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"An Examination of "The Vine" Motif through the Lens of the Old Testament, the Books of John and Revelation, and Peripheral Extrabiblical Sources"

Dissertation

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by

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Content

Abstract

Motifs and themes are interchangeable, used in everyday speech, and common in scholarly literature. Some scholars view motifs and themes as the two most used forms of narrative repetition.[1] "The vine" motif contains multiple meanings throughout the Old and New Testaments. Sometimes, "the vine" readers misunderstand motif-specific referents. Research on "the vine" motif can clarify those specific passages of Scripture that utilize this motif. The interpretation of Scripture is not easy to understand without a proper understanding of the vine motif. Throughout Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, Israel is "the vine." In the Gospel of John, Jesus is "the true vine," according to John 15:1.

Scholars often focus on the immediate connection between the Old and New Testaments and ignore the specifics of "the vine" imagery and its meaning in each biblical testament.

[1] James Morgan, "How Do Motifs Endure and Perform?: Motif Theory for the Study of Biblical Narratives," *Revue Biblique* 122, no.2 (2015): 198.

Chapter One

Motifs and the Structure of the Dissertation

Introduction

The image of God described as a vintner and Israel as "the vine" became a typical image of a culturally prosperous nation and was also a source of pride for the Israelites. Viticulture was complicated and highly connected to the harvest cycle in the fall; when families were producing wine, it was a joyous time.[2] It was customary for farmers to have vineyards, and there is evidence of larger royal wine productions. The harvesting of grapes correlated with the Feast of Booths, one of three major festivals in ancient Israel. Viticulture became a robust standard for a developing nation.

When attempting to define a motif from a dictionary, one thing is that it must be a repeated element. Naturally, motifs are mobile and studied diachronically or synchronically.[3] Diachronically, the study of motifs is for a portion of historical poetics. Synchronically, the study of motifs is for what they contribute to a singular work.[4]

Motifs connote formative messages instead of factual ones. Writers utilize them not merely as a dressing of their accounts and narratives.[5] They attentionally use them as tools to assist readers in reliving the events that inspired them to write. Like other literary tropes, such as

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[2] Jennifer Pantoja, *The Metaphor of the Divine As Planter of the People: Stinking Grapes or Pleasant Planting?* (Boston: BRILL, 2017), 82.

[3] Ibid., 196.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Shemaryahu Talmon, *Literary Motifs and Patterns in the Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 5.

metaphors and similes, motifs are beneficial if they provide clarity to the reader or listener. One definition of a motif with regards to the Hebrew Bible is:

> A literary motif is a representative complex theme that recurs within the framework of the Hebrew Bible in variable forms and connections. It is rooted in an actual situation of an anthropological or historical nature. In its secondary literary setting, a motif gives expression to ideas and experiences inherent in the original situation and is employed by the author to re-actualize in the audience the reactions of the participants in that original situation. The motif represents the essential meaning of the situation, not the situation itself. It is not a mere reiteration of the sensations involved, but rather a heightened and intensified representation of them.[6]

When motifs appear in religious writings, a proper interpretation provides clarity. The Bible contains many motifs. For example, "the vine" motif illustrates ideas and thoughts that show God's wisdom using natural elements to demonstrate divine truths. This motif teaches the reader about the relationship between God, Israel, Jesus, and His disciples. "The vine" motif also illustrates the results of God's punishment for those who do not believe in Jesus as Lord. Conversely, imagery can be in at least three categories: graphic, verbal, and mental. Images, consciously and unconsciously, are in every area of our lives. Imagery and its influences have been constant throughout history.[7] However, when teaching composition, reading, and literature, the importance and usage of images for readers there are limitations. By using language, language references become simplified for proper understanding.[8] Imagery enters classrooms using a metaphor, simile, or description. Imagery exceeds the belief that words are all that is

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[6] Ibid., 4-5.

[7] Kristie Fleckenstein, Calendrillo, Linda and Worley, Demetrice *Language, and Image in the Reading-Writing Classroom: Teaching Vision* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), 4.

[8] Ibid.

needed. Imagery connects us to the moment and connects our thoughts and feelings. Words without imagery are often meaningless.[9] By understanding the importance of imagery, teaching subjects that pertain to writing, reading, and literature and their difficulties translate effectively. Students can better appreciate language arts by emphasizing how language and imagery work hand in hand. Such a task does not require studying every use of imagery, only that the transaction between imagery and language is acceptable when the student learns them.[10]

Summary

This chapter will include the thesis statement, problem, research method, literature review, and research organization. In addition, an overview of the Torah, the Psalms, and the Prophetic Corpus will be some of the primary sources from the Old Testament from which the research will come. These sources illustrate how much "the vine" imagery was in every aspect of the Israelites' lives.

Thesis Statement

This dissertation argues that to obtain a more enriched understanding of "the vine," imagery comes from first interpreting its meaning from each biblical testament. Then, the connection between both testaments is second. This dissertation further supports this thesis by analyzing what "the vine" imagery means in Judaism and Christianity. One of the goals of this dissertation is to provide a better understanding of how "the vine" imagery influences Judaism and Christianity. "The vine" imagery connotes distinct attributes for both faith groups and connects them.

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[9] Ibid., 5.

[10] Ibid.

The imagery of "the vine" and its meaning in the Torah, Psalm 80:8-16, the prophetic corpus, the Gospels, and the epistles will reveal "the vine" imagery use and what it means in its contextual forms. Historically, scholars have argued that the Old Testament represented Israel as God's vine. However, in the pericope of John 15:1-5, Jesus clearly states that He is "the true vine." The shift in the identities of "the vine" presented by John challenges the historical view of Israel being "the vine" and Jesus being "the true vine" in the New Testament.

Problem

The first problem centers around John's portrayal of Jesus, stating that He is "the true vine" and His disciples are the branches. According to the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7, Isaiah claimed that Israel was God's vine. In Psalm 80:8-16; Ezekiel 15:1-8, 17:1-10, 19:1-14; Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 2:12, 15; and Amos 5:17, God's people are "the vine" metaphorically. With the multiple passages that refer to Israel as "the vine," how does Jesus' claim that He is "the true vine" in John 15:1-5 reflect on the people of Israel? There is some disparity in understanding the role of Israel when Jesus states that he is "the true vine."

The second problem centers around the fact that Judaism does not see Jesus as the Messiah, and because of that, the question of the type of connection "the vine" imagery has may warrant further study. The two problems prompt three questions: How is "the vine" imagery interpreted when analyzed within each biblical testament or faith group? How is the connection defined? Is it spiritual, or is it only by image? Furthermore, is "the vine" imagery singular in its meaning, or is there a broader aspect to it?

Methodology of Research

The method of research demonstrated in this study will be the thematic correlation of an inductive Bible study, with a synthesis of motifs for a topical study approach. Correlation is a

significant part of interpreting Scripture. The Bible itself will serve as its best reference when compared to Scripture. Thematic correlation provides a method of research that includes a broader synthetic interpretation of Scripture and allows for an analysis of Scripture for a topical meaning. Thematic correlation offers a technique that also includes a review of themes and motifs that expands to a broader message of those motifs.[11]

Research using the thematic correlation method is a two-stage process. For correlative purposes, the themes and motifs of the research are from biblical passages.[12] These themes and motifs from the biblical passages assist with clarification and understanding. The synthesis is central to the thematic correlation research method because it establishes an interpretive understanding of the theme or motif.[13]

The research method will also contain a comparative analysis to identify any specific features that "the vine" imagery reveals from each testament and faith group. Identifying the specifics is crucial to the thesis. The specifics will show how "the vine" imagery identified God's people in Israel in one way and Jesus' disciples in another way.

Literature Review

The Bible contains many references to "the vine," sometimes it is literal, metaphorical, or as a symbol. Some of the material in this dissertation will set a foundation for the thesis, and other materials will support the thesis. In addition to the biblical references, scholars have

[11] Ibid., 255.

[12] Ibid., 256.

[13] Ibid.

conducted relevant studies on viticulture in Israel.[14] For example, Carey Walsh, the author of *The Fruit of the Vine*, researched the practice of viticulture, from planting vines to the consumption of wine within the Israelite society. In addition, she investigated how important viticulture was and how it became a topic for biblical writers. Viticulture was an essential aspect of the Jewish nation in the biblical times.[15] Walsh further posited that viticulture was part of the daily lifestyle in ancient Israel, and biblical writings illustrated its cultural importance. The key to her thesis was that viticulture demonstrated the social spheres and social relations in the Hebrew Bible.[16]

Peter Akpunonu, the author of *The Vine, Israel, and the Church*, also provided relevant information. He argued that there was a transition of "the vine." It was first "a choice plant," which became "a choice nation."[17] In addition, he adds that "the vine" came to reference Jesus Christ and the Church. One key thought he mentions is how the aspects of viticulture and salvation were in history. Because of these aspects and the idea that viticulture is essential and applicable to Israel and Christianity, it is crucial and studied.[18]

Jennifer Pantoja wrote another relevant piece of literature. In her book titled *The Metaphor of the Divine As Planter of the People: Stinking Grapes or Pleasant Planting?*, she

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[14] Carey Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine, Viticulture in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 2.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 3.

[17] Peter Akpunonu, *The Vine, Israel, and the Church. Studies in Biblical Literature* (New York: Peter Lang AG, 2004), 2.

