesis Rabba 20, 11 added another explanation for Eve’s name: mother of demons,

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<sup>330</sup> Genesis Rabbah 20, 11.

ר' סימון אמר אם כל חי, אמן של כל החיים,

Rabbi Simon said, “the mother of all living” means “of all living beings,”

דאמר ר' סימון:

For Rabbi Simon said:

כל מאה ושלשים שנה שפךשה חנה מאדם

All one hundred and thirty years that Eve was separated from Adam

[פירוש אדם צחיה “Adam separated from Eve” Albek],

היו רוחות הזכרים מתחממין ממנה, והיא יולדת מהם,

there were male spirits who were warmed from her and she gave birth from them,

ורוחות נקבות מתחממות מאדם, ומולידות ממנו<sup>331</sup>

while the female spirits were warmed by Adam and they bore from him.<sup>332</sup>

This passage described the proliferation of demons that plagued humanity. If John was thinking of those who acted “licentiously,” as Adam and Eve did in the garden, he was more likely to be thinking of forbidden intercourse with demons, than sanctified intercourse with each other.

While both Adam and Eve took part in the creation of demons, Eve alone was named “mother of all beings,” i.e., mother of demons. In John’s vision of the

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<sup>331</sup> משה אריה מירקין *Bereishit Rabba*, translated into modern Hebrew by Moshe Arieah Mirqain, part 1, (Tel Aviv: Yavneh Publishing House, 1968), 155.

<sup>332</sup> cf. Genesis Rabba XX, 11; Freedman, transl., London: Soncino Press, 1939, 170.



new Eden, there would be no human intercourse, no demons, and no more hybrid demon-human breeding.

#### DIVINATION

John's sixth transgression: "practitioners of φαρμάκοις" was related to but distinct from idol worship. Idol worship in the ancient world was a public communal offering, while divination was more private. Divination could involve either the Jewish God or other gods. If John was thinking of the garden of Eden, divination may have pertained to Eve "divining" the serpent's words. Another definition of φαρμάκοις was "poison." John may also have been referring to Adam and Eve being "poisoned" by the fruit. Thus, "practitioners of divination" could have also meant "practitioners of poison."<sup>333</sup> These definitions may have related to the transgressions of the garden of Eden: divining the words of the serpent and eating the poisonous fruit.

John seemed influenced by the rabbinical discussion of *pikuaḥ ha-nefeš* (to-the-point-of-death) transgressions that must not be committed in six of his transgressions: murder, illicit sex, and idolatry, cowardly, unfaithful, and divination. John also seemed influenced by midrashic interpretations of the transgressions of the garden of Eden: Eve as murderer, the falsehood, divination, and idol worship of the serpent, illicit sex with demons in the garden of Eden, and the cowardly, abhorrent, false, and unfaithful act of eating the fruit of the Tree of

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<sup>333</sup> This word could also mean "medicine" which seems to have been the serpents argument: Eve's eyes would be opened/healed by the medicine of the fruit.

Knowledge of Good and Evil. Thus, what expelled Adam and Eve from Eden and lead to death also expelled people from the new Eden, the new Jerusalem, and lead to the “second death” (Rev 21:8).

#### UNCLEAN

In addition to John’s transgressor list, John added the description “unclean” to those who will not get to enter the new Jerusalem. Transgressions made a person unclean; also being a gentile made a person unclean. John alluded to Isaiah’s prohibition of “unclean and uncircumcised” but left off “uncircumcised.” This modification likely occurred because of eschatological expectations concerning gentiles in the world to come, but the modification may also have occurred because of the lack of circumcision in Eden.

Revelation 22:15 may have been an editorial addition; however, if it was aligned with Rev 21:17, “dogs” may have been a synonym for “unclean.” Most commentators in fact, have argued that “dogs” referred to those who were unclean.<sup>334</sup> The uncleanliness of dogs may have stemmed from their eating of the bones from the temple. For example, a reconstructed text from the Dead Sea Scrolls said, “And one should not let dogs [enter the holy camp] because they might eat [some of the bones from the temple and the flesh upon] them because Jerusalem [is the holy camp, it is the place].”<sup>335</sup> One could also imagine dogs eating the bones of corpses which would incur impurity. In the new Jerusalem,

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<sup>334</sup> JANT 575; Lupieri 360

<sup>335</sup> 4QMMT (=4Q396 col. II line 9-11)

there would be no bones—neither from animals, because there were none, or people, because they could not die. Since “unclean” was one of the words John used in Rev 21:17, it was likely “dogs” (if original to John) also meant “unclean.” One commentator, however, argued “dogs” referred to homosexuals because Deuteronomy 23:18-19 uses the word dog as a synonym for a male prostitute.<sup>336</sup> If “dog” was referring to male prostitute, it would likely be a reference to temple prostitutes. Both male and female temple prostitutes were part of worship of foreign gods and thus would be a subsection of idol worship.

John’s use of “unclean” as a category of prohibited people was significant since “unclean” was more of a Jewish concern than a Christian one. It was one of the categories that separated early Jews and Christians. For example, “unclean” was not used by Paul as a category of sin. Paul wrote, “I am persuaded... that nothing is unclean in itself” (Rom 14:14). Moreover, “unclean” seemed to be a *ḥārīzā* to Isaiah’s vision of a new Jerusalem.

#### UNCIRCUMCISED

Isaiah 52 described the ones excluded from the new Jerusalem as “uncircumcised and unclean.”

עוֹרֵי עוֹרֵי לְבָשֵׁי עֲזָרָה צִיּוֹן

Arise, awaken! Get dressed (with) your strong (garments), Zion!

לְבָשֵׁי יָפִים בְּגָדֵי תִפְאֶרֶת יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ

Get dressed in your beautiful garments, Jerusalem the city of holiness.

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<sup>336</sup> JNTC 856

כִּי לֹא יִזְרְקוּ אֶבְרָהָהּ עַל עַרְלָהּ וְעַל אִמְרָתָהּ:

Because one who is uncircumcised and unclean will never again enter you (Is 52:1).

John's description echoed Isaiah's with slight variation. In previous passages, John described Jerusalem as a holy city dressed in beautiful garments. John's new Jerusalem also appeared and was adorned with finery. The one significant difference, was that the uncircumcised gentiles could bring gifts into John's new Jerusalem while in Isaiah's Jerusalem, the uncircumcised could not enter.

John described the nations and kings bringing their glory into the new city.

Thus, the “uncircumcised” gentiles could enter it:

καὶ περιπατήσουσιν τὰ ἔθνη διὰ τοῦ φωτὸς αὐτῆς,

By its light will the nations walk,

καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς φέρουσιν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτήν,

and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,

καὶ οἱ πυλῶνες αὐτῆς οὐ μὴ κλεισθῶσιν ἡμέρας,

and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.

νύξ γὰρ οὐκ ἔσται ἐκεῖ, καὶ οἴσουσιν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τῶν ἔθνῶν εἰς αὐτήν<sup>T</sup>.

They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.

καὶ οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν πᾶν κοινὸν καὶ ῥ[ό] ποιῶν<sup>1</sup> βδέλυγμα καὶ ψεῦδος

But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false,

εἰ μὴ οἱ γεγραμμένοι ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου<sup>1</sup>.

but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

καὶ οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν

And will not go into her:

πᾶν κοινὸν καὶ ποιῶν βδέλυγμα καὶ ψεῦδος,

Anything unclean and one who does abomination<sup>337</sup> and falsehood (ESV Rev. 21:27).

A common Christian explanation for John not mentioning the “uncircumcised” was that the early Christian Jewish writers of the New Testament eschewed the ritualistic laws of Torah; however, a less anachronistic explanation for John not calling the excluded ones “uncircumcised” would be that gentiles had a role to play in Jewish eschatology.

For example, Zechariah described a time when all the nations would go up to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkot.

וְהָיָה כָּל-הַנּוֹתָר מִכָּל-הַגּוֹיִם הַבָּאִים עַל-יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

It will be that every remnant from all the nations who came against

Jerusalem—

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<sup>337</sup> “Abomination” in Revelation may refer to *hārīzā* in Isaiah 44:19 or 66:17. Each of these passages occurred in the context of the rebirth of the city of Jerusalem and with descriptions of the abominations of those who may not enter. Similarly, John may be echoing his earlier description of Babylon as having abominations (Rev 17:4-5).

וְעָלוּ מִדְּי שָׁנָה בְּשָׁנָה לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לְמֶלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְלַחַג אֶת־חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת:

They will go up yearly to prostrate themselves before the king, Lord of armies, and to celebrate the pilgrimage festival of Sukkot (Zechariah 14:16).

Isaiah's exclusion of uncircumcised people did not align with Zechariah's concept here of surviving remnants of "all the nations" (uncircumcised Gentiles) going up to Jerusalem during Sukkot to prostrate themselves before God.

However, second Isaiah likewise described foreigners coming to the "house of prayer" on God's "sacred mount":

וּבְנֵי הַגֵּר הַנִּלְוִים עַל־יְהוָה לְשָׁרְתוֹ וְלֹא־הִבְדָּה אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה לְהִיזוֹת לוֹ לְעַבְדִּים  
כָּל־שֹׁמֵר שַׁבָּת מִחֻלְלוֹ וּמִמְחַזְקִים בְּבְרִיתִי:

And the sons of the foreigner who are joined to the LORD to serve him and to love the name of the LORD to be his for servants, all who keep from profaning Shabbat and are strong in the covenant...

וְהַבִּיאוּתֵימ אֶל־הַר קְדוֹשִׁי וְשִׁמְחֻתֵימ בְּבַיִת תְּפִלָּתִי עוֹלְתֵיהֶם וְזִבְחֵיהֶם לְרָצוֹן  
עַל־מִזְבְּחִי כִּי בֵּיתִי בֵּית־תְּפִלָּה יִקְרָא לְכָל־הָעַמִּים:

...and who bring to his holy mountain and rejoice in in the house of my prayer, their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar because my house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples (Isaiah 56:6-8).

This was the passage quoted by Jesus during his so-called cleansing of the temple. Jesus, like John, was strongly influenced by Isaiah. Both of these first

century Jews likely shared a first century Jewish conception of gentiles being part of the eschatological paradise.

Thus, similarly to Zechariah and to the later passage of Isaiah, John described the nations/gentiles coming up to the new Jerusalem. John wrote,

καὶ περιπατήσουσιν τὰ ἔθνη διὰ τοῦ φωτὸς αὐτῆς,

And the gentiles will walk by her light,

καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς φέρουσιν ἑτὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν<sup>1</sup> εἰς αὐτήν,

And the kings of the earth bring their glory into her

καὶ οἱ πυλῶνες αὐτῆς οὐ μὴ κλεισθῶσιν ἡμέρας,

And her gates will not close by day,

νύξ γὰρ οὐκ ἔσται ἐκεῖ

For night will not exist there

καὶ οἴσουσιν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰς αὐτήν<sup>T</sup> (NA28 Rev

21:24-26)

And they will bring the glory and the splendor of the nations into her

(Rev 21:24-26).

Unlike Zechariah's description of the nations coming up to Zion to celebrate Sukkot, John did not specify the holiday. Nevertheless, John described the nations bringing gifts, walking by the light of God, and receiving healing from the leaves of the Tree of Life. John's vision and Isaiah's vision both described a reversal of the Babylonian conquest and, in John's case also the Roman conquest. Instead of the gentile kings taking the "glory" (or holy relics and treasures) out of the Jerusalem temples, the gentiles and gentile kings bring

“glory” and gifts to Jerusalem.

John’s description of the new Jerusalem in this passage also had the gates remaining open since “night will not exist there.” The gates of Jerusalem (and other cities) were usually closed at night, but also at the approach of an enemy. The Jerusalem gates opening by themselves, such as in Yoma 39b (of the Babylonian Talmud), was interpreted as a prophecy of destruction since open gates allow in the gentile enemy. In this passage, the gates remained open, but without the forboding of Jerusalem’s destruction. Instead, in the new Jerusalem there is no more night and there is no more fear of invaders and thus no need to close the gates. Instead the gentiles arrive and enter bearing gifts.

Additionally, a connection to Genesis may also explain why uncircumcised people would be allowed into the new Jerusalem. “Uncircumcised” would not make sense in the context of the first Eden which predated the circumcision covenant with Abraham. In the book of Revelation, the transgressions echo those of Eden: listening to false gods, falsehood, divination, and murder, but not uncircumcision. John was connecting the ones expelled from the new Jerusalem Paradise to those expelled from Eden. Just like Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden for transgressing God’s commandment, and apparently having sex with demons, so too those who transgress God’s commandments, who are licentious, who listen to falsehood, who practice divination, who murder, who are abhorrent, and who are not courageous enough to follow God’s commandments.

Adam was not expelled for being uncircumcised, but for listening to his wife, an “unclean” woman. In the Bible and in rabbinical Judaism, woman are



ritually “unclean” during their menstrual periods, and for seven additional days, as well as for an extended period of time after giving birth. Additionally, in Orthodox Judaism, men will not touch a woman in case she is unclean. Thus, John’s reference to “unclean” may be another reference to Eve or woman in general.

These expelled ones were like Eve: their transgressions echoed the sins she committed in Eden. Likewise, neither Eve nor the expelled ones got to stay in the new Edenic Jerusalem or eat from the Tree of Life. While “daughter” was a reminder of the serpent and death, there was still a female representation of the people of God that was acceptable: the virgin bride.

Genesis’s creation provided the background for who John determined were the insiders and who were the outsiders in the new Eden. Adam and Eve were the humans in the original Eden. The son and the bride represented the humans in the new Eden. Adam and Eve transgressed God’s commandment and were expelled from the garden. John also described transgressors who were expelled from the new Jerusalem.

The influence of midrashic traditions was evident in John of Patmos’s development of his eschatological new creation characters. It is also clear that he used midrashic techniques to develop these characters, thus making it pivotal that the midrashic elements that connect to these terms are fully explained.

The new Jerusalem could also be thought of as the new garden of Eden which the “son” and the “bride” inherited. The transgressors were expelled from the garden and inherited the water of death much like the original transgressors

of the garden of Eden. However, the new son and bride were not transgressors and thus were allowed to remain in Paradise and inherit the Tree of Life.

However, if the bride was identified as the people of God, then there was no marriage between the son and the bride; rather the marriage was between God and the bride. Unlike Eve, the Jerusalem bride remained pure and faithful to her husband. There was no serpent (within this Jerusalem Eden) to tempt her.

If the bride was the people of God, then the son, also as the people of God, did not marry her. Rather, the son would be the “son of God” or the “seed” who fulfilled the promises that the “seed” would become a messianic king and promises that the “seed” would inherit the land.

If the son was the new Adam in John’s new Jerusalem, then he was recreated without Eve and without animals. He existed in the new Eden only with God. In this do-over, God stopped creation with Adam. Thus, Adam was incorruptible.

Instead of the son and the bride becoming transgressors (as Adam and Eve became transgressors), others carried that label. In John’s new Jerusalem, there were transgressors who were barred from entry. Unlike the original garden of Eden story, there was no crossover in the new Edenic Jerusalem between insiders and outsiders: the son and bride of the new Jerusalem could not become transgressors; the transgressors could not become inheritors.

Nevertheless, unlike the descriptions in Isaiah, the unclean were not associated with the uncircumcised. In John’s new Jerusalem, the uncircumcised gentiles may bring gifts and tribute (glory). The gates were open.

The backdrop of Eden may have helped explain how John determined the demarcation between insider and outsider. The inhabitants of the new Jerusalem could be compared to the creation of male and female humans on day six of Genesis's creation story. Likewise, John's transgressors could be compared to Adam and Eve becoming transgressors and being banished from the garden of Eden in the second (Jahwist) creation account. John likely had not only the account from Genesis in mind but also the subsequent Jewish interpretations of these accounts.

Thus, John's new Jerusalem was a reboot of Eden, but with the bad first things "forgotten." Since Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent, in the new Eden there was no serpent. Likewise, since the son was tempted by Eve, there was no female human partner for the son. Moreover, since the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil brought death, only the Tree of Life remained. Subsequently, without the elements that brought the curse (the serpent, the woman, and the Tree of Knowledge) there was no curse or its effects: no pain, no toil, no childbirth, and no death for the new inhabitants.

Since, however, John described the people of God as the son, the bride may carry another identification. In Revelation, perhaps there was not a new Adam and Eve. Perhaps there was only a new Adam. Albeit, biblical scholars have often interpreted John's new Jerusalem as the people of God, the idea being that the new Jerusalem as bride married God in an ultimate wedding celebration. However, in Revelation, John called the people of God "son." Thus, the people of God need not be the bride. Thus, John's new Jerusalem bride may

have been something other than the people of God. Perhaps, as will be considered in the next chapter, the new Jerusalem bride was a metaphor for the Sabbath bride. Perhaps God was the bride.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE NEW JERUSALEM AS SABBATH BRIDE: TIME, PLACE, PERSON

The Sabbath and Jerusalem were sacred portals to the numinous. Even though one was a time while one was a place, both enveloped a person into the numinous. Jerusalem was the closest place on earth to the heavenly realm; the Sabbath was the closest time on earth to heavenly time. Both the Sabbath and Jerusalem were set apart from mundane time and space. Both transported the worshipper into the realm of God's time and space.

People went through the portals of the Sabbath and Jerusalem to find the numinous; but the direction was also reversed. The Sabbath and Jerusalem as brides brought the numinous into mundane time and space. Thus, near the end of the book of Revelation, John of Patmos was outside watching a bride descend from heaven. In a similar scenario in the Talmud, R. Hanina and his teacher, R. Yannai, went outside and waited for a bride to descend from heaven. In the first scenario, the bride was a place, the new Jerusalem; in the second scenario, the bride was a time, the Sabbath. These similar scenes of men waiting for mystical brides were more than just coincidence. Both John's new Jerusalem bride and the Sabbath bride represented the presence of God. Thus the time of the Sabbath and the place of the new Jerusalem became the person of the bride.

The previous two chapters considered the impact of midrashic ideas and interpretative methods on John's new Jerusalem visions of John regarding the first six days of creation. In this chapter, the impact of midrashic ideas and methods will be looked with regard to the final day of creation, the Sabbath. In midrash, the Sabbath developed as a foreshadow of end-time. In addition to its significance for time, the Sabbath developed significance with regard to place, and also developed into an anthropomorphic being.

John's vision of the new Jerusalem descending from heaven as a bride was part of the tradition of a bridal emanations from God. It paralleled the practice of welcoming the Sabbath bride and, thus, was an early attestation of welcoming God's presence from heaven. In addition to John's vision of a bridal emanation from God, there were two early midrashic examples of the Sabbath as a female companion for Israel.

#### R. HANINA AND R. YANNAI

The anecdote of R. Yannai and his student R. Hanina was one of the earliest attestations of the Jewish practice of welcoming the Sabbath bride from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century; however, John's vision of Jerusalem as a bride corroborated the practice of welcoming a bridal emanation from God as early as the first century. These two scenes shared a background in cosmography and midrashic interpretation of the Bible

These two scenes paint a similar image. In the first one, two men, R. Hanina and his teacher, R. Yannai, go outside and welcome the bridal queen.

כדר' חנינא דאמר ר' חנינא

It is like what R. Hanina would say concerning what he would say [at twilight on Shabbat],

בואו ונצא לקראת כלה מלכתא

“Come and go out to greet the bride, the queen!”

ואמרי לה לקראת שבת כלה מלכתא

and some say, “...to greet the *Sabbath*, the bride, the queen!”

רבי ינאי מתעטף וקאי ואמר

R. Yannai would cover himself and say,

בואי כלה בואי כלה

“Come, bride! Come, bride!”<sup>338</sup>

In R. Hanina’s case, some remembered him as calling the bride queen and some additionally said he called the bride the Sabbath. His teacher, R. Yannai, was only described as calling for a bride while ritually covering himself with his talit. Both of these men seemed to be encouraging a ritual of going outside before the onset of Shabbat to welcome her as a bride. In this ritual, a bride was being welcomed by Jewish men who seemed to represent all of Israel.