[18] Ibid.

argues that God is constantly described metaphorically.[19] As such, she posits that her study is designed to study the concept of the metaphor of God as a divine planter," showing that biblical literature depicts the relationship between God and humanity as a mirror of the natural environment. Within her argument, she argues that ancient Israel was a society that relied heavily on cultivation and that the land and faith worked together.[20] A key element to her study was to follow the metaphorical description of God as the divine planter from ancient Hebrew poetry to the time of the Second Temple Judaism, further showing how the deep connection with the land cultivated the thoughts and beliefs of old Israel. From a broader perspective, the metaphor of YHWH as "the vintner" of Israel was an image primarily utilized in prophetic literature before exile.[21]

Shemaryahu Talmon, the author of *Literary Motifs and Patterns in the Hebrew Bible,* argues that the trained Bible reader often struggles with understanding the motifs and patterns in ancient Hebrew writings. Although some existing thoughts and concepts may be in these writings, they are limited and not presented systematically.[22] Talmon asserts that this lack of understanding of the ancient Hebrew writings can change by highlighting the biblical authors' literary conventions. These conventions should include motifs that provide speculative thought. As a signifier, the motif, as it is in various biblical writings and different contexts and various

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[19] Jennifer Pantoja, *The Metaphor of the Divine As Planter of the People: Stinking Grapes or Pleasant Planting?* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), xi.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Shemaryahu Talmon, *Literary Motifs and Patterns in the Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 3.

forms, is grounded in experiences. They do not entirely reflect on a person's ideas, but they are part of the group experience and the memories of the authors and audience for whom they are.[23]

James Morgan wrote an article titled *How Do Motifs Endure and Perform?: Motif Theory for the Study of Biblical Narratives*, and in this article, he argues that motifs should have their own distinct identity and functions as literary motifs because they are often confused with or taken over by other themes or various literary devices such as allegories, metaphors, or analogies to name a few.[24] Morgan also asserts that motif theory illustrates how motifs can assist readers with interpreting biblical narratives and other ancient narratives. One thought to consider is that narratives share specific characteristics regarding their intentions, instructions, and techniques, regardless of whether the narrative is factual or fictional. Narratives are designed to provide an encounter for readers; they are not simply used to provide information, and using motifs helps with that encounter.[25]

Kristie Fleckenstein, Linda Calendrillo, and Demetrice Worley, the authors of *Language and Image in the Reading-Writing Classroom: Teaching Vision*, argue that educators, even though we live in an imagistic culture, do not augment reading-writing with imagery in the classroom from kindergarten through high school and as a result, by the time students enter into high school they are not able to incorporate imagery along with reading-writing activities.[26]

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[23] Ibid., 4

[24] James Morgan, "How Do Motifs Endure and Perform?: Motif Theory for the Study of Biblical Narratives," *Revue Biblique* 122, no.2 (2015): 195.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Kristie Fleckenstein, Linda Calendrillo, and Demetrice Worley, *Language, and Image in the Reading-Writing Classroom: Teaching Vision* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), xiii-xiv.

However, the importance of understanding imagery is regaining a new focus on knowing and being in the world. Work in a few disciplines, such as cognitive psychology, anthropology, history, and cultural studies, has caused imagery to be analyzed differently. Imagery is currently studied in terms of how it contributes to reading and writing.[27]

Allen Frank, the author of *Search Scripture Well: Karaite Exegetes and the Origins of the Jewish Bible Commentary in the Islamic East*, argues that to search Scripture well, a model to consider is the Karaite exegetes' method from the tenth century. He presents surveys that discuss some of the significant exegetes before the Crusaders destroyed the Jewish community.[28] His study supports the vine imagery in Joseph's narrative. He provides a key that explains how Joseph could successfully interpret the Chief Butler's and Chief Baker's dreams. Muslims believe that "He who sees himself planting a vine or a tree will obtain distinction and elevation to a higher position." Frank also asserts that if the dreamer sees white grapes, there will be enough food to preserve that individual through the season. If the person sees white grapes in his or her dreams, they will be blessed unexpectedly. Because of these ideas, Joseph was able to provide a favorable report to the Chief Butler.[29]

In his book Genesis, James McKeown argues that one of the book's characteristics is its thematic repetition. The most prominent themes illustrate a sense of continuity throughout the book. For example, several narratives in the book of Genesis contain the repetitive themes of

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[27] Ibid., xiv.

[28] Frank Allen, *Search Scripture Well: Karaite Exegetes and the Origins of the Jewish Bible Commentary in the Islamic East* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 2.

[29] Ibid., 10.

offspring, blessings, and land. McKeown further asserts that it is not just the fact that these themes are repeated throughout Genesis but also the way they are developed that is critical.[30] According to McKeown, Genesis is a biblical book that moves towards a goal; the stories in the book continually take readers into various venues with such gentle momentum that they are unaware of the different scene shifts. The themes of offspring, blessing, and land are essential components of the book's cohesion, and through these themes, Genesis reveals unity, purpose, and direction. Each theme relies on God for its development, and God relates through the narratives' themes and characters. There are several theme changes in the book of Genesis, and a transformation takes place at the end of the book.[31] McKeown's book helps decipher the meaning of "the vine" imagery about Jacob's blessing of Judah.

Trevor Shannon, the author of *Understanding the Psalms: A Spirituality for Today*, asserts that the Old Testament is not used enough, nor does it have a high value, and Christians do not clearly understand it. It is a fact that out of All of the Old Testament books, the one most referenced in the New Testament is the Book of Psalms. Jesus was undoubtedly acquainted with the Psalms, and as Christians will attest, Jesus quoted some of the verses from Psalm 22 as he was suffering on the cross. Because of this quote from Jesus, from the early church until the present church, the Psalms have been used in worship extensively, privately, and collectively. In most Anglican parishes, the service times that incorporate the Holy Communion are the services with the most worshippers. Of the many psalms used in any worship service, Psalm 23 remains

[30] James McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 13.

[31] Ibid.

the most well-known.[32] However, Psalm 80 is the focus of this dissertation and the imagery that identifies Israel as the vine. Each new generation of Christian scholars attempts to show how beneficial the Psalms are and how they can strengthen one's faith as they speak to the believer of their hopes and fears. Scholars like Martin Luther and John Calvin claimed the Psalms help believers address matters shared amongst fellow believers who are serious about their faith in God and their lives as believers. Christian scholars in the 20th century continued researching the Psalms, hoping to understand them better from their original settings and purposes.[33]

Carolyn Sharp, the author of *Old Testament Prophets for Today*, provides critical information regarding the importance of prophets. She argues that the Old Testament Prophets' words are still as important today as they were initially written. According to Sharp, the prophets saw God, spoke for God, and thought they knew God.[34] The Christian church benefits from prophetic utterances because those utterances point toward Christ. Early Christians interpreted several prophetic narratives as a prediction of Jesus' incarnation, ministry, suffering, death, and resurrection. Christians have relied on several metaphors in the prophetic narratives to make theological claims. One theological claim was that Jesus was God's Messiah and the Son. Christian interpreters since the New Testament argue that the Old Testament Prophet vaguely described the ministry of Jesus Christ.[35] In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Prophet communicated

[32] Trevor Shannon, *Understanding the Psalms a Spirituality for Today* (Chicago: Austin Macauley Publishers, 2019), 9.

[33] Ibid., 16.

[34] Carolyn Sharp, *Old Testament Prophets for Today* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2009), 11.

[35] Ibid., 14.

with God through dreams and visions for specific individuals or entire communities. At times, this form of communication was identified in the Scriptures, and at other times, the text says the "word of the Lord came to the prophet."[36]

Susan Docherty's book *The Jewish Pseudepigrapha: An Introduction to the Literature of the Second Temple Period*, provides a wealth of material regarding the vine imagery. She argues that Pseudepigrapha has a continuing value regarding theological and ethical teaching. Pseudepigrapha teaches many issues that are as important today as they were when these texts were written. These texts illustrate how to respond to social injustice, innocent suffering, and the fear of death. The literature is essential in discussing historical matters and thoughts about Scripture and theological traditions in the Second Temple era.[37] Pseudepigrapha is vital in studying Judaism. However, it is equally crucial to study Christianity at its early stages. These texts provided evidence for the early church in the Common Era when sources of information were lacking for these new believers in Jesus Christ. These texts are also critical to many religious debates, such as the relationship between Palestinian and Diaspora Jews and Jewish Scriptures. Docherty hopes that her book will provide sufficient reasons for the continued study of Pseudepigrapha.[38]

Michael Knibb, the author of *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Text and Traditions*, asserts that this book focused on the problems of interpreting the Book of

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[36] Ibid., 15.

[37] Susan Docherty, *The Jewish Pseudepigrapha: An Introduction to the Literature of the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 10-11.

[38] Ibid.

Enoch's text.[39] He argues that the historical text and the history of its formation are connected. His study method was to study the sequential stages from a historical point of view and to consider how much the book was affected after Christians took it over. In Ethiopian Christianity, the Book of Enoch, along with the Book of Parables, was perceived as Christian. In the Ethiopic manuscript, a few narratives support Christian beliefs at an early stage. The Greek versions of the Book of Watchers and the Epistles were copied with Christian texts, showing they were part of Christian traditions. However, even though the Book of Enoch can be read from a Christian view, the complete Book of Enoch was ascribed to the Jews.[40]

In his book The Origins of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible An Analysis of Joseph and 4 Ezra, Juan Widow provides a passage that pertains to "the vine" imagery and correlates to the movement of "the vine" in the Old Testament. Widow wrote his book to assert that research on the formation of the canon acknowledges the importance of 4 Ezra against Josephus' *Against Apion* text as the two oldest texts that provide the number of books in the Hebrew Bible. Widow claims that a comparative analysis of the two texts related to the canon has not been conducted. There is material from one or the other, but no study draws from both documents.[41] A comparative analysis may shed some light on how the Hebrew Bible came to be composed of

[39] Michael Knibb, *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1.

[40] Ibid., 3.

[41] Juan Widow, *The Origins of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible, An Analysis of Josephus and 4 Ezra* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 3.

twenty-four books. To answer the questions from this comparative analysis, it would be purposeful to start with an investigation into the creation of the Jewish canon.[42]

Sean Adams, the author of *Studies on Baruch: Composition, Literary Relations, and Reception*, is a composition of various authors with various studies. Adams' book was written because the Book of Baruch lacks sufficient attention, and more scholarship should be involved in studying this book. Adams' book is a collection of essays covering several topics but leaving room for further study. Some of the topics in the book discuss Baruch's inception, translation, and placement in history, as well as a vital topic of the relationship between Baruch and the Jewish Scriptures. There are studies in Adams' book that re-investigate theological perspectives. Each chapter is topic-specific, but collectively, they reveal similarities, showing that an innovative approach to studying Baruch is a uniting feature of the book.[43]

Grant Osborne, the author of a commentary on *Matthew*, states that he wrote this commentary to answer the question: What would I want to know as a pastor preparing a sermon on a gospel passage? How do we do that? What is the process of preaching a series of messages from Matthew's Gospel? Osborne asserts that "gospel" means more than "good news." The verb used means to "preach the good news." Osborne further provides two methods to study Scripture. First, the principles of grammatical-historical exegesis need to be understood to ascertain the message Mattew was trying to convey. Osborne studies a passage's context,

[42] Ibid., 4.

[43] Sean Adams, *Studies on Baruch: Composition, Literary Relations, and Reception* (Germany: De Gruyter, 2016), 1.

grammar, semantics, syntax, background, and theology.[44] Second, particular hermeneutics recognize the composition of Matthew's narratives and how they function. These components for consideration are the point of view of the narrative, plot and development, characterization and dialogue, and the intended reader. The objective of studying Matthew's gospel in this manner is to try and understand how the narratives function at each of the levels mentioned above and combine them in terms of the message's intent and intended reader.[45]

Andreas Köstenberger, the author of *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God*, writes this book to provide an in-depth exploration of theology in the New Testament. He asserts that Biblical Theology is stymied by questionable presuppositions, improper methodologies, and inaccurate executions, even though the field is currently promising for theological research.[46] Biblical Theology highlights specific biblical texts while considering the historical setting in which they were written. It desires to convey the concepts from biblical documents in correlation to God's salvation plan up to the salvific work of Jesus Christ. It also seeks to ground the theological ideas in given sources by closely reading the text. Another objective of Biblical Theology is to contribute to studying connected context-sensitive and spiritual themes.[47]

Stanley Porter's monograph, *John, His Gospel, and Jesus: In Pursuit of the Johannine Voice*, was written to assert the importance of knowing Jesus through John's Gospel and its

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[44] Grant Osborne, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2010), 23.

[45] Ibid., 24.

[46] Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 26.

[47] Ibid.

unique voice. Even though the title claims one thing, the title could have been written as "Jesus and John's Gospel." However, that title would not have correlated with the monograph because it starts and ends with the Gospel of John. Porter's monograph is a compilation of essays that illustrate the specifics of John's unique voice.[48] However, even though the monograph is John-specific, the lessons from the monograph always lead back to Jesus. This is correct, according to Porter; after all, it is Jesus who is the pillar of the Christian faith, and from the conception of Christianity to the present, Christianity is about genuinely confessing Jesus as Lord. The Gospel of John is stylistically, historically, and theologically different than the Synoptic Gospels; this is the uniqueness of John's Gospel. John's Gospel concerns Jesus as the incarnate Word who served in an earthly ministry until He was arrested, crucified, and resurrected.[49]

Gordon Fee's commentary, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary*, was written because he believed that believers avoid reading the book for two reasons: because it is full of angels, trumpets, earthquakes, beasts, dragons, and a bottomless pit. According to Fee, most believers either avoid reading Revelation or think they will find the mysteries of the world's end. Both positions are incorrect; the book is part of the Holy Scripture, providing a beautiful conclusion to the entire Scripture.[50] Fee further asserts that much has been written about the book of Revelation, especially at the popular level, but this often clouds the book's meaning instead of helping the reader understand it. Fee's book was written with the singular purpose of offering a

[48] Stanley Porter, *John, His Gospel, and Jesus: In Pursuit of the Johannine Voice* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 10.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Gordon Fee, *Revelation A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2013), ix.

New Testament scholar's interpretive reading of the book with the goal of its reader hearing it as the word of God. Some of the questions that Fee poses are: What does it mean for God and Christ to be the only sovereigns in the universe?[51] And what does it mean for contemporary believers to be counterculturally different? Even more, with theology, there must be worship; the book of Revelation recognizes that Christian theology should lead to liturgical expression of praise to God. John wrote the final New Testament book in the Christian canon, providing a proper climax to the biblical story, which began in Eden and will conclude with Eden being restored.[52]

Organization of the Research

The research aims to start with "the vine" imagery in the Old Testament and move forward to the New Testament to understand its specific meanings within its contexts. Initially, research on "the vine" in the Old Testament sets the foundation for John's Gospel and concludes in the Book of Revelation. The vine imagery is in multiple texts as early as the Book of Genesis. Part of the research would be eliminating those references to "the vine" that are not essential to the thesis.

Chapter Two analyzes "the vine" imagery from the Torah. Each of the five books contains an aspect of "the vine" imagery that directly or indirectly supports the thesis. The five books from the Torah will impact the study expositional and contextually. The multiple passages in the Torah will provide material to determine and ascertain their impact on this study.

Chapter Three discusses "the vine" imagery in the Psalms and some of the prophetic corpus. In this chapter, an analysis of "the vine" motif from Psalm 80:8-16 and the prophetic

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., x.

passages of Isaiah 5:1-17; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 15:1-8, Ezekiel 17:1-10, 19:1-14; Hosea 2:12, 15; and Amos 5:17, will be the focus. An exposition and chapter synopsis of these passages from the Old Testament will support the thesis. This exposition will account for the context of the passages and contain various perspectives from scholarly literature. These books will be the primary sources. However, other prophetic books may be in the research as it progresses.

Chapter Four will examine extrabiblical sources that may expound on "the vine" imagery. These sources will come from the books of 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch to examine "the vine" motif more in-depth. The books of 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch will support the thesis, even though they are not in the Hebrew or Christian Bible canon.

Like Chapter Three, Chapter Five analyzes "the vine" imagery from the New Testament. The primary sources from the New Testament will be Matthew 21:33-41, John 15:1-5, and Revelation 14:18-20. This chapter will contain an overview, a chapter synopsis of these biblical books, and a focused exposition on the "I am" statements in John. In addition, an exposition of both passages from the New Testament will provide material from their contexts and support the thesis. Peripheral New Testament books referencing "The Vine" will be in the research if needed.

Chapter Six discusses Judaism and Christianity regarding "the vine" imagery in the form of a comparative analysis. This comparative analysis will illustrate how "the vine" imagery affects each religion and how they connect. Understanding how "the vine" imagery connects testaments is extremely important. Christian scholars streamline the connection of "the vine" imagery from the Old Testament to the New Testament. However, Judaism, particularly the Orthodox Jew, does not. This comparison will attempt to describe the type of connection it is.

Chapter seven is the dissertation's conclusion, showing the research results. A summarization from each chapter illustrating the critical points of "the vine" imagery will show how the research points toward the thesis. The extrabiblical sources and the correlative elements that support Israel as "the vine" or Jesus as "the true vine" will show how the imagery impacts them. The chapter will conclude with a re-emphasis on how the research defended the thesis of this dissertation and further recommend continued research on motifs and imagery for a more in-depth understanding of them.

Overview of Old Testament Sources

Torah

Once the Pentateuch reached the level of being authoritative, the Torah became one of the key directives for religious practices for the Jews and Samaritans. From ancient times, the five books of Moses have served as a consecrated constitution and guide for belief and direction.[53] Regardless of how long the authorization process may have taken, it was an enormous historical achievement for the Jews and was important historically in antiquity. The Pentateuch has become influential in the development of Western societies in terms of law, political philosophy, and community.[54]

It is common to refer to the first five books of the Old Testament as the Pentateuch, which in Greek means "five," "book," or "implement." In Hebrew, the books refer to the Torah,

[53] Gary Knoppers, and Bernard Levinson, *The Pentateuch As Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 2.

[54] Ibid.

which means "the law" or "the Law of Moses."[55] The Hebrew term "law" also has a broader meaning to include "instruction." The Torah contains various genres: laws, narratives, poems, and genealogies. Laws usually provided direct instructions that taught the Israelites what they could or could not do.[56] Narratives use a story method to teach readers how to reflect on the principles they observe in the law. The two genres are related and different. The Israelites did not read the laws the same way as the narratives, even though they may have dealt with similar issues. The laws and the narratives deal with issues distinctly and provide different instructions.[57]

Moses is the author of the Torah. His authorship contributed to the prominence of the laws in these books. In addition to the Torah, other sources support his authorship as well.[58] Moses is a significant figure throughout most of the Torah, which was the book of Moses in the Hellenistic period. The Dead Sea Scrolls point to Moses as the author.[59] Jewish authors Philo and Josephus also believed that Moses was the author, and even the Babylonian Talmud considered Moses the author. Tradition favors that Moses' authorship began in the book of Deuteronomy, and it eventually spread to the other books in the Torah because Moses was the mediator of the laws.[60]

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[55] Richard Averbeck, *The Old Testament Law for the Life of the Church: Reading the Torah in the Light of Christ* (Chicago: IVP Academic, 2022), 83.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] John Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, The Nature of the Pentateuchal Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 65-67.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

The Torah provides a historical description of the Jewish nation and gives a structure for its continued development at the individual level and as a nation. It discusses critical information about mankind's creation, the purpose of the Jewish people, and person-to-person relationships, all of which are just as important today as when Moses wrote the Torah.[61] The Jewish nation is one of the most influential civilizations. It interacted with the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans of antiquity. Some of these latter civilizations only exist today in historical books. The Jewish nation was conquered, enslaved, and dispersed in the past. However, it is a crucial group on the world stage.[62] The Torah and its values, views, and language continue to be vital to understanding the uniqueness of the Jewish nation. By studying it and what it means, the reader will better understand Jewish history and the destiny of the Jewish people in modern times.[63]

Psalms

In the English Bible, there are 150 separate psalms, also known as poems; many are prayers meant to be sung to God. The title "Psalms" comes from the Greek "*psalmos*." Its Hebrew translation is *mizmôr*, which is used in many psalm titles.[64] The term *mizmôr* comes from the root *zāmar*, meaning "to make music" or "to sing praise." From the Jewish perspective,

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[61] Sarah Levy, and Steven Levy, *The JPS Rashi Discussion Torah Commentary* (Lincoln: The Jewish Publication Society, 2018), xvii.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Tremper Longman, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 23.

the book of Psalms is known as the "*Tehillim*," which is the plural form of "*tĕhillâ*," meaning "Praise" or "Hymns." The key idea of the title *tĕhillâ* is to illustrate that even though there may be more laments than hymns within the book of Psalms, the overarching theme is praise.[65]