In the book of Revelation, we also had a Jewish man outside welcoming a bride from God. In fact, John watched the bride descend twice. The first time, Jerusalem was adorned as a bride, but was also the tabernacle:

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<sup>338</sup> Bava Kama 32a:22-32b:1 (chapter 3, section 6) (Order Nezikin; Babylonian Talmud): codified in the 5<sup>th</sup> c. CE but quotes are from the turn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE

καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καινὴν

And the holy city—new Jerusalem!

εἶδον καταβαίνουσιν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ,

Look! Coming down out of the heaven away from God

ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς.

Prepared as a bride adorned beautifully for her husband.<sup>339</sup>

καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ Ἱθρόνου λεγούσης·

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying,

“Look! The tabernacle of God is with the people,

ἰδοὺ ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων,

And he will tabernacle with them”

καὶ Ἱσκηνώσει μετ’ αὐτῶν

Cities were not normally dressed as brides and were not normally mobile; however, the description of the city as the tabernacle helped to explain the city’s mobility.

In the second description of John’s new Jerusalem bride, the angel called her the Lamb’s wife:

Καὶ ἦλθεν εἷς οὐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων τῶν ἐχόντων τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας Ἱτῶν γεμόντων<sup>1</sup> οἱ τῶν ἑπτὰ πληγῶν τῶν ἐσχάτων καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ’ ἐμοῦ λέγων·

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<sup>339</sup> Revelation 21:2. Scholarly consensus dates the book of Revelation to the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.



Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying,

δεῦρο, δείξω σοι τὴν νύμφην τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ ἀρνίου<sup>1</sup>.

“Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.”

καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν,

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain,

καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καταβαίνουσαν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ

and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,

Ἴ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔρχουσαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ

having the glory of God (ESV Rev 21:9-11a).

If John’s visions paralleled the ritual of R. Hanina and R. Yannai, John would represent the people of Israel and the new Jerusalem would be the bride.

The problem, then, would be the identification of the new Jerusalem as the people of God. The people would be both the groom and the bride. On the other hand, if Jerusalem was God’s presence, the people would be welcoming her as bride. John would be representing the people as groom.

#### SHABBAT AS “PARTNER”

In addition to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century evidence of R. Yannai and R. Hanina welcoming the Sabbath as a bride, there was an even earlier description of the Sabbath as a “partner.” In Bereishit Rabba, Shabbat is personified as a lonely

day, the only one without a partner. In this example, the Sabbath is not a bride per se, but being a "partner" may be an earlier step in considering the Sabbath as a bride.

דְּבַר אַחֵר, לְמַה בְּרָכוּ,

שָׂאִין לוֹ בֶּן זֹוג, חֵד בְּשַׁבָּתָא, תְּרִי, תְּלִיתָא, אַרְבַּעַתָא, חֲמִשָּׁא, עֶרֶבְתָא, שַׁבְּתָא לִית לָהּ בֶּן זֹוג.

תַּנִּי רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי, אִמְרָה שַׁבַּת לִפְנֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, רַבּוֹנוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם לְכָל יֵשׁ בֶּן זֹוג, וְלִי אֵין בֶּן זֹוג. אָמַר לָהּ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל הִיא בֶּן זֹוגָהּ. וְכִינּוּן שְׁעָמְדוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי הָרַי סִינֵי אָמַר לָהֶם הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא זָכְרוּ הַדְּבָר שֶׁאִמַּרְתִּי לְשַׁבַּת, כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל הִיא בֶּן זֹוגָהּ, הִינּוּ דְבוּר (שְׁמוֹת כ, ח): זָכוֹר אֶת יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ.

Why did God bless Shabbat?...

"Because it has no partner. The first day of the week has the second, the third has the fourth, the fifth has the sixth, but Shabbat has no partner....

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai taught: Shabbat pleaded with the Holy One, Blessed be God saying: "Everyone else has a partner, but I have nothing!" God answered saying: "The community of Israel will be your partner." God continued: "And when thy stood before Sinai, God said to the Israelites: "Remember what I said to Shabbat, that the community of Israel is your partner, "Remember Shabbat and keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). (Bereishit Rabba 11:8)<sup>340</sup>

<sup>340</sup> [https://www.sefaria.org/Bereishit\\_Rabbah.11.8?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Bereishit_Rabbah.11.8?lang=bi), my translation, access date 9/12/22

This passage described a union between Israel and the Sabbath, but in this case, both parties were described with feminine words. Instead of “people” of Israel, which was a masculine word, a feminine word was used: “community” of Israel. Israel was considered the bride at Sinai, with God as the groom in biblical prophetic writings. Thus, Israel could have a partner, the Sabbath, but still was the female who married the male God.

This midrash on the Sabbath as Israel’s partner anthropomorphized the day.

John’s vision of the new Jerusalem, anthropomorphized the the sacred city.

Thus, both the final day of the week became personified as a bride, and the final place at the end of time became personified as a bride.

#### SHARED MIDRASHIC EXPOSITION

John’s visions of the new Jerusalem, R. Hanina and R. Yannai’s visions of the Sabbath bride, and the description of the Sabbath being a partner to Israel, all attest to early Jewish beliefs in a bridal emanation from God. Moreover, though, the these traditions of bridal emanations shared midrashic interpretative methods. In other words, the process of the new Jerusalem and the Sabbath becoming brides followed a parallel trajectory.

The idea of a time or a place becoming a bride came from midrashic analysis of the word “bride” (*calah*) with its homonym “to complete.” In Hebrew, the root of the word “bride” *cil* was different than the noun form of *callah*. Likewise, the root of the verb “to complete” is *calal*. Thus, in some midrashic (polysemic and *harizah*) analyses, the use of the root *calal*, when it means “to complete” signaled the presence of a “bride.”

For example, Exodus 31:18 said, וַיִּתֵּן אֱלֹהֵי-מֹשֶׁה, כְּכֹלְתּוֹ לְדַבֵּר אֵתוֹ בְּהַר סִינַי, “When God completed (*cæcalloto*) giving Moses all the law which he spoke to him on Mount Sinai.” Midrashically, however, this was interpreted as, “When God gave to Moses as his bride to speak to him on Mount Sinai.”

MIDRASH RABBEINU BAHYA SHEMOT 31:18

An example of this midrashic interpretation can be found in Midrash Rabbeinu Bahya Shemot 31:18. In the following passage, the 3<sup>rd</sup> century teacher, Resh Lakish, described the Torah as the bride that God gave to Moses.

אמר ריש לקיש כל מי שמוציא דברי תורה ואינם ערבים על שומעיהם ככלה זו שהיא ערבה על בעלה נוח לו שלא אמרם, שבשעה שנתן הקב"ה תורה לישראל היתה חביבה על ישראל ככלה זו שהיא חביבה על בעלה.

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said, anyone who brings out words from the Torah and does not succeed in making them heard as a bride who is loved by her husband, he should have left it without speaking them. For at the hour that the Holy One blessed be he gave the Torah to Israel, she was as beloved by Israel as a bride who is beloved by her husband.

Rabbeinu Bahya Shemot 31:18 (4)<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> “A commentary on the Torah gathered and edited by Rabbi Bahya ben Asher, 1255-1340, in Spain” (Sefaria.org [[https://www.sefaria.org/Rabbeinu\\_Bahya%2C\\_Shemot.31.18.4?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Rabbeinu_Bahya%2C_Shemot.31.18.4?lang=bi)]). Although this commentary was codified in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, Bahya’s midrashic techniques were characteristic of an earlier period. Additionally, in this passage, Bahya quoted Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, better known as Resh Lakish, who lived from 200 to 270 CE in Syro-Palestine. Thus, this commentary likely preserved an early oral tradition or reflect an early way of thinking about the word כלה.

Resh Lakish ritualized the giving of the Torah as a bride at Sinai by saying that it should continuously be treated as a bride.

Midrash Rabbeinu Bahya Shemot 31:18(4) continued with a description of the Sabbath as a bride:

ומה שנקראת שבת כלה לפי שהשבת סוף ששת ימי בראשית ותכלית מעשה שמים וארץ  
כי כן השבת של מעלה סוף האצילות,

Another reason that the Sabbath is called bride, כלה, is that it occurred for the first time at the end of the six days of creation. It had been the objective, “end purpose,” of all that had been created before both in the heavens and on earth.

This description of the bride as the Sabbath argued that the three consonants of bride, *clh*, can also mean “end.” Thus, the “end” or completion of creation was the Sabbath. Thus, this midrash offered an alternative bride than the Torah that Moses received at Sinai: the Sabbath bride.

In context of the biblical passage of God giving Moses the Torah, God also gave the people the Sabbath.

בְּיָדֵינוּ, וּבֵין בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל--אֹת הוּא, לְעֵלָם: כִּי-שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים, עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-  
הָאָרֶץ, וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי, שָׁבַת וַיִּנְפֹשׁ.

[The Sabbath] is a sign between me and between the children of Israel, forever: For six days, the Lord made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day he rested.

Thus, in context, there were two possible feminine references for the bride. Moreover, the Sabbath was called a “sign between me and the children of Israel, forever.” Thus, the Sabbath was like a wedding token: a ring or coin. “Forever” also signaled the world to come.

The identification of the bride with the Sabbath in this midrash was because of a *harizah* with Genesis 2:2.

ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה וישבת ביום השביעי מכל-

מלאכתו אשר עשה

God completed his work which he did on the seventh day, and he ceased on the seventh day from all his work which he did (Gen 2:2).

The first word “וַיִּכְלֵ” meant “he completed” in the biblical text, but it was the same root used in Exodus 31:18 in which the rabbis found the word “bride.” Thus, וַיִּכְלֵ in Genesis 2:2 denoted the Sabbath as a bride.

This type of exposition of the root *c//* was one of the ways the Sabbath attained a personification as a bride. The identity of the bride in this case was either the Torah or the Sabbath.

This Sabbath idea of “completion” of creation was also in the book of Revelation. In the dénouement of the book of Revelation, God said,

Γέγοναν. ἐγὼ τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.