The Psalms contain numbers in most Bibles and prayer books. However, some of the Psalms also have headings found in some versions of the Psalter. Jewish scholars and editors added headings to the Psalms about 200 B.C.[66] These scholars and editors claim that King David wrote seventy-three of the psalms, two psalms are ascribed to King Solomon, Moses wrote Psalm 90, Asaph wrote twelve psalms, Korah wrote eleven psalms, Heman wrote Psalm 88, and Ethan wrote Psalm 89. Both Asaph and Heman were musicians who participated in the ark's installation into Solomon's newly built temple. Some of the headings of the psalms inform the reader of their origin.[67]

Prophetic Corpus

The Old Testament Prophet was essential in the spiritual direction of Israel, the Christian Church, and even secular culture. Prophets are known in the Bible in Israel, from Abraham's calling from his homeland and becoming the father of all who believe in YHWH to the New Testament times.[68] The witnessing of the prophets was so severe that the prophets' actions became documented and preserved in stories, oracles, and other collections of prophetic texts

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Trevor Shannon, *Understanding the Psalms: A Spirituality for Today* (Chicago: Austin Macauley Publishers, 2019), 15.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Carolyn Sharp, *Old Testament Prophets for Today* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2009), 13.

throughout Judaism. The prophets in Israel addressed many issues, including domestic, economic, social, and cultural. In addition, they provided direction when an international crisis arose involving foreign enemies wanting to dominate them.[69] To the ancient Israelites, the Prophets were sometimes honored and, at other times, ignored. Sometimes, the Prophets were troublemakers, while others considered their prophecies and passed on their words to future generations. Some viewed the Prophets as crazy, and some recognized that their words were the only solid source to get them through turbulent times.[70]

This study previously mentioned prophetic corpus books bear the authors' names. Many, if not all, identify the author and the recipients of God's message early in each book. For example, in the book of Isaiah, Scripture teaches that God gave Isaiah visions. Isaiah identifies the recipients of his visions. The ministry of Isaiah extended from 755 to 685 B.C.[71] Jeremiah's prophetic ministry extended from 627 B.C. to 585 B.C. for a sinful Israel.[72] Ezekiel delivered his message and signs to the Hebrews, who had been living as exiles from 593 to 571 B.C.[73] The author's early identification pattern is in the major and minor prophets. Hosea is identified early in his book, and he preached during the latter years of King Jeroboam II, during the war where Assyria defeated King Pekah, and in the days before Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians.

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[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Gary Smith, *Interpreting the Prophetic Books: An Exegetical Handbook*, ed. David M. Howard Jr., Handbooks for Old Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2014), 60.

[72] Ibid., 64.

[73] Ibid., 68-69.

Hosea's ministry was between 755 to 725 B.C.[74] Amos, born in Judah, prophesied to warn the Jews in the Northern Kingdom of Israel as God commanded him to. His warning came close to the end of the reign of King Jeroboam II. Amos' ministry was from 765 to 760 B.C. Within this time frame, Amos prophesied for only one year.[75]

The interpretation of the prophetic utterances from the prophets foretells the coming of Jesus Christ, His incarnation, ministry, suffering and death, and ultimate resurrection.[76] Christianity has relied heavily on prophecy metaphors to argue that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled prophecy; he also fulfilled the Jews' long-awaited Messiah and God's son. Since the New Testament, interpreters have argued that the Hebrew texts point in multiple ways toward the identity and purpose of Jesus Christ.[77]

The stories of the prophets in the Bible provide a view of the prophet's role in the spiritual and political life of the Israelites.[78] The Torah and the historical books of the Bible contain prophets. The three major prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and the minor prophets follow them.[79]

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[74] Ibid., 73.

[75] Ibid., 75.

[76] Carolyn Sharp, *Old Testament Prophets for Today* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2009), 13.

[77] Ibid., 13.

[78] Ibid., 14.

[79] Ibid.

Chapter Two

The Torah Pericopes

Introduction

The purpose of the second chapter is to examine "the vine" imagery from the Torah. The five books of the Torah contain a pericope using "the vine" imagery. This chapter introduces each book and examines the Scripture verses that contain "the vine" imagery to examine them contextually. "The vine" imagery is first in the Torah.

Genesis

The Book of Genesis is about the beginnings. It describes the universe's beginning and humanity with its good and bad times and reveals humanity's successes and failures.[1] A focal point in the book of Genesis is how it depicts the relationship between God and people and people with other people. These themes may seem easy in principle; however, they are complex in the reality of God and His relationship with mankind. These themes are universal but complex because their background correlates to the styles and settings from the ancient Near East.[2]

Genesis 9:20

After the flood, Noah brought bread and wine. Like the creation story, the flood story is not a complete precursor for a new future. However, it establishes the foundation for developing God's divine plan. In chapter 9, Noah's post-flood work with the soil and his work as a

[1] Daniel Durken, ed. *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), 63.

[2] Ibid.

viticulturist produced food items that became the bread of life and the cup of salvation.[3] In this chapter, God confirms the promises of a renewed blessing by establishing a covenant with Noah and his sons. The covenant is not just for humans; it is between God and all flesh living on the earth. Even though Noah received the covenant, it included every living creature and a continued existence for all.[4]

Genesis 9:20 reads, "And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard." Some scholars believe that he was following in the footsteps of Adam, whom God commanded to tend to the garden so the earth's fruits and produce were taken care of.[5] In this passage, Noah becomes the first person to plant a vineyard post-flood, which fulfills Lamech's prophecy. Lamech's prophecy is in Genesis 5:29, which reads, "And he called his name Noah, saying, this *same* shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed." Even more interesting is what God said about Noah in Genesis 6:8-9, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Noah's name means "rest," and Lamech gave it to him because the Lord cursed the ground because of Adam's sin, and Noah would bring relief from the work and the toiling of the lands.[6] More than likely, wild grapes may have been harvested before the flood. However, Genesis 9:20 teaches that Noah

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[3] Russell Reno, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 164.

[4] James McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 59.

[5] Miguel De La Torre, *Genesis: Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2011), 96.

[6] Ibid.

planted a vineyard after the flood, which aligns with the archeological evidence of the oldest-known winery found in Armenia, a part of ancient Ararat where the Ark settled.[7]

One of the most familiar stories in the Bible is the story of Joseph and his brothers. It is designed to be more than a story that revolves around a young man mistreated by his brothers, eventually overcoming several obstacles in his life.[8] Even though God is not often mentioned by name, His presence is evident in the story of Joseph. The story of Joseph and his brothers teaches a vital lesson about the relationship between God and humanity. By reviewing Joseph's story and including God's presence, the story of Joseph becomes even more spectacular.[9]

Genesis 40:9-10

Genesis 40 is a pivotal point in Joseph's storyline. Joseph is in jail, and even so, God has raised Joseph to a high position there.[10] An assumption can be made that Joseph's position was elevated enough to the point where he was given the task of caring for the royal officials who were also incarcerated. Both officials, one a baker and the other a butler, had a dream that Joseph interpreted, but it would be years before his interpretations would lead him to his freedom. The Chief Butler was one of the officials whose dream was interpreted by Joseph, but he forgot about him when he was released from prison, and Joseph remained for two more years.[11]

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[7] Andrew Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (London: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 115.

[8] Merrell Peters, *Joseph: A Gateway to the Lord* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 1.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 323.

[11] Ibid.

Genesis 40:9-10 reads, “And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, ‘in my dream, behold, a vine was before me; And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth, and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes.’”

Joseph’s interpretation of the dream is illustrative and shows what will come to pass. The three days provide the exact time for the dream's fulfillment.[12] Joseph’s interpretation of what is to happen is divine because of its clarity and details. Joseph is not vaguely discussing some future event that does not have a completion time; if so, that would have allowed multiple interpretations. His description is precise and easy for the reader to conclude.[13] This ability, given to Joseph by God, is no ordinary skill. No one could interpret the officials' dreams except Joseph, and his chance of correctly interpreting them was low. Interpreting these dreams was a high risk for Joseph because his future would have been grim if they had not come true.[14] Joseph steps out on faith because of his relationship with God, which illustrates that he knows God controls the future. God gives Joseph the ability to explain the dreams to both officials. In the next three days, Joseph’s valid interpretations will be clear.[15]

Some exegetes believe that Joseph was very capable of interpreting simple dreams. Although Scripture does not describe how he can interpret them, these exegetes try to explain his thinking and how it led to his solutions. A commentary written by Sahl B. Malish explains that in

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[12] Merrell Peters, *Joseph: A Gateway to the Lord* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 62.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

Genesis 40:9-12 the phrase “in my dream there was a vine before me” means, “in my dream, I beheld a vine from a vineyard before me.”[16] This phrase is symbolic and is mostly promising for the individual who sees it. The dream came about as the Chief Butler described, “And on the vine, there were three branches,” at first, these branches did not have any leaves, but upon a closer review, he saw that they did have leaves.[17] Just as he saw the leaves, they also blossomed; the chief Butler states, “As soon as it budded, its blossoms shot forth,” like how the leaves were put forth; the blossoms were set forth as well.

However, this is not the typical way vines grow.[18] After a period, they produce leaves, then blossom and grow until they have grapes that produce juice. This juice from the grapes must sit before it is ready for consumption.[19] The dream from the Chief Butler is much quicker than the standard processing timeframe because he described branches without leaves, then leaves put forth, and then they blossomed and matured until they produced grapes in a short period.[20]

Genesis 49:11

Scholars consider Genesis 49 to be Jacob's last words, the “Testament of Jacob,” and the first poem in the Bible. Jacob has previously blessed Pharaoh, Joseph, and his sons and now

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[16] Allen Frank, *Search Scripture Well: Karaite Exegetes and the Origins of the Jewish Bible Commentary in the Islamic East* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 109.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

provides blessings for all his other sons.[21] Jacob is speaking as a wise old patriarch with prophetic insight. His blessings on his sons ensure the future of tribes and provide them with God's divine enabling. The blessings may be directed toward individuals; however, they also emphasize intertribal relationships and Israel.[22]

The blessings from Jacob are twofold: they contain a prophecy concerning the future of his sons and recall the actions of each of them. Two sons, Joseph and Judah, receive the most extended blessings, revealing their importance. Jacob's blessing contains about 253 words; half mentions the blessings he prophesied on Joseph and Judah.[23]

Genesis 49:11 reads, "Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes." This imagery of "the vine" is given as Jacob pronounces the blessings on his sons.