“It has been done. I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end” (Revelation 21:6).

This declaration Γέγοναν, “it has been done” echoed the completion of God’s work in Genesis, “he completed.” Thus, John considered the midrashic understanding of this word to mean “bride.”

Additionally, Γέγοναν (“it was finished”) was related to the Greek word for “Genesis.” Both were forms of the verb γίνομαι—to come into being. Thus, “it was finished” was also translated “it was created.” This was another tie between the creation account in Revelation with the creation account in Genesis.

Both the creation story in Genesis and the new creation story in Revelation culminated in the “end” of work. In Genesis, the cessation of work was called the Sabbath day. In Revelation, it was described as without night. At both the beginning and end of time the created order was “done” or finished by God. Revelation described the end as connected to the beginning, alluding to Genesis with the first Sabbath on one hand, and the eternal Sabbath on the other. While in Genesis, the Sabbath ended and Adam and Eve consummated their union, in the final Sabbath in Revelation, God and the people celebrated the eschatological wedding, but they alternated between who was the bride and who was the groom.

In the above midrash, the Torah was identified as the bride because God taught Moses “all” the Torah on Mt Sinai. In the same midrash, the Sabbath was identified as the bride because right before this phrase, God gave the people the

sign of the Sabbath. Thus, different rabbis in this midrash interpreted the events of Sinai as a wedding of the people of Israel with either the Torah or the Sabbath.

This was different from the prophetic writings that interpreted Sinai as a wedding between the people of Israel and God. Thus, John's Jerusalem bride could be like the Sabbath/Torah bride who married the people of Israel rather than being the people of Israel who married God. The time, place, and person of the Jerusalem-Sabbath time-space entity found its ultimate celebration in a final wedding. The groom and bride, though, were also fluid just as Jerusalem and the Sabbath were fluid. The bride and groom alternately identified as the people of God and the presence of God.

#### TIME

In Jewish midrash, the day of the Sabbath itself was connected to "the world to come." First of all, the Sabbath was considered a taste of the world to come. Secondly, the Sabbath was analogized as part of a 7 thousand year week, to become a thousand year millennium.

In rabbinical thought, "the world to come" was a kind of supersized Sabbath. While in the biblical text of Genesis, the Sabbath etiologically commemorated the beginning of the world, in Jewish midrash, the Sabbath eschatologically pointed to the end of the world. For example, Berakhot 57b said, "שבת--אחד מששים לעולם הבא."<sup>342</sup> "The Sabbath is one sixtieth of the world to come." Thus, conversely "the world to come" would be sixty times a regular Sabbath.

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<sup>342</sup> b Berakhot 57b (13)



Secondly, this end of the world Sabbath was delimited in midrashic tradition as a millennium. This was based on Psalm 90, verse 4:

כִּי אֶלֶף שָׁנִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ כַּיּוֹם

For a thousand years in [God's] eyes is as a day.

This verse was taken literally and applied to the seven day week. Thus, there was an analogue that had the chronology of the world compared to a week. In other words, all of history, past, present and future, was condensed into six days, each day lasting one thousand years, for a total of six thousand years. The final day was the Sabbath which lasted one thousand years. This final day was when God reigned on earth in his millennial reign.

However, it was a bit more complicated. In the Talmudic tractate Sanhedrin 97a, there was debate concerning the Sabbatical millennium. The debate centered on both the length and the characteristics of the period. Some said it was a time of judgment, some said it was a time of blessing. Some said it was a single one thousand year period, some said it was recurring.

For example, the third century teacher, Rav Katina, described the millennium as analogous to the cycle of leaving the fields fallow every seventh year. Rav Katina argued,

שנה אחת לז' שנים כך העולם משמט אלף שנים לשבעת אלפים שנה שנאמר ונשגב ה' לבדו ביום ההוא ואומר (תהלים צב, א) מזמור שיר ליום השבת יום שכולו שבת ואומר (תהלים צ, ד) כי אלף שנים בעיניך כיום אתמול כי יעבור

One year out of seven years (is a sabbatical year). Thus, the world disengages (for) one thousand years in every seven thousand years, as it says: "And the Lord alone shall be exalted on that day," (Is 2:17) and it states: "A psalm, a song for the Shabbat day" (Psalms 92:1), meaning a day that is entirely Shabbat. And it says, "For a thousand years is in your eyes as a day, yesterday that has passed" (Psalms 90:4). (Sanhedrin 97a)

Thus, according to Rav Katina's midrashic interpretation, there will be many Sabbath-like milleniums.

In context the idea that "a thousand years... is as a day" described how time moved differently for an eternal God. The rabbis, however, took this passage literally and applied it to the week. Thus, each day was a thousand years and the Sabbath was the final thousand-year day of rest.

However, there was variation in the interpretation of this analogy. Another opinion from Sanhedrin 97a described the coming of the messiah as lasting two thousand years.

תנא דבי אליהו ששת אלפים שנה הוי עלמא שני אלפים תוהו שני אלפים תורה שני אלפים ימות המשיח

The school of Eliyahu taught: Six thousand years is the duration of the world. Two thousand of the six thousand years are characterized by chaos; two thousand years are characterized by Torah, from the era of

the Patriarchs until the end of the mishnaic period; and two thousand years are the period of the coming of the Messiah.

While in the biblical text of Genesis, the Sabbath was a special time—the seventh day of creation account which is then commemorated every week on the seventh day—within Jewish commentary, the Sabbath also corresponded to the world to come-- either in a millennial reign of God's kingdom, as the eternal "world to come," as recurring milleniums, or as a period of time when the six thousand years are up. John's vision of a final day without night seemed also to be an analogy of the Sabbath day.

John's new creation was manifested alternately as the millennial reign of God and the eternal "world to come."<sup>343</sup> Thus, thee midrashic traditions about the Sabbath representing a final supernal time were part of John's temporal paradigm. Analogous interpretation of the Sabbath created the millennium. The supernal significance of Shabbat tied it to the supernal time of God's heavenly time which was also eternal time. The new Jerusalem was the thousand-year Shabbat bride.

In John's Revelation, there was both a millennium and an eternal day of the Lord. Some scholars argued that in Revelation there were two end time

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<sup>343</sup> John did not mention the Sabbath by name; however, John's Revelation began by locating the vision on the "Lord's day" or "day of the Lord." This phrase was often interpreted as Sunday by modern commentators; however, Sunday did not become the "Lord's day" in Christian ritual until the later separation from the Jewish community; rather, "the day of the Lord" was the eschatological "day of the Lord"—either judgment day or the world to come. Thus, John writing that his vision took place on "the Lord's day" was not referencing the day of the week in c 90 CE when he had his vision, but rather when the things in his vision took place: on the eschatological day of the Lord.

visions of Jerusalem. These two visions were not of the same Jerusalem but of two Jerusalems: one which will exist for a millennium and one which will exist forever.<sup>344</sup>

As with sacred time, the Sabbath was a time outside of mundane time. It was supernal. Each Sabbath was a taste of the World to Come. Each Sabbath connected the believer with God the World to Come which was also God's Place in heaven. Moreover, the supernal time of the Sabbath descended from the place and time of heaven and the place and time of the world to come to consummate the eternal union between God and the people. This weekly consummation was reflected in the scenario of R. Hanina and R. Yannai; the end-of-time consummation was reflected in the scenario of John of Patmos.

#### PERSON

In the parallel scenarios of men welcoming brides--John welcoming the new Jerusalem bride, and Rav Hanina and Rav Yannai welcoming the Sabbath bride—the identity of the bride had a few possibilities. On the surface the identities of the two brides were known: the Sabbath on one hand and the new Jerusalem on the other. Beyond this, it was unclear if they represented different things, such as Jerusalem representing God's people, or if they were personifications of a day and a city, respectively, or if both brides represented God's presence. If they were personifications of a city and a day, that would

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<sup>344</sup> J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation, The Anchor Bible Commentary 38*, (Garden City, New York; Doubleday, 1975), 38-39. Ford acknowledged P. Gaechter for this theory. Ford also explained that, in Revelation, there were several thousand year periods, including the thousand years when Satan is enchained.

mean the city and day actualized as a people, as brides. Concerning this manifestation, Moshe Idel asked, “Does it mean that Jerusalem, like her bridegroom, Jesus, is divine too?”<sup>345</sup>

John calling the new Jerusalem “tabernacle” was a telling choice. John could have called it a temple. John could have omitted calling it a tabernacle, and continued calling it the new Jerusalem, God’s throne, and bride. The tabernacle was a mobile sacred place that housed the ark of the covenant, the resting place for God’s presence. The tabernacle eventually became located at Jerusalem and rebuilt as the temple. Jerusalem itself became infused with the holiness of the tabernacle/temple.

Another part of the explanation for the mobility of this city was a midrashic interpretation of Exodus 15:17. This was discussed fully in chapter 3, but, in summary, this verse was a proof-text for several midrashim to illustrate that there was a heavenly Jerusalem. One possible reading of this verse was that the heavenly Jerusalem will descend to the earth, specifically to mount Zion. This reading demonstrated the mobility of the heavenly tabernacle. The interpretation of Exodus 15:17 as a future reality implied more than a restoration of the earthly temple; it implied heaven coming to earth, God coming to earth.

In addition to tabernacle signally the temple’s mobility, tabernacle signalled the presence of God. In Hebrew, the word “tabernacle,” or *miškan*,

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<sup>345</sup> Moshe Idel, “On Jerusalem as a Feminine and Sexual Hypostasis: From Late Antiquity Sources to Medieval Kabbalah” *Memory, Humanity, and Meaning: Selected Essays in Honor of Andrei Pleșu’s Sixtieth Anniversary*. Edited by Mihail Neamțu and Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban. [Cluj:] (Zeta Books, 2009), pp. 65-110, 8.

shared its root letters with the words “dwell” *šoken*, and “presence” *šekinâ*. Thus, the new Jerusalem being described as “tabernacle,” implied that it was the presence of God. Even though John was writing in Greek, not Hebrew, the concepts and terms he used came from the Hebrew biblical scrolls and the contemporary interpretations of them. Moreover, the presence of God being adorned as a bride was quite similar to the idea of the Sabbath being called a bride and later being described as the *šekinah*, or the presence of God.

The use of the Aramaic equivalent of the term *šekinah* for the presence of God was already in use in the first century, in the Aramaic translations of the Torah. According to Martin McNamara, Targum “Onqelos renders all cases in which [the Hebrew word] *škn* occurs in reference to God by the [Aramaic] phrase ‘*ašre šekinta*’, ‘made (his) Shekina dwell.’”<sup>346</sup> McNamara explains, “In this sense the Targum relates *šekinta*’ to God, in so far as he resides omnipresently in the midst of his people.”

Gershom Scholem, on the other hand, argued the Kabbalists first feminized the *šekinah*. “The introduction of this idea was one of the most important and lasting innovations of Kabbalism. ...no other element of Kabbalism won such a degree of popular approval.”<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> McNamara, Martin (2010), *Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament* (2nd ed.), (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010), 150. McNamara cited the examples, Exod 25:8; 29:45 and Num 5:3; 35:34.

<sup>347</sup> Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, (Jerusalem; Schocken, 1941), 229.

Nevertheless, the midrashic example of the Sabbath as bride and the New Jerusalem as bride were early attestations of God's feminine presence. Moshe Idel explained,

Those descriptions dealing with the feminine dimensions of the divinity in early Kabbalah neglected the existence of an alternative line of discussions regarding the hypostatic feminine elements that are concerned with a topic rather ignored in the studies of the development of Jewish mysticism: the feminine hypostasis of Jerusalem.<sup>348</sup>

Jerusalem as a woman was a feminine dimension of the divinity. Idel further explained the origins of the kabbalistic Sabbath bride,

Several years ago I suggested a certain type of history that may explain the presence of some feminine dimensions of the divinity in medieval Kabbalah: ancient motifs dealing with feminine deities or feminine dimensions of the one God that have been discussed extensively by scholars of the Bible mentioned above, found their ways to medieval sources, and become part of the complex system of divinity, the ten *sefirot*, itself a development of earlier traditions. Those elements are related to the special status of the nation of Israel, sometimes conceived of as *Knesset Yisrael*, conceived in some cases as the divine wife, or the

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<sup>348</sup> Moshe Idel, "On Jerusalem as a Feminine and Sexual Hypostasis: From Late Antiquity Sources to Medieval Kabbalah" *Memory, Humanity, and Meaning: Selected Essays in Honor of Andrei Pleșu's Sixtieth Anniversary*. Edited by Mihail Neamțu and Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban. [Cluj:] (Zeta Books, 2009), pp. 65-110, 3.

divine wisdom, *Hokhmah*, or of the *Shekhinah*, and last but not least for the aim of our discussions below, the concepts of the land of Israel and of Jerusalem, conceived of as existing not only on earth but also in the divine realm as the feminine counterpart of the male aspects of the divinity.<sup>349</sup>

Thus, Idel argued for an early attestation of Jerusalem “as the feminine counterpart to the male aspects of the divinity.”

A feminine aspect of God was not a new idea in the first century. It had precedent in the Hebrew Bible, such as where God was described as a mother bear (Hosea 12:8) or a mother eagle (Deut. 32:11); similarly, in the book of Matthew 23:37, Jesus said “Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.” Likewise, the prophet Isaiah said, “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 66:13).

Additionally, in Hebrew, the word *ruah* or spirit to describe God was almost always feminine,<sup>350</sup> such as in Genesis 1:2 וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים, מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם, the spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water. Moreover, the presence of God was comparable to the spirit of God. Thus, welcoming the Sabbath bride

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid

<sup>350</sup> The final definition of *ruah* in BDB said, “spirit of God equals the ancient angel of the presence and later Shekina: spirit of his holiness (Is 63:10, 11) equals spirit of YHWH (Is 63:14) which also equals “king of his presence” (v. 9). Cf. Ps 106:33, 51:13, 143:10; Ne 9:20; Hg 2:5, Zc 4:6. This conception culminates in *ruah* [equaling the] divine Presence, and as such omnipresent, Psalm 139:7” (BDB 926a).



and the Jerusalem bride were also ways of describing God's spirit or presence with feminine words.

Each of these identifications of the new Jerusalem were more than possibilities, they were coexistent multiple identities. John's new Jerusalem was God's presence, God's people, and her own entity, not one or the other. Since John's vision of the new Jerusalem was midrashic, this polysemy was expected. In midrash, multiple opinions were placed in the mouths of multiple rabbis; in John's vision of the new Jerusalem, these multiple opinions were portrayed as one opinion. Nevertheless, John's vision was a compilation of midrashic traditions. Thus, John's new Jerusalem had layers of identification rather than a single identification. Thus, the new Jerusalem was not just a time-space-person continuum but a time-space-multiple personality continuum!

#### FINAL WEDDING: THE NEW JERUSALEM AS SABBATH BRIDE

Since the new Jerusalem was a bride, there was to be a wedding. Since the Sabbath was a bride, there was to be a consummation of the marriage. Since the bridal Jerusalem appeared on that final day—the eschatological Sabbath—she came to earth for the wedding and to consummate her marriage. Thus, the place, time, and person of Jerusalem united with her groom. Heaven married earth, God married the people, and their “joy” was in the supernal time of eternal Shabbat within the canopy of the tabernacle.

John's new Jerusalem bride reflected both temporal aspects of Shabbat: the weekly and the eternal. John's new Jerusalem bride reflected both spatial aspects of Jerusalem: heavenly and earthly. John's new Jerusalem bride

reflected both personifications of Jerusalem: the *šekinah* and the people of Israel. Moreover, John's new Jerusalem represented a wedding consummation/union between heaven and earth, God and people, mundane and eternal time.

The eschatological marriage was sometimes called "The day of the Lord" and sometimes called "the days of the messiah." This ultimate Sabbath wedding fulfilled the prophets' promises to God's people that their marriage at mount Sinai would be restored. Another significant marriage was between Solomon, who represented the people of Israel, and the temple, which represented God. Finally, some early Jewish traditions had Adam and Eve consummate their union on the first Shabbat. Each of these weddings was supernal and supported the mythology around the wedding of the new Jerusalem bride.

#### SEVEN THOUSAND YEAR WEDDING

"The days of the messiah" was another term used to describe the eschatological wedding of God and his people. In the following passage, the "days of the messiah" were seven thousand years instead of one thousand years. Nevertheless, this was an example of the end times being referred to as a wedding between God and his people.

תני אבימי בריה דרבי אבהו ימות המשיח לישראל שבעת אלפים שנה שנאמר (ישעיהו  
סב, ה) ומשוש חתן על כלה (כן) ישיש עליך (ה') אלהיך

Avimi, son of Rabbi Abbahu, taught: The days of the messiah for Israel will be seven thousand years, as it is stated: "And as the bridegroom

rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you” (Isaiah 62:5).

(Sanhedrin 99a:9)

This interpretation used the analogy of a wedding week instead of the creation week. Since the “bridegroom rejoices over the bride” for seven days, God rejoices for seven thousand years since a thousand years is as a day to God. Despite this alternate timeline of seven thousand years, “the days of the messiah” were end-time days, in which God will rejoice over his people as a groom rejoices over a bride.

#### SUKKOT WEDDING

According to some prophetic passages and some midrashic passages, God married his people at Mount Sinai. The Torah was compared to a wedding contract, or *ketubah*. Thus, the covenant ratified at Sinai was the marriage covenant. This marital event was remembered and ritualized during the yearly holiday of Sukkot.

Midrash often used the analogy of the wedding for the relationship of the people with God, but also with the Torah. For example, in Exodus Rabba, Moses was described as delivering the marriage contract to God’s bride.

In giving his Torah to Israel, God is like a king who gives his only daughter in marriage, and makes it a condition with her husband that there shall always be a room kept for him in their house. If we wish to have the Torah, we must have God also. This is the meaning of the

words, "Make me a sanctuary that I may dwell therein" (Exodus Rabba, p 84).

In this example, the Torah was the bride, the people were the groom, and God was the father who dwelled in the sanctuary (along with the people and the Torah). Thus if this is analogized likewise in Revelation, Jerusalem would be the bride, the son (the people) the groom, and God the father.

#### SOLOMON'S TEMPLE NUPTIALS: SHEMOT RABBA 52

According to Shemot Rabba, the day of the temple's erection was a wedding day. This was because the presence of God came to dwell with the people, much like the description in Revelation of Jerusalem descending so God could tabernacle with his people.

הַדָּבָר אַחֵר, וַיְבִיאוּ אֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּן, הַדָּא הוּא דְכְתִיב (שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים ג, יא): צְאִינָה וּרְאִינָה  
בְּנוֹת צִיּוֹן בַּמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֵמָה בְּעֵטְרָה שְׁעֵטְרָה לֹא אָמוּ בְיוֹם חֲתֻנָּתוֹ וּבְיוֹם שְׂמֵחַת לְבוֹ. אֵימְתִי  
נֹאמֵר הַפְּסוּקָה הַזֶּה, בְּיוֹם שְׁעֵמֵד הַמִּשְׁכָּן, שְׁהִיְתָה שְׂמֵחָה גְדוֹלָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ  
הוּא שׁוֹרָה אֶצְלָם.

Another explanation. "Now they brought the Tabernacle..." (Exodus 39:33) This is what is written "Go out, O daughters of Zion, and gaze upon King Solomon, upon the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his nuptials and on the day of the joy of his heart." (Song of Songs 3:11) When was this verse said? On the day that the Tabernacle was erected, when there was great joy in Israel because the Holy One dwelled among them (Shemot Rabba, 52, 5).

In Exodus Rabba, the erection of the tabernacle was equated not just to God dwelling (or tabernacling) among the people, but to Solomon's wedding. Additionally, a little later in this same passage, Exodus Rabba interpreted the temple as Solomon's "crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his nuptials." The temple, however, was not the building alone, but what the building housed: the presence of God. God's feminine presence, *šekinah*, filled the place of God's presence, *miškan*.