The blessing from Jacob begins with Leah's six sons, and their blessings are in the poem's first part. Excluding Zebulun, they are in birth order. Rachel's sons are last, and between the sons of Leah and Rachel are the sons of the concubines.[24] One of the distinct features of Jacob's prophecy is the use of imagery. He uses animal imagery about thirteen times in this poem. A second unique feature is the use of agricultural imagery, which occurs with the

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[21] Andrew Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 449.

[22] James McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 151.

[23] Andrew Steinmann, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 2019), 449.

[24] Ibid., 450.

blessings of Judah and Joseph. These agricultural blessings are in wine, grapes, and wine and milk.[25]

This image of the donkey tied to the best vines depicts the attitude of one who is carefree; it illustrates that he is carefree because he has a multitude of vines and does not care that his donkey is tied to them or eats them.[26] The washing of clothes in the wine also connotes fertility and wealth. This refers to Judah's health and wealth by mentioning that his eyes are darker than wine and his teeth are whiter than milk; these are not ordinary ways to describe a person, but in the context of a farming community in Judah's time, they reveal a healthy life.[27] The distinct advantages written concerning Judah are that he will be victorious over his enemies, lead his brothers, be sovereign over the nations, and have much wealth. Judah is given a key position amongst the brothers and is identified as the one from whom the future leader of all the tribes will come. Jacob's blessings over Judah also reveal the unique role he will play in the promises made between God and Abraham.[28]

Exodus

The Book of Exodus provides continuity within divine election, redemption, and revelation that initially started in the book of Genesis. The Book of Exodus is associated with the Book of Leviticus with the legislation that provided the means of God's continual presence. The Book of Exodus is associated with the Book of Numbers because it contains material that

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[25] Ibid.

[26] James McKeown, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 153.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

discusses the journey to the promised land and the preparation of the people to possess it.[29] The Book of Exodus is linked to the Book of Deuteronomy because of the people's covenant faithfulness needed to conquer and possess the promised land. The stories from the Book of Exodus highly influenced Israel's history.

From the perspective of the Jews, the Israelite's exodus from Egypt and the creation of the law helped to shape their understanding of themselves as the chosen people of God. The creation and giving of the law at Mount Sinai are celebrated in the "Festival of Shavuot" in the late spring, fifty days after the Passover begins.[30] This is more than a doctrine or statement; it impacts their lives entirely; it gives the Israelites a reason to live and provides direction.[31] Simultaneously, the Book of Exodus has been read in multiple settings, impacting how the text is read. For example, in Midrashic literature, the burning bush is used to explain the suffering of the Jewish people by connecting them to the gentile nations.[32] Some interpreters see the Jewish people as a fence that protects all other nations by surrounding them and suffering for them.[33]

Exodus 22:5

Chapters 21:1-22:20 of the book of Exodus can be divided into two types of laws in four blocks in an alternating sequence. The two types of various laws are "statutes" and "ordinances."

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[29] Emmanouela Grypeou, and Helen Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 362.

[30] Ronald Eisenberg, *Jewish Traditions: A JPS Guide* (Dulles: Jewish Publication Society, 2000), 298.

[31] Scott Langston, *Exodus Through the Centuries* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2005), 3.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

Ordinances are in chapters 21:1-11; 21:18-22:17, and "statutes" are in chapters 21:12-17; 22:18-20. Ordinance connotes something usually practiced, whereas statutes deal with more severe crimes. Chapter 22:5 is an ordinance.[34]

Exodus 22:5 reads, "If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field; of the best of his field, and the best of his vineyard, shall he make restitution." Chapter 22:5-15 of the book of Exodus describes property liability and its penalties. Verses 1-18 describe the types of property damage and how it was based on either mishaps or contracts. Repayment was based on what was lost from either real property or loss from productivity if the loss involved fields or orchards that had to be taken out of production due to damage.[35] Clearly, the responsible person understood that they had to repay the loss. Some examples that cause damage are spreading fire, uncontrolled animals, and failure to care for dams or other irrigation methods. In any case, the person who caused the damage was required by the law to pay for any losses, like the laws of Hammurabi and Ur-Nammu.[36] Sometimes, loss was not covered because it may have happened because of unforeseeable circumstances or because it may have been included in rental agreements.

The statutes that deal with harm through negligence and robbery include various writings that discuss property loss, ranging from the expectancy of the crops to the cost of marriage. The first item from these chapters examines the loss of a field or vineyard through carelessness

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[34] William Johnstone, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 65.

[35] John Walton, et al. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 255.

[36] Ibid., 27.

involving either livestock or a fire.[37] In verses 4-5 of chapter 22, the references are to crops trampled by grazing animals and a fire carelessly allowed to burn out of control, destroying everything. The loose animal's owner must pay by giving up his best crop. The compensation requirements for an uncontrolled fire situation are not as detailed.[38]

Exodus 23:11

In Exodus 23, God led Israel to a land that flowed with milk and honey. God also commanded the Israelites not to abuse the land. One example of this abuse was the Israelites' overworking of the land. The Sabbath rest was for the animals, workers, and even the land itself. God also wanted the Israelites to practice a seventh-year rest of the land to reflect spiritually and provide an opportunity for the poor to be cared for.[39]

Exodus 23:11 reads, "But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner, thou shalt deal with thy vineyard and olive yard." In verses 10-12, the text teaches that the Israelites should focus on serving God during these seasons and days. The beginning of the Sabbath years and days is in verse 11. From this commandment, the land should have a "Sabbath Rest."[40] According to this commandment, the land must not be sown or reaped every seventh year because it is a Sabbath to the LORD (Lev 25:4). Two Hebrew words are expressed in verse 11

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[37] John Durham, *Exodus, Volume 3* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 325.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Glen Martin, *Holman Old Testament Commentary - Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2002), 111.

[40] Tremper Longman, *Genesis-Leviticus*, ed. by David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 603.

that specifically refer to the land; they are *šhāmaṭ* "to let drop, remit" and *nāṭašh* "to leave, abandoned." This was to provide for the people experiencing poverty and the wild animals.[41]

The correlation between the seventh year and the seventh day is in verse 12. To allow a field to be untouched every seven years is innovative agriculturally because it can increase production. However, that was not the reason; it was more of a result of following the law of the Sabbath. There is a view that the purpose of the "Sabbatical Year" was so that the earth could return to its original state and glorify God as He is the God of nature.[42]

Another view is that it references the days when men had to gather food or work as farmers. From a religious aspect, it revealed Israel's faith in God, who provided for their needs. The wild beast being allowed to eat also has a theological meaning. Israel's faith allows the belief that God preserves man and beast and feeds the wild beast daily.[43] Jesus reiterated this thought in Matthew 10:20 and Luke 12:24, with the examples of a sparrow and a raven. The Israelites may not have observed the Sabbath years on a large scale in the early days. In the days of the Maccabeans, they kept the Sabbath years universally and simultaneously. Prophets would later recognize that because the Sabbath laws were not observed, the seventy years of exile served as a punishment for the 490 years the Israelites neglected the Sabbatical Laws.[44]

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[41] Muhammad Schmidt, *A Hebrew-English Reference Manual to the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament. Based on the Leningrad Codex and Strong's Hebrew-English Lexicon* (Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag, 2017), 637, 406.

[42] Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 186.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

Although verses 11-12 may not answer the question directly regarding how the seventh year and seventh day were to be observed, Leviticus 25:1-7 serves as guidance, showing that all of the land was to be set aside in the same year.[45] The Israelites were to stop working on the seventh day following the Decalogue. The Ten Commandments declare that a cease in work includes all labor and agricultural work. One reason is the concern for domesticated animals and human workers.[46] The Sabbatical year and Sabbath day guidance centers on "rest" for society's members and all animals. Given the text, it is essential to mention that it illustrates a caring and generous spirit towards those taken advantage of.[47]

Leviticus

The Book of Leviticus is about values. Values are in every chapter and almost every verse. It may surprise some to consider the book to contain values because it includes several rituals, such as sacrifices and impurities.[48] The Book of Leviticus also contains rituals, but underneath these rituals are the values that demonstrate how people should relate to God and others. Society teaches values in the form of rituals. Rituals are visual and participatory, instilled by memory at a young age and reinforced each time they are acted upon.[49]

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[45] T. Desmond Alexander, *Exodus, Apollos Old Testament Commentary* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017), 521.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics: Continental Commentaries* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 1.

[49] Ibid.

Leviticus 19:10

Chapter 19 of Leviticus is the theological center of the latter portion of the legal codes of Leviticus. At its core is the call to holiness. Holiness is an essential reality in the complete book of Leviticus. In chapter 19, many commentators see the full force of holiness; as a force, it is an overwhelming power of moral purity.[50]

Leviticus 19:10 reads, "And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God." Verses 9-10 of chapter 19 point toward sharing food from the harvest with those in need, illustrating an anticipatory life gleaned from the promised land for as long as Israel followed God's laws of holiness. Within both verses, there are a total of five commands. Four of them direct landowners not to harvest a field or vineyard until it becomes bare.[51] The fifth command provides the reason why, and it is so there will be food left for the underclass and resident aliens. Resident aliens are included when there are discussions regarding the poor and disadvantaged.[52] They were considered resident aliens because they lacked their lands, and without owning their lands, they faced financial difficulties. Usually, they had to start with little or nothing when they arrived.[53] A central theme in these verses addresses covenant law; living

[50] Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 201.