The bridal imagery of the new Jerusalem as God's tabernacle was similar to the bridal imagery of the erection of Solomon's tabernacle. Just as God's presence descended on and filled Solomon's temple on mount Zion, John's tabernacle of God descended (already filled) onto mount Zion. Solomon's tabernacle was called his wedding crown. Jerusalem was described as a wedding crown in Isaiah. Moreover, John envisioned the walls of the new Jerusalem walls as encrusted with jewels like a crown and the whole edifice descended (like a coronation crown) to sit on the high hill. The people inherited the city; they entered it and thus, like Solomon, were crowned with God's presence. Moreover, in Late Antiquity brides wore crowns called Jerusalem of gold.

These crowns may be God's queens or consorts. The idea of a feminine counterpart for God occurred in several places despite the anti-goddess theology in the biblical prophets. Wisdom was a feminine companion for God in midrashic interpretations of Proverbs 3:8. R. Hanina also called the Sabbath a queen. And here, Solomon's temple was a feminine crown that surrounded him when he

entered the temple. Solomon's crown represented the queen, the temple, and the presence of God even as it/she coronated the king. Thus, Solomon's temple as crown may be a precursor to the new Jerusalem tabernacle as bride.

The temple and the city were not the only sacred entities anthropomorphized as brides. The Sabbath and the Torah were also sometimes portrayed as brides. The bridal imagery carried with it the ritual and accoutrements of the wedding. In several cases, the bride descended to the groom—the Sabbath bride appearing to Rav Hanina, the new Jerusalem bride appearing to John, the Torah descending from heaven to the top of mount Sinai and from mount Sinai to the people, and God's presence descending as a crown onto Solomon.

#### ADAM AND EVE CONSUMMATION

John envisioned a more perfect creation, with a more perfect eternal Sabbath, and a more perfect marital union. Thus, the mythology of the consummation of the union of Adam and Eve on the first Sabbath may have influenced the idea of eschatological *hieros gamos*.

The *hieros gamos* wedding was due to prophetic descriptions of a reunification of God and his bride. Moreover, the bride as tabernacle emphasized the relationship between God and his people. He/she was there with them. There were two conflicting paradigms of the identity of the bride: 1, God's presence came to earth to dwell with his people and 2, God's people appeared as a pure bride for her wedding to God.

The end, though, did circle back to the paradisaical beginning. Eden was recreated. Humans were innocent again. The wedding at the beginning was between Adam and Eve, living in purity, in the Garden. This new Eden did not have the traps of the previous Garden. There was no Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, there was no snake. There were no animals. There was no Eve. There was only God as bride and the people as a new Adam.

Interestingly, there was debate among first century Jewish groups concerning whether or not Adam and Eve consummated their marriage on the Sabbath or even in the garden of Eden. Anderson argued in favor of consummation in the Garden,

One should keep in mind the technical sense of the term ‘joy’ when read the blessings in *Ketub. 8a*. As can be seen from *b. B. Bathra*, the joy which is present at the wedding includes both the eating and drinking by the wedding guests, but also the sexual consummation of the marriage.

Both types of marital joy are associated with the Garden of Eden.<sup>351</sup>

In contrast to some Christian stereotypes that consider the sexual union of Adam and Eve to be part of the “fall,” rabbinical interpretation considered the sexual union of Adam and Eve to be part of the “joy” of the garden of Eden.

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<sup>351</sup> Gary Anderson, “Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 82, no. 2 (1989): 121- 148. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1509640>

However, the joy of the marital union in the garden was not shared by all. Anderson explained the contrasting view of celibacy in the Garden,

The theme of marriage was also used by early Christian writers, but with a major difference: they did not share this enthusiasm for real human marriage in the New Age. The image was spiritualized and thought to convey only a mystical marriage of the redeemed to their Savior. The Jewish interest in real human marriage in the New Age is consonant with their perspective that the eschaton would entail a return to a real land and real temple.<sup>352</sup>

Thus, both Jubilees and many early Christian writers saw the garden and the final paradise as places of celibacy between people.

Nevertheless, spiritual marriage implied spiritualized sexual union.<sup>353</sup>

Thus, Yannai's vision of the Sabbath bride implied a spiritualized sexual union on the Sabbath eve.<sup>354</sup> Likewise, John's vision of the new Jerusalem bride implied a

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid, 136.

<sup>353</sup> According to Anderson, the expectation of joy in the eschaton retrojects joy in the creation. Anderson wrote, "In the restoration literature of the postexilic and post-70 periods, the New Age was described as one of joy while the present age was described as one of mourning. These images of joy in the Endzeit soon became images of the primordial Urzeit" (Gary Anderson, 131).

<sup>354</sup> This marital consummation on the Sabbath is in contrast to the theology of the book of Jubilees. "The book of Jubilees also outlaws sexual activity on the Sabbath as well (50.8). This is certainly no accident. The creation of Sabbath, in the description of the P writer (Gen 2:1-3), was comparable to the creation of the Tent- shrine/Temple" (Gary Anderson, 129).



spiritualized sexual union on the eschatological Sabbath.<sup>355</sup> Despite this difference in real versus spiritualized marriage, a marriage was still taking place in John's eschaton, a marriage that recalled the first marriage in the garden of Eden since it took place in the restored Eden, the new Jerusalem. Both marriages took place after the cessation of creation, on the day of rest, the Sabbath.

Moshe Idel argued that Jerusalem first appeared as a sexualized bride in John's Revelation:

For the first time in a written text, Jerusalem — albeit only in its future state — assumes a clear sexual coloration: it is altered from a “mother” to a “bride,” a hypostatic representation with clearly erotic connotations. The adornment is part of the splendor characteristic of the descriptions of the supernal Jerusalem in general found in both Jewish and Christian apocalyptic sources. However, here it is predicated on a vision of a feminine supernal entity prepared for some form of wedding.<sup>356</sup>

Other Jewish texts described Jerusalem as a mother to her children—a non-sexual relationship; however, Jerusalem as “mother” was also sexual since a mother had to have had sex to become a mother. A bride was a precursor to the

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<sup>355</sup> Marriage and entering sexual union are also described in other texts such as rabbinical interpretations of the Song of Solomon and Ezekiel's description of God raising and marrying the people Israel.

<sup>356</sup> Moshe Idel, “On Jerusalem as a Feminine and Sexual Hypostasis: From Late Antiquity Sources to Medieval Kabbalah” *Memory, Humanity, and Meaning: Selected Essays in Honor of Andrei Pleșu's Sixtieth Anniversary*. Edited by Mihail Neamțu and Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban. [Cluj:] Zeta Books, 2009, pp. 65-110, 8.

union and becoming a mother. Bride may even be a de-sexualized woman, since the bride was a virgin. Thus, bride was a more pure version of a woman—someone who has not had the opportunity to be unfaithful. (Someone who was not yet tempted in the Garden....) Yet, here, the bride was to be wed and consummate the marriage.

All of these ideas tied back to the appearance of the Jerusalem bride arriving on the ultimate Sabbath, the “Day of the Lord,” as a wedding day between God and his people. Because holidays were also Sabbaths, it was easy to transition the holiday of Sukkot at Sinai to the “Day of the Lord.” On both days a wedding took place between God and his people (or between the people and the bridal presence of God). This final “day” may be a thousand year Sabbath at the end of history’s six thousand year week. Additionally, this new creation mirrored the first creation, including the “joy” or consummation in the garden of Eden.

Throughout the biblical texts, God and the people had a tumultuous union. The people were unfaithful, worshipping other gods, which in the prophetic books was described as a wife having sex with other men. In the prophetic texts, God was the cuckold husband, trying to woo back his wife, on the one hand, and punishing her, on the other. The wars with other nations were described as punishment for Israel’s unfaithfulness. The Babylonian exile was described as a divorce and the return as a restored marriage. The prophets described a time to come, on “the day of the Lord,” when the people and God will finally be united in a forever marriage. John, likewise, described this forever marriage with the place

and person of the new Jerusalem as the bride descending from her heavenly protected spot to the new creation. She appeared on this new forever day without night. This new time and space was sacred time and space where God's blessed "Day" united with God's blessed "Place."

With the canonical approach, the new Jerusalem's development into a bride would be tied to the bride's description in the prophets, in which Jerusalem metonymically referred to the land, the people, and the temple. Thus, in Revelation, the new Jerusalem metonymically would refer to the promised land, the restored people, and the eternally restored temple-city.

With the midrashic approach, the new Jerusalem's development into a bride could be explained as following the trajectory of the Sabbath and the Torah's development into brides. All of these followed the midrashic polysemy of the root *c//*, which allowed the word "complete" to mean "bride." Thus, God gave his bride when he completed creation, when he completed giving Moses the Torah, and when he completed the new creation.

The midrashic approach explained the development of the new Jerusalem as a Sabbath bride. While the Sabbath was a time and the new Jerusalem was a place, their accumulated meanings made them more alike than different. Although one began as a time and one began as a place, they shared a time-space continuum. This time-space continuum was supernal—not of this mundane world but of God's heavenly world. The Sabbath and Jerusalem were two halves of a whole, without a clear demarcation between them. Both the

Sabbath and Jerusalem took on the qualities sacred time, sacred space, and a sacred person.

With regard to time, the new Jerusalem took place on an eternal day at the end of time, on an ultimate eternal Sabbath day. Both the Sabbath and the new Jerusalem were bound up with the time and place of “the world to come” and with the time and space of God’s temple. Both symbolized God’s presence.

Unity was one of the themes throughout John of Patmos’ vision of the new Jerusalem: heaven and earth united, land united, and, here, God united with his bride. The two Sabbaths (the primordial one and the eschatological one) were in a sense one and the same Sabbath. The Sabbath day was celebrated as a time outside of mundane time. It was set apart. It was primordial Edenic time and eschatological transcendent time. It was in the Sabbath that eternal time touched both the beginning and the end.

In Revelation all six days of creation found their culmination in the one final Day of creation, a day that lasted forever as an eternal Sabbath. The other days were excluded, just like all the other negative things that were excluded from the new Edenic Jerusalem. The other days were placed alongside all the other cursed things that were forgotten. Only the good remained. Only the best Day remained.