[51] Jay Sklar, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 244.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

holy includes generosity toward those in need. This type of generosity means that people should be the priority instead of money.[54]

These verses are repeated in Leviticus 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:19-22.[55] Leaving some harvest after gleaning was also practiced in the ancient Near East for the same reasons indicated in Scripture. However, the term "alien" was distinct from Israel. By including the term "alien," the concern for caring for people experiencing poverty extended beyond the immediate family, friends, village, and all of mankind.[56]

Leviticus 19:9-10 contains two issues that ultimately lead to a similar goal: "Thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger." In the first issue, farmers are not supposed to reap the corners of their fields nor gather the gleanings of what has been harvested (Leviticus 19:9). The pericope uses the Hebrew term *kālâ*, which means to "destroy."[57] It describes the reaping process as so severe that nothing is left behind. The second issue about vineyards is that vineyards must not be gleaned entirely, and the fallen fruit must not be gathered. Both problems are similar in that they must consider the poor and the alien, and the fallen extras must not be picked up.[58] The first is an activity designed for people experiencing poverty and aliens, and the second is preparing them. The text does not explicitly state the amount of fruit or crops that should be

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[54] Ibid., 245.

[55] Tremper Longman, *Genesis-Leviticus*, ed. David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 890.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ming Him Ko, *Leviticus: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary* (Carlisle: Langham Creative Projects, 2018), 178.

[58] Ibid., 179.

allotted for the poor and the alien, and it does not describe how much of the corners should not be reaped. Farmers and landowners may have practiced this according to their own decisions.[59]

By leaving specific areas not completely reaped and the fallen fruit from the vineyards on the ground, the community could provide for the poor and underclass. God promised He would care for the people who followed the covenant by granting them prosperity.[60] This meant that they would have enough to share with others. Unfortunately, the people did not follow God's commands, and poverty became common within the community.[61] Agriculture was common in ancient Israel, and owning land was critical and provided financial gains for those who owned it. However, bereavement, natural disasters, and thieves caused economic loss, even the loss of family lands. If a landowner had lost their land, the community was expected to aid those families now living in poverty.[62]

Leviticus 25:3-4

The seven-year sabbatical in Leviticus 25 was created to allow the land to rest. This resting period meant that the land could not be sowed, neither could the vineyards be dressed. Instead, everyone, including the animals, was required to sustain themselves from what the land naturally provided. The land at rest would produce from its natural abundance, and all would

[59] Ibid.

[60] Kenneth Mathews, *Leviticus: Holy God, Holy People* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 162.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

receive from it as they did in its original state. Not only does the land receive its rest, but families also return to their inheritances, debts are no longer required, and enslaved people are set free.[63]

Leviticus 25:3-4 reads, "Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard." God's command starts with a directive to extend the critical concept of the weekly Sabbath rest to include the land itself. The land shall be untouched every seven years so that it will be used for the Sabbath by the Lord.[64] During this time, there is no sowing or pruning of the land, and God's creatures must be freed from the work conducted on the first Sabbath. Whatever the land produces while on the Sabbath may be eaten, and there was more than enough to sustain the community during the year the land would be untouched. The list of those who would typically consume the food during this period would not be fearful when they observed the land's Sabbatical year.[65]

In verses 1-7 of chapter 25, the practice of the Sabbath is extended and reaffirmed. The extension and reaffirmation come from the original command in Exodus 23:10-11. Typically, a rotating fallowing of the ground would have occurred, but here, the command is for the land to lay fallowed at one time.[66] This rest from mankind's use, which gives the land to God for a year,

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[63] Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 201.

[64] Samuel Balentine, *Leviticus: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2011), 223.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Walter Houston, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 22.

just like the weekly Sabbath, which devotes an entire day to focusing on God. Landowners on tight budgets could give up cultivation for a year. Usually, fields had to be left untouched not just every seven years but every other year.[67] One way farmers could apply this practice was to divide the land into two parts, allowing one part to remain untouched each year. If the farmer would let his land remain fallow for the year, then he would cultivate both parts in the sixth year, and his loss of production would be minimal.[68]

The laws cited in chapter 25 of Leviticus reference the land resting and care for people experiencing poverty as priorities. However, most people worked hard each day and had little time to rest. The crops had to be taken care of, and so did the animals.[69] The importance of "rest" has a theological component that includes the call of the people to show compassion like God. This virtue would consist of proper care of creation and help for the poor.[70] Further, the years of the Sabbath and the Jubilee connoted the spirit of peace. This peace was more than the absence of war; it was a time when harmony and welfare were in every part of life. Chapter 25 of Leviticus depicts a time when labor was a gift, people were allowed to rest when needed, and no family was lacking.[71]

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[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Edward Ownes, *Leviticus: Volume 4* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011), 42.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

Numbers

The Book of Numbers is an instruction manual for a post-Sinai Israel. The Book of Numbers deals mainly with three areas: how the nation was to conduct itself while on its journeyings, how the priests and the Levites were to operate while being mobile, and how they were to prepare themselves for the taking of Canaan and their lives after.[72] The Book of numbers covers forty years, from giving the Law at Mt. Sinai to the conquest of Canaan. This time coverage of forty years illustrates the importance and character of the book as history.[73]

Numbers 6:4

Chapter 6 of Numbers begins with laying the foundation for the Nazirite vow. Those who seek to take this vow exemplify a unique holiness, and this vow is a symbol of holiness. Chapter 6 concludes with God blessing all people, and all of the rituals fall under the authority of the priests.[74]

Numbers 6:4 reads, "All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk." Contextually, chapter 6:1-21 of Numbers deals with someone taking the Nazarite vow.[75] The individual was required to abstain from all beverages fermented and produced from "the vine." The individual was not allowed to shave their head, and they could not come in contact with a corpse. If they mistakenly came near a corpse, then

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[72] Eugene Merrill, "Numbers," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Law*, ed. John Walvoord, and Roy Zuck (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2018), 28k.

[73] Ibid.

[74] William Bellinger, and William Bellinger, *Leviticus, Numbers* (Grand Rapids Baker Books, 1995), 158.

[75] Eugene Merrill, "Numbers," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Law*, ed. John Walvoord, and Roy Zuck (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2018), 30j.

they would have to participate in a ceremonial cleansing that would entail the shaving of the head and offering two doves or pigeons for a sin and a burnt offering. Then, they could continue with the Nazarite vow.[76]

The Nazarite vow was taken willingly and designed to be a dedication period to devote one's life to God. Other biblical characters like Sampson and Samuel demonstrated that the vow could last a lifetime.[77] The chapter contains one of the few mentions of both sexes being able to participate in a vow. The language used in this chapter includes several words repetitively. The Hebrew word *nāzîr*, Nazirite, means "to separate or set apart," it occurs multiple times within verses 6:1-21.[78] A similar word is *nāḏar*, which means "vow" or "dedicate" and is referenced a few times. Another repetitive word is *qāḏôš*, which, when translated, means "holy," and the verses also refer to it.[79] The repetitive use of these words demonstrates the importance and commitment of someone who takes this vow.[80] The restrictions of abstaining from wine or grape products, not cutting the hair, and avoiding dead bodies, even if they were family members, were

[76] Ibid.

[77] Daniel Durken, ed. *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015), 266.

[78] Muhammad Schmidt, *A Hebrew-English Reference Manual to the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament. Based on the Leningrad Codex and Strong's Hebrew-English Lexicon* (Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag, 2017), 400.

[79] Ibid., 396, 542.

[80] Daniel Durken, ed. *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015), 266.

the three distinct qualifications to becoming a Nazirite. Wine drinking to the point of becoming drunk was associated with the Canaanites and their way of life.[81]

One of the benefits of the Nazirite vow was that those who were not priests could enjoy a level of sanctity between themselves and God. One of the differences between the Nazarite vow and the priest was that priests were allowed to drink wine until they entered the sanctuary, but those who took the Nazarite vow were not allowed to drink wine at all. Thus, their standard was considered higher.[82] Ordinary priests were allowed to participate in the burials of close family members. The Nazarite was prohibited from such conduct and was more akin to a high priest.[83]

Numbers 16:14

Chapter 15 provides a short period of relief from the rebellious experiences while the Israelites were in the wilderness. Chapter 16 picks back up on that theme, bringing the Levitical Priests into the narrative. The chapter paints a broad picture by recounting the continual rebellion of the Israelites. Chapter 16 has several twists and turns, which require careful reading.[84]

Numbers 16:14 reads, “Moreover thou hast not brought us into a land that floweth with milk and honey or given us inheritance of fields and vineyards: wilt thou put out the eyes of these men? we will not come up.” This was an accusation against Moses from Korah, Dathan, and Abiram because they believed that Moses was not leading them to the promised land. Within

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Roy Gane, *Commentary on Numbers: From the Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2019), 5.

[83] Ibid.

[84] William Bellinger, and William Bellinger, *Leviticus, Numbers* (Grand Rapids Baker Books, 1995), 188.

this accusation, they compared their enslavement in Egypt to paradise and considered Moses as someone who was guiding them in the wrong direction.[85] They also accused Moses of lording over them. They attributed all the bad things that happened to them to Moses while forgetting the good ones.[86]

Dathan and Abriam had followed Moses out of Egypt, believing they would be led to the promised land flowing with milk and honey. In Chapter 14:22-23 of Numbers, they were informed that they would die in the wilderness.[87] With this news, Egypt seemed wonderful, and the accusers believed Egypt was the land with milk and honey. Dathan and Abiram were angry because they thought that Moses had seduced them with lies and he was attempting to control them. They forgot that they were in their current predicament because they did not believe Caleb's report regarding the promised land (Numbers 13:23-33).[88] Similar to the pericope from Numbers 16:14, Numbers 20:5 is also a complaint against Moses. It reads, "And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? There is no place of seed, figs, vines, or pomegranates; neither is their water to drink." This time, the people are in the Zin desert in Kadesh. Because there was a lack of water, the Israelites revolted against Moses and Aaron.

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[85] Ronald Allen, *Numbers* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2017), 278.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Daniel Durken, ed. *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2015), 286.

[88] Ibid.

The pericopes from Numbers 16:14 and 20:5 are similar stories in which the Israelites complained about insufficient food, and Moses and Aaron provided it as God allowed. Throughout the story from Exodus, the Israelites complain about not having food or water.[89] In each complaint, the question is asked: why did you (Moses) bring the people out of Egypt? But even as the people complained, God instructed Moses to use his rod to get water from a rock. The complaints are similar for both Exodus and Numbers.

Numbers 20:17

Chapter 20 is the concluding chapter of the middle section of the book of Numbers. This chapter hints that the camp is ready to move again, but some events prevent the Israelites from moving. There is a loss of a generation, and it has become more devastating as the Israelites lose two of their leaders. Chapter 20 reveals that Moses and Aaron are excluded from entering the promised land. Moving the current wilderness generation is proving to be slow and painful, and there is a lot of trouble.[90]

Numbers 20:17 reads, “Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's highway, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.” These verses describe a scene where Edom refused Israel to pass through his land. The Israelites had planned to go into Canaan from the east crossing the Jor “brother” dan River which was across from Jericho.[91] This would have been the most direct route because

[89] Gordon Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 168.

[90] William Bellinger, and William Bellinger, *Leviticus, Numbers* (Grand Rapids Baker Books, 1995), 200.

[91] Joe Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 313.

it was territory opposite Jericho from Kadesh and passing through Edom. Moses promised that Israel would not eat from the fields or vineyards of Edom nor drink their water. However, Edom refused the Israelites and threatened to attack them if they attempted to pass through.[92]

Numbers 21:22

Unlike chapter 20, chapter 21 ushers in a new movement in the book of Numbers. After dealing with the deaths of Miriam and Aaron in chapter 20 and the sin that Moses committed, the camp is ready to move. In the final chapter of Numbers, the trek continues to the Transjordan plateau and then to the land of Canaan.[93]

Numbers 21:22 reads, “Let me pass through thy land: we will not turn into the fields, or into the vineyards; we will not drink of the waters of the well: but we will go along by the king's highway until we are past thy borders.” This scene is like the scene from Numbers 20:17. However, now the Israelites are asking for permission to pass through the territory of King Sihon and are headed toward Canaan. They informed Sihon that they would stick to the main highway and not eat from his fields or vineyards or drink from his water supply.[94] Sihon was overconfident because of his previous victories in battle and responded to the Israelites by attacking them. Israel was able to counterattack, defeat Sihon, and take over his territory.[95]

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[92] Ibid.

[93] William Bellinger, and William Bellinger, *Leviticus, Numbers* (Grand Rapids Baker Books, 1995), 203.

[94] Ibid., 326.

[95] Ibid.

Numbers 22:24

Chapter 22 provides the extended narrative, including the prophet Balaam. The recurring theme is seeing and not seeing.[96] Although Balaam is not an Israelite, he is included in God's blessing before the Israelites enter the promised land. Balaam's story comes from early narratives and is included in the Priestly accounts. Balaam is a prophet who conducts his ministry in the Transjordan. Balak is the king of the Moabites who hires Balaam, hoping that he will curse Israel. However, God intercedes because He determines the future and blessings for Israel.[97]

Numbers 22:24 reads, "But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side." Until this verse, Balaam is a spiritual man of God. He can meet with God, and his words carry weight when it comes to the fate of the nations.[98] However, in this pericope, he is a man who is experiencing spiritual blindness as well as being powerless. He cannot see the angel of the LORD blocking his path, but his donkey can.[99] Balaam cannot determine why the donkey is acting strangely, even though strange actions by animals were omens in Mesopotamia.[100] Balaam should have understood that the angel of the LORD had a message for him. After beating the donkey, the donkey finally speaks to Balaam,

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[96] William Bellinger, and William Bellinger, *Leviticus, Numbers* (Grand Rapids Baker Books, 1995), 207.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Gordon Wenham, *Numbers: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 192.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid.

and after their conversation, the LORD opens the eyes of Balaam, who then sees the angle and receives his message.[101]

Deuteronomy

The Book of Deuteronomy is essentially a speech that Moses delivered to the Israelites before crossing the Jordan to conquer and take over the land of Canaan. In his speech, Moses covered Israel's history and showed how people disobeyed God's commandments.[102] He warns the people, informing them of what will be required once they are in Canaan. Some of the essential elements of the speech are that the people should avoid religious contact with the land's inhabitants, set up their place of worship where God directs them, and follow the laws that God has given them.[103]

Deuteronomy 6:11

Deuteronomy 6 illustrates Israel's heart, faith, and confession as it follows the Decalogue in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 extends the first two commandments from Chapter 5 and serves as a reminder and warning for the children of Israel.[104]

Deuteronomy 6:11 reads, "And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full." In its context, "the vine" imagery illustrates what God intends

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[101] Ibid.

[102] John Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible: Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 13.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Edward Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 150.

to provide for the children if they obey Him and Him alone. It also serves as a warning that when they enter the promised land, these gifts should not cause them to forget the God who brought them to the promised land.[105] Their rewards for being loyal would be that they would receive things that they did not produce. Verse 11 lists their rewards: incredible cities, houses filled with good things, wells already dug for collecting water, and vineyards and olive orchards already planted. In its context, a warning also teaches that God will be angered if the people become disobedient and follow other Gods.[106]

Deuteronomy 8:8

Deuteronomy 8 focuses on the Israelites' past behavior while in the wilderness and how they respond in the future. Another way to look at chapter 8 is to see the wilderness as a place where the Israelites were tested and how, in the future, the land would be a place of blessing and testing of Israel's loyalty. Chapter 8 has a twofold message: (1) Remember God in the hard times from past experiences; (2) Remember God in the good times in the future.[107]

Deuteronomy 8:8 reads, "A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil, and honey;" From this verse, Moses includes "the vine" imagery as he describes the good land. There is a distinct difference between the good land and

[105] John Rogerson, *Deuteronomy: Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 5.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Edward Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 169.

the wilderness.[108] Good land has many resources, including water, agriculture, and minerals. It is the promised land and has everything the children of Israel need to live under God's rule.[109]

Deuteronomy 20:6

Deuteronomy 20 contains an ideology of a divine war. This chapter also includes the only ancient Near Eastern legal code that explains how to behave appropriately during wartime. Every military victory found in chapter 20 is because God gave the Israelites the victory. The point of the chapter is that these victories in war are not human, but Israel was only victorious because God led them in battle. [110]

Deuteronomy 20:6 reads, "And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it." This verse is contained within the context of the laws concerning war and the domestic responsibilities a soldier should take care of before participating in war. Those responsibilities are in verses 5-7 of chapter 20. Verse 6 explicitly includes "the vine" imagery and considers the importance of the viticulturalist partaking of its fruits before he goes to battle.[111]

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[108] Michael Grisanti, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2017), 171.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Deanna Thompson, *Deuteronomy: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2014), 110.

[111] Ajith Fernando, *Deuteronomy: Loving Obedience to a Loving God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 385.

Deuteronomy 22:9

The first twelve verses of chapter 22 of Deuteronomy illustrate three laws that discuss not mixing two kinds of seeds, cross-breeding the ox and the ass, and mixing wool and linen. The concept is that biblically, it is unnatural, and it can violate the naturalness of God's design.[112]

Deuteronomy 22:9 reads, "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled." Verses 9-11 contextually are commandments from God that illustrate the importance of improperly mixing two things that are not alike. In verse 9, "the vine" imagery is associated with God's command that the vineyard should not be combined with different kinds of seed, or the vineyard would be considered defiled. The law against mixing different seed types may have come from the farmer observing that the seeds cannot germinate appropriately if combined.[113]

Deuteronomy 23:24

Verses 19-20 of Deuteronomy 23 teach that fellow Israelites should not be taken advantage of. In verse 24, the landowner now finds support and should not be unfavorably exploited by the community. The property rights of landowners were to be respected. However, needy travelers could gather food from a vineyard or field. The traveler could not use a basket or a sickle to reap more because that would be a violation and considered theft.[114]

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[112] Edward Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 269.

[113] John Rogerson, *Deuteronomy: Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 14.

[114] Edward Woods, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 279.

Deuteronomy 23:24 reads, “When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel.” If an Israelite was traveling and came across another Israelite vineyard or field, this law allowed him to eat some of the produce as he passed through. He was allowed to eat until he was full. In ancient days, no methods existed to keep food fresh when someone traveled.[115] This law also fostered an environment of compassion for fellow Israelites. However, this law does not allow travelers to take more than needed for personal gain. The property and the produce belonged to the landowner, and travelers had to respect their ownership.[116]

Deuteronomy 24:21

One of the main ideas in Deuteronomy 24 is that God’s people must care for those who are impoverished. This includes various groups like immigrants, orphans, and widows. They must be protected from those who would unjustly take advantage of them. Moses reminds the Israelites of this vital truth because they were once enslaved people in Egypt.[117] This concept also allowed those in need not to beg or seek welfare to survive; they could work for their food. An added blessing was that farmers had the opportunity to praise God for His abundant provision and see His love for the poor members of the community.[118]

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[115] Michael Grisanti, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2017), 283.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Kenneth Collins, *Wesley One Volume Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020), 228.

[118] Jack Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Law*, ed. John Walvoord, and Roy Zuck (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2018), 50.

Deuteronomy 24:21 reads, "When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow." This law applies to farmers. In verses 19-22, the law directs landowners and farmers that after they harvest grains, olives, and vineyards, they must leave some for people who need to take.[119] It, along with Deuteronomy 23:24, is similar in the idea of taking care of people. One key difference is in verse 22, which reminds us that the Israelites were once enslaved people in Egypt, and as such, God commands them to be obedient to this law.[120]

Deuteronomy 28:30

The central theme of chapter 28 of Deuteronomy is the blessings the Israelites will receive for being obedient and the consequences of being disobedient. The text uses the repetitive words "blessed" and "cursed" to illustrate the importance of the concept.[121] Once Israel entered the promised land, Moses renewed the previous covenant and focused on Israel's current concerns in Moab. The blessings occur first in chapter 28:1-14, then the rest of the chapter, verses 15-68, pertain to the curses. The curse verses are significantly longer than the blessing verses because they may follow the style from the ancient Near Easter agreements, which included more curses than blessings. Another thought is that the number of curses was a way to show how Israel would fail in the future.[122]

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[119] Ajith Fernando, *Deuteronomy: Loving Obedience to a Loving God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 435.

[120] Ibid.

[121] John Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 515.

[122] Jack Deere, "Deuteronomy," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Law*, ed. John Walvoord, and Roy Zuck (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2018), 58.