Moreover, the end-time was not just a time, it was the place of heaven brought to earth. It was when God’s time became earth’s time and where God’s space became earth’s space. Additionally, both the Sabbath and the new Jerusalem were described as the temple of God—the house where God and his

bride reside. And since the concern of John's people was the rule of foreign kingdoms who displaced them, killed them, and destroyed their temple and their home, they needed a safe place in addition to a safe time. Moreover, the new Jerusalem was not the stationary temple-city built by kings, but the nomadic tabernacle built by priests in the wilderness.

Tabernacle had the etymology of a dwelling place, specifically God's dwelling place. Moreover, tabernacle was cognate of the word "presence." Thus, John referring to the new Jerusalem as God's tabernacle identified the new Jerusalem with God's presence.

There were many feminine aspects of God, such as his presence, as Jerusalem, as the temple, and as the Sabbath. In the Hebrew Bible, a feminine aspect of God was his spirit or *ruah*. The *šekinah* developed in later Kabbalistic thought as the feminine form of God; however, John's portrayal of the new Jerusalem as a bride was an early precursor. John's new Jerusalem as tabernacle, i.e., *miškan*, shared its root with *šekinah*. John's description to the new Jerusalem as God tabernacling with the people made it a feminine physical manifestation of God's Presence.

Moreover, this time-space new creation anthropomorphized into a bride—a being that represented the place and time of God's fulfilled promises to the people, a being who represented a marital covenant, physical intimacy, and an eternal commitment, a being who was both the people of God and God's *šekinah*. Thus, although the Sabbath began as a time and Jerusalem began as a place, they unified into a time-space-person.

R. Yannai would cover himself and say, "Come bride! Come bride!" And in Revelation, this refrain is returned: "And the spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'" (22:17) Instead of R. Yannai welcoming the Sabbath time into the space of his home, the Jerusalem bride welcomed R. Yannai (i.e., God's people) into the space of her home. Mundane time and space became the holy time of the Sabbath and the holy space of the new Jerusalem. At the beginning of the Sabbath, R. Yannai welcomed one sixtieth of "the world to come" into his home. When "the world to come" arrived, she welcomed all into her home, into her sixty-fold Sabbath. "The spirit and the bride say, 'Come....All who are thirsty, come drink from the water of life.'"

In the third century, R. Hanina and R. Yannai welcomed the bride at the beginning of the weekly Sabbath. In the first century, John welcomed the bride at the beginning of the millennial Sabbath. John envisioned the new Jerusalem bride descending out of the heaven to the earth just as Rav Yannai envisioned the Sabbath bride descending from heaven to the earth. Perhaps, because of their overlapping symbolism, Rav Yannai would have seen the new Jerusalem as the ultimate Sabbath bride.

## CONCLUSION

The new Jerusalem signified so much more than group identity! The new Jerusalem was connection to others in one's group but it was also God, connection to heaven, connection to the world to come, connection to the past in the promises of God to the people of Israel, connection to the government in the promises to the kings, connection to creation in the restoration of Eden, connection to life—the eternal life, the tree of life, the dissolution of curses—pain, death, toil, childbirth, sin, transgression, divorce, rejection, abuse.

The new Jerusalem was multivalenced: the new Jerusalem could be the presence of God and it could be the people of Israel. As the presence of God, the new Jerusalem bride was a precursor to the idea of God's *šekinah* presence. This feminine entity later became associated with the Sabbath bride. Jerusalem as the people of Israel, represented the community as the feminine entity who married God. John switched back and forth with identifying the new Jerusalem as an emanation of God and as the people of God. Thus, both parties gender switched. God was alternately the father of the bride and the bride herself. The people were alternately the bride and the son.

Biblical critics and theologians view inconsistency differently. On the one hand, biblical critics look for multiple sources and inconsistency to explain the

development of a text. When compiling a document from various written and oral sources, inconsistent ideas may find their way into the finished document.

John's depiction of the new Jerusalem inconsistently reflects both its identification with God's presence and its identification with the people of Israel. One explanation for these multiple identities is that John did not syncretize the identities of the new Jerusalem.

Theologians, on the other hand, try to find consistency and systematic theology. Thus, the apparent use of multiple sources undermines the validity of the text for Christian belief in the inerrancy and divine inspiration of the biblical text.

The midrashic approach to the text, like the biblical critical approach, assumes the existence of multiple sources and multiple opinions. Unlike the theological approach, though, midrashic inconsistency does not undermine the text; rather, within midrash, multiple opinions bolster a text. Midrash welcomes multiple sources.

The usual mode of biblical interpretation for theologians (especially, but also other approaches) was to put the Hebrew Bible in its original context, then apply that interpretation to the Christian writings of the New Testament; however, this originalist approach was anachronistic. It would be more helpful to look at first century interpretations of the Hebrew Bible as a basis for interpreting New Testament writings. Historically, rabbinical writings have been neglected in Christian interpretation.

Another problem with looking at the New Testament through the lens of the Hebrew Bible was anything different in the New Testament was considered



both new and superior. Thus, the emphasis was placed on John's *new* Jerusalem. It was not the *old* Jerusalem. For example, in Ezekiel's vision of the city only the temple and the priestly quarters were holy. In contrast, in John's vision of the new Jerusalem, the city itself was completely holy. Also, the lack of animals in John's new Eden could be seen as superior to Isaiah's. Isaiah still had animals who could cause another "fall." Isaiah's people lived long lives but still had death. Thus, if the theologian were only looking at the canonical texts, they could find differences that could support their confirmation bias in the superiority in John's new version of the final city and temple.

On the other hand, biblical critics, looked not just at the canonical biblical texts but also the early Jewish writings. By including the extant first century Jewish writings, they would find fewer innovations in John's new Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the biblical critics usually continued in a new type of supersessionist view: criterion of originality. They looked for original ideas with the sayings of Jesus especially as proof for authenticity.

The practice of looking for authentic original ideas continued with the analysis of John's new Jerusalem. Thus, both theologians and biblical critics usually found John's lack of a temple as superior. This was because of an anti-Judaism bias: the Jewish practices and religion were seen as defunct and no longer valid. Thus, no temple meant the Jewish religion was obsolete.

However, when one looks for continuity in John's new Jerusalem with first century Jewish traditions, one does not look for superiority. One looks for the authorless ideas, authorless interpretations, authorless cosmography and

eschatology. John was part of a larger shared awareness which interpreted the biblical texts in certain ways. He shared these interpretations and methods of interpretation. Getting into the first century paradigms, structures of meaning, signifiers and signified, placed John's visions in a larger continuum.

One of the missing pieces to understanding the first century Jewish mind was midrash. Adding the midrashic approach to understanding John's new Jerusalem opened up his place in the first century Jewish milieu. Then, within that milieu one could see John's development of the new Jerusalem as a midrash on Eden, a creation account based on the first creation but with *ḥārīzā* to the prophets. One could see John's shared tradition of a heavenly Jerusalem with midrashic traditions. One could see John's *ribbui* development (or reflection of the development) of a descending Jerusalem based on Exodus 15:17.

Jewish midrash was often undervalued in New Testament studies, generally because of two main reasons: 1, the separation of Jewish and Christian scholarship and 2, the late date of codification. The separation of Jewish and Christian scholarship stemmed from the historical separation of the religions. Thus, rabbinical students studied midrash in Jewish seminaries, but theologians rarely studied midrash in Christian seminaries. Thus, the long-standing "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity were ways parted not just among the religious but also among scholars. The "parting of the ways" created two worlds of thought which rarely overlapped. More recent biblical-critical scholars and theologians attempted to reconcile the two worlds, but the default, sadly, seemed to be to keep them separate.

One justification for this separation was the problem that rabbinical writings began as oral traditions that were resistant to being put down in writing. Therefore, rabbinical traditions were often dismissed as too late to be relevant to New Testament interpretations. They were undervalued in Christian and secular scholarship because of their late date of codification. There is some validity to this argument since the written account preserved a moment in time of the oral tradition. The oral tradition changed over time. In contrast, the Dead Sea Scrolls offer us extant manuscripts from the first centuries. However, if one is not too concerned with absolute proof, these belatedly written down traditions give many clues to understanding the way first century Jews interpreted the Hebrew Bible. Of course, John of Patmos was one of those first century Jews.

Thus, midrash is particularly useful in understanding John's visions of the new Jerusalem. It offers a general picture of interpretations and interpretative methods which extended hundreds of years before the codification of the traditions. Midrash offers a glimpse into the early Jewish milieu, the way of thinking of the cosmos, and the way of interpreting the text.

The hesitation in bringing these two worlds of study together even occurred in the Jewish Study Bible. Although the JSB had many authors of varying practices of Judaism, they mainly read the Hebrew Bible in its original context. While the original context approach illuminated the biblical writers' original intents, using the original context of the Hebrew Bible for interpretation of the New Testament was not very helpful.

For example, the simple statement from the book of Exodus 31:18: “When he (God) finished (כִּלָּה) speaking with him (Moses) on Mount Sinai...” had a plain and obvious meaning, but also a midrashic meaning which was not often commented on--not even in the Jewish Study Bible. However, as noted in a previous chapter, this statement in rabbinical writings lead to extensive commentary and speculation. The rabbis found in this verse a gift of a bride to the people of Israel. They found two identities of the bride: the Torah and the Sabbath.

To add complexity and multivalence to the identity of the bride, the people of Israel were also identified as the bride. Thus, on the one hand, God gave the people the Torah and/or the Sabbath as a bride. On the other hand, the people were the bride of God marrying God at Sinai. Similarly, Jerusalem as bride may have multiple identities. She may be the people of God, the presence of God, and she could be a gift from God, her own entity, just as the Torah and Shabbat were their own entities.

The focus on Exodus 31:18 was an example of Torah primacy. The main example, though, for John’s new creation was the original creation account in Genesis. Thus, while John’s “new creation” could be an allusion to either Isaiah or Genesis, the principle of Torah primacy advised that John would anchor his interpretation in Genesis. Connections Isaiah and Ezekiel would then be midrashic *ḥārīzā* to Genesis. Therefore, the midrashic methodological approach to John’s new Jerusalem visions first examines Genesis creation. Where John

modified Genesis, the midrashic approach brings in his *ḥāṛīzōt* to Isaiah and other biblical books.