Deuteronomy 28:30 reads, “Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.” The curses of Deuteronomy 28:30-34 are known as the “futility curses” because they do not allow the proper enjoyment of something. The curse referenced in verse 30 illustrates the breakdown of protection described in Deuteronomy 20:5-7 and 24:5.[123] These laws ensured that a married man could enjoy the bonds of marriage and the house he built. This curse includes “the vine” imagery, illustrating that the owner cannot partake of its produce even though the vineyard is planted. Non-Israelites would take away the lives of the Israelites.[124]

Deuteronomy 32:32

In chapter 32 of Deuteronomy, the central idea is that the nations that follow gods will be judged. The pagan gods are nothing like Israel’s God. God uses the other nations as tools to bring about curses upon the Israelites because of their continual disobedience. However, these nations have gone too far, and God will hold them accountable for overstepping.[125]

Deuteronomy 32:32 reads, “For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter.” In this verse, “the vine” imagery metaphorically describes the pagan gods in the pagan nations. This vine’s roots compare to Sodom and Gomorrah in their perversion and wickedness.[126] The grapes and wine these vines

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[123] Michael Grisanti, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2017), 332.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Kenneth Collins, *Wesley One Volume Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020), 237.

[126] Michael Grisanti, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2017), 394.

produce is bitter and poisonous compared to a venomous snake's poison. Worshipping pagan gods leads to certain death. Israel, along with the pagan nations, must recognize the consequences of worshipping false gods if they are to live.[127]

Summary

In his article "How Do Motifs Endure and Perform?" James Morgan posits two significant thoughts on identifying a motif in a literary work. He claims motifs are determined by their frequency and attraction to the reader. A motif is recurrent without having a specific number of occurrences.[128] The frequency of the recurrence is dependent on the literature and its length. The motif must reoccur often and be beyond coincidence or need to be identifiable.[129] Motifs must permeate the environment so much that they will be unconsciously felt. The second thought is an attraction to the reader; motifs must be used within their contexts as they appear. Motifs need to attract the reader's attention, not just by their repetitive uses but also by how they are used. [130] Morgan's concepts align by exposing the verses containing "the vine" imagery from the Torah. The imagery reoccurs several times and in many different contexts in the Torah. In the Book of Genesis, Noah is a Viticulturist, and this title takes place after the great flood in his day. This imagery of "the vine" further enters Joseph's life as he interprets the chief Butler's dream, depicting a symbolic "vine" and its branches.

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[127] Ibid.

[128] James Morgan, "How Do Motifs Endure and Perform?: Motif Theory for the Study of Biblical Narratives," *Revue Biblique* 122, no.2 (2015): 202.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid.

In the Book of Exodus, “The Vine,” imagery expounds on the restitution laws for damaging another’s property and adequately applies the seventh-year sabbath. The exposed verses further provide scriptural references detailing the requirements for both laws. Both laws are a way to honor God by being obedient. These laws are to protect and feed both people and animals.

Like the Book of Exodus, Leviticus utilizes “the vine” imagery to explain the purpose of not gleaning, which was to care for those in need. The verses from the Book of Leviticus teach landowners not to glean excessively and offer specific reasons why they should not. Leviticus also reiterates and extends the practice of the Sabbath.

From the Book of Numbers, “the vine” imagery describes the specifics of a man or woman who takes the Nazarite vow. Wine is one of the three elements that the participant of the Nazarite vow cannot partake in. They must abstain from cutting their hair and touching dead bodies as well. In addition, “the vine” imagery is in episodes where the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron while in the wilderness. “The vine” imagery was used when the Israelites were on the move and wanted to pass through the lands of Edom and Sihon and were denied passage. There is a miracle in the Book of Numbers where “the vine” imagery is used as well, and it takes place in the story of Balaam and his donkey.

The Book of Deuteronomy perhaps utilizes “the vine” imagery in more ways than any of the other books in the Torah. Some of its verses used are to illustrate the benefits of being obedient to God. “The vine” imagery explains the laws of warfare, and the imagery in Deuteronomy explains who can or cannot attend the local assembly. Other laws in the book use “the vine” imagery that reveals the consequences of disobedience. Even in the final chapter of

the Torah, “the vine” imagery is in the “Song of Moses” to describe pagan gods and pagan nations.

The Torah contains many scriptural references emphasizing the importance of “the vine” imagery. In the Torah, “the vine” imagery was used literally and metaphorically, and it would become historical centuries later. The Torah is a significant source for augmenting the concept and importance of “the vine” motif.

Chapter Three

Psalm 80 and the Prophetic Corpus Pericopes

Introduction

The purpose of the third chapter is to examine "the vine" imagery from Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 15:1-8, 17:1-10, 19:1-14; Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 2:12, 15; and Amos 5:17. In each of these books, there is a pericope where "the vine" imagery supports the thesis. This chapter introduces each of these books and examines the Scripture verses containing "the vine" imagery so that you can read them contextually. "The vine" imagery in these books reveals a change in that Israel has now become identified as "the vine." Also depicted in these pericopes is how Israel failed as "the vine" and what God plans to do with them.

Psalms

One method of reading and studying the Psalms is to break them down into three sections and observe them as the Psalms as truth, the Psalms as poems, and the Psalter. As truth, the Psalms are Scripture that God inspired by his Holy Spirit, and they should be used to teach and guide us. The contents of the Psalms provide a wealth of knowledge, and this knowledge speaks to the minds of their readers.[1] The Psalms, as poems, speak not only to our minds but also to the hearts of their readers. Reading the Psalms engages both sides of the brain: the intellect, the emotions, and how its readers think and feel.[2] The Psalms as the Psalter can be divided into at least five smaller books (Psalms 1-41; 42-72; 73-89; 90-106; 107-150). Each of the smaller

[1] James Johnston, *The Psalms (Vol. 1): Rejoice, the Lord Is King. The Psalms* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 12.

[2] Ibid., 13.

books can be studied individually or as a section of the larger books. However, the reader should remember that a specific order runs through the Book of Psalms.[3]

Psalm 80:8-16

The theme of Psalm 80 is a prayer for Israel's restoration. This prayer came because foreign oppressors abused it. In addition to being a prayer for restoration, it is a cry for revival. Psalm 80 was written in Jerusalem, where Asaph, a singer, lived. The Psalmist cries out to God to protect them as the true Shepherd and as a vinedresser to care for them.[4] Psalm 80:8-16 reads,

> Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.

Psalm 80 continues with the same conceptual thought as Psalm 79 regarding God's faithfulness in significant loss. However, in Psalm 80, the cries are not against others but for God to use His restorative powers and bring the lost children of Israel back. God's power and nature are revealed by comparing and contrasting His formal names and His familial claim of Israel.[5]

In verse 8, the pericope begins with the author stating that God has freed the Israelites from bondage, cast out their enemies, and planted them. In the previous psalm, Israel is a

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[3] Ibid., 14.

[4] Steven Lawson, *Holman Old Testament Commentary - Psalms 76-150* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 45.

[5] Nancy deClaisse-Walford, Rolf Jacobson, and Beth Tanner *The Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2014), 482.

symbolic "flock of sheep," but in Psalm 80, they are a "vine." This title may have come from a different piece of literature and was incorporated into the psalm. Still, it is also likely that the new name for Israel came about because of the images, prayers, and agricultural environment in Israel. The lesson learned is that God cared for the people; because of that, the people thrived as a "vine."[6]

The transplanting of "the vine" from Egypt is about the exodus.[7] God made the preparations for it, and because of His care and love, it flourished. Although vines are not known for producing a lot of shade, this vine, representing Israel, could provide shade or protection for the mountains and the cedar trees. This description profoundly illustrates how God cared for Israel as His illustrious vine.[8]

Verses 9-14 can be in two sections: verses 9-12 and verses 13-14. There is a contrast between these two pericopes. First, there is the reference to a glorious beginning and a disastrous outcome, which follows with a contradictory statement regarding YHWH's involvement. YHWH, with the most excellent skill as a Viticulturist, extracted Israel from Egypt, where the soil was terrible, stunting its growth and development and where its very existence was threatened.[9] He then replanted them in the land of Canaan, where there was plenty of room once the other nations were driven out. Because they now had enough room, they could put down

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[6] Ibid., 484.

[7] Tremper Longman, *Psalms an Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 299.

[8] Ibid., 300.

[9] Erich Zenger, Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, and Linda Maloney. "Psalm 80." *In Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, edited by Klaus Baltzer (Minneapolis: 1517 Media, 2005), 315.

deep roots and ultimately become powerful.[10] Within the Psalm, Israel is identified as "the vine," the Psalm reveals that YHWH removes the protective walls around the vineyard so that the wild animals destroy it. This extreme change of YHWH as a divine gardener of Israel contains two meanings. It serves as a salvific historical reminder to present the ancient beginnings of YHWH's order of salvation. And serves as a reminder of God's loving action for Israel.[11]

God planted the vineyard, and He also broke down its walls. "The vine" is Israel, and the walls protect it from threats. But now Israel can be threatened by anyone who passes by.[12] "The vine" is now vulnerable to other creatures. With Israel's vulnerability in mind, the Psalmist asks God to return using his battle name. He calls on God, who is not among the people, and asks Him to return and provide assistance.[13] Both Israel as "the vine" and the king need God. The reference to the king as God's son connects to King David and the covenant between him and God. The covenant firmly established that a descendant from David would be on the throne forever, and he would be God's son.[14] The covenant was declared by Nathan, the prophet, to David from God in 2 Samuel 7:4-17, when David had made up his mind to attempt to build God a temple.

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Tremper Longman, *Psalms an Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 300.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

Verses 15-16 begin with a request for the crisis to end. There are four critical requests made to God by the Israelites. The first is "turn around," which discusses how YHWH has turned away as the vintner, and there is an appeal for Him to turn back to the Israelites and show concern for His people as the vintner.[15] The second involves "repentance," it begins with YHWH turning His attention back to "the vine," looking at what it needs and providing it. Next is the "reenactment," which references the vintner-like care from YHWH for a damaged vineyard that needed Him to repair it so it may put forth new growth and become the vineyard that YHWH had intended. Lastly, there is "preserve," which refers to YHWH providing so that Israel, as "the vine," will live and flourish in correlation to the order of creation.[16]

The author of the psalm wants God to return and restore