Applying *ḥāṛīzā* and Torah primacy pointed to John's phrase, "the first heaven and first earth went away" (Rev 21:1), as a cipher for the transformation of Genesis's creation account into John's new creation account. The first "heaven and the earth" God created (Gen 1:1), became a "new heaven and a new earth" where "the first things will not be remembered, and they will not be lifted to the heart" (Isaiah 65:17).

Applying this cipher, the other days of the week were in a sense "not remembered;" only the final Sabbath day remained in the new Jerusalem. The other six days were forgotten, even though each day was transformed in John's new Jerusalem: 1, light became all-encompassing; 2, the heavenly water disappeared creating a conjoined heavenly-earthly realm; earthly seas disappeared creating an exponentially enlarged promised land; 3, the sun and moon became God and the lamb within this new city; 4, plants disappeared except for the primordially preserved Tree of Life; 5, birds and sea-life disappeared since there was no place for them—no sky or sea; 6, animals disappeared so as not to tempt the new Adam.

Part of the effect of bad things being forgotten was a unification of good elements. Thus, unity was one of the themes throughout John of Patmos' vision of the new Jerusalem: heaven and earth united, land united, and God united with his bride. Even the Sabbath was united.

There were two Sabbaths outside of mundane time: the primordial one and the eschatological one. These two supernal Sabbaths were in a sense one and the same Sabbath. Even the weekly Sabbath day was celebrated as a time outside of mundane time. It was set apart. Its origin was based on primordial Edenic time. Part of its holiness was based on its connection to eschatological transcendent time. Thus, it was in the weekly Sabbath that one connected to eternal time which touched both the beginning and the end of time.

In Revelation, all six days of creation found their culmination in the one final Day of creation, a day that lasted forever as an eternal Sabbath. While in this eternal Sabbath, the other days themselves were “not remembered”, some of the good created on them did remain or was transformed: light remained while darkness was forgotten; heaven, earth, and land remained but unified without the chaotic water; God and the Lamb were the new celestial lights but within the heavenly-earthly realm rather than outside of the land; tempting animals disappeared; sacrificial animals also disappeared; and the Tree of Life remained without any other toil over the plants.

From the creation of the Sabbath in Genesis to bridal imagery in Isaiah to rabbinical elevation of the Sabbath as bride, John developed a new Jerusalem with the characteristics of a Sabbath bride. Like the Sabbath bride, this bridal Jerusalem symbolized union with God in the sacred time of the last day--the eternal Sabbath with God. Also, as the Sabbath was treated as a bride in Jewish ritual, so too was this ultimate Sabbath a wedding celebration.

This final Sabbath, however, was not just a time and a person, but a place. The ideas and imagery surrounding the Sabbath bride were applied to the holiest city, the *pièd a terre* of God. God's presence was in the earthly temple-city and the seed of Israel inherited this space with God. God's presence was also in the heavenly temple-city. In John's vision, this heavenly temple-city became God's new place on earth which became his only place. His heavenly tabernacle descended onto the earth, thus creating heaven on earth.

The passages on the new Jerusalem found in the last two chapters of Revelation were a conflation of written and oral Jewish ideas that were compiled, translated, and re-ordered into an account of the end of days. Each term that John used had connotations within the biblical text and within early Jewish interpretation. The terms John used were found within midrashic texts; however, the use of midrash for understanding John's new Jerusalem visions has been undervalued.

With regard to the new Jerusalem bride, midrash offers us a glimpse into the dual Jerusalem cosmos, how these two Jerusalems came to be, and why the new Jerusalem was described as a bride. Thus, although with midrash we cannot know precisely what was said originally, the oral tradition preserved a general background of John's late first century text.

Similarly, but in reverse, John's vision of the divine feminine provided early corroborating evidence for orally transmitted rabbinical ideas not written down until later centuries. John described Jerusalem as a woman, a bride, and a tabernacle. In rabbinical writings, the feminine aspect of God appeared as his

presence, but often conflated or associated closely with the feminine Jerusalem, Sabbath, and Torah. In the Hebrew Bible, a feminine aspect of God was his spirit or *ruah*. The *šekinah*, the presence of God, developed in later Kabbalistic thought as the feminine form of God; however, John's portrayal of the new Jerusalem *mīškan*, tabernacle, as a bride was an early precursor. The shared etymology of *mīškan* and *šekinah*, as well as the similar visions of the celestial bride descending, point to early attestations of the divine feminine.

This new Jerusalem was also described as God's tabernacle in which he tabernacled with the people. The Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word for tabernacle was *mīškan*. This word shared its root with *šekinah*. If this new Jerusalem was describing God tabernacling with the people, it was a feminine physical depiction of God's Presence. God's presence filled Solomon's temple and surrounded him as a crown when he entered the temple. R. Hanina welcomed the Sabbath as his "bride," his "queen." He brought her into his home and spent the night and day intimately with her.

The new Jerusalem was the presence of God and it was the people of Israel. The Jerusalem bride as God was a precursor to the idea of God's *šekinah* presence. God's *šekinah* later became associated with the Sabbath bride. Thus, rabbinical scholars and theologians can find an early Jewish tradition within John's visions.

Early rabbinical interpretations of the biblical texts shed considerable light on the meaning on John's new Jerusalem visions because John, even though he was writing in Greek was a Jew, was steeped in first century Jewish



interpretations of the biblical books. Unlike later Christians, first century Jewish “Christians” read the Hebrew Bible through the lens of early Jewish thought (to varying degrees in all Judaism’s varieties).

Previous scholarship generally regarded John’s new Jerusalem visions as apocalyptic. However, placing his visions in the genre of midrash uncovered how John, (and whoever he was borrowing from) developed the new Jerusalem. By suspending (for the time being) objections to using midrash, it became possible to explore the midrashic aspects of John’s visions. Some scholars presumed that John was just writing down dreams or visions, but the midrashic lens suggested that what he was actually doing was more intentional. A midrashic lens pointed to John’s visions being a result of sophisticated theological exegesis. Moreover, John’s myriad of allusions to the Hebrew biblical books confirmed that he was not just writing down a vision, but that he was interpreting biblical verses. Thus, the scientific principle of usefulness would argue that the midrashic approach was more useful than the apocalyptic approach.

This sixth approach to John’s new Jerusalem, the midrashic approach, can be combined with the other five approaches: theological, biblical-critical, literary, post-modern, and theory of religion, in ways more useful than the apocalyptic approach.

It has rhetorical usefulness for theologians. For example, the polysemic aspect of John’s new Jerusalem is assumed with the midrashic approach. Thus, the so-called problem of the various and contradictory images in John’s vision is no longer a theological problem since midrashim held many interpretations within

them that contradicted each other. In midrash, each opinion was included and there was no final say—even God himself did not have the last word. Thus, midrashic perspective on truth was similar to the scientific principle of “quantum” reality—the cat can be both alive and dead at the same time. We do not know which of the opinions was the final one, if any, yet the contradictions do not create a problem of errancy in the text. Rather than John’s vision being treated as solely a divinely inspired dream-vision of the eschaton, it could be given credit as a laborious compilation of biblical texts, midrashic traditions, and midrashically developed connections.

However, while the polysemic aspect of the midrashic approach can be used by theologians to highlight the thought process behind John’s new Jerusalem text, it can also be used by critics to undermine the text. The tenets of faith claim that God’s biblical writers were divinely inspired (even if their human senses filter the inspiration). If John were creating *ḥāriṣōt* of verses from the canonized texts (of the Hebrew biblical books), then one could argue that he did not develop the new Jerusalem through a vision; rather, his imagery was interpretation.

The midrashic approach can be used by feminist scholars. The midrashic approach highlighted the feminine nature of God as the new Jerusalem bride. It highlighted the vision of the final Sabbath-city descending in her finery for the final wedding. It allowed gender fluidity between God and her/his people. It elevated the feminine nature of God, of the city, of the temple, of the people, and of time. It also highlighted the disappearance of Eve from the new Garden.

Midrashic polysemy can also be used by post-modern environmentalists. One non-polysemic interpretation of John's visions is that it predicts the end of this world. Thus, if this world will pass away, we do not need to preserve it. A polysemic ecological application of the midrashic view on reality would be that John's vision did not definitively say that this earth will be destroyed to make way for a new earth. Rather, in one vision, John was on a mountain that existed on the current earth viewing the descent of the new Jerusalem; in another vision, John was witnessing a new unified heaven and earth which was different than this one which had "passed away." Therefore, the earth should be preserved in case the new Jerusalem needs a place to land!

A modern kerygma, or salvific message, can mitigate the problematic aspects of hoping for a new Jerusalem. Thus, the longing for a new world can be balanced with a message to preserve the sanctity of this world. Both future worlds could be hopeful improvements, idyllic Edens. However, any real change to actions, especially religious actions, must be led by religious leaders. Thus, the environmental approach may be more successful if combined with a theological approach. Having a theological epiphany about John's new Jerusalem and its purpose for modern Christians could help with the lack of care for this world. However, only by working with pastors, preachers, rabbis, and muftis can there be a transformation of approach to the environment, to preserving this world, in the hope of God's paradise on this earth.

While scholars may disagree on the meaning of the symbols in their original context, they can agree on a vision of the new Jerusalem which

considers the current need for ecological awareness of their message and they can agree on a rejection of anti-Judaic theology. Having an unbiased perspective can then lend itself to creating a message for today. The rabbinic principle of *pikuah nefesh*--to live and not die by the commandments, would also imply living and not dying by prophesy—another reason the midrashic approach is more useful than the apocalyptic. The midrashic approach to the book of Revelation can arise only in this day and age when two historically separate departments of scholarship—rabbinical studies and Christian theology—can come together. Unity in research allows deeper reflection on Jewish and Christian interpretations of canon. Thus, to put it bluntly, a pro-Jewish methodology helps the modern scholar to bridge the divide between John's world and our own, and hopefully, preserves this world for the future.

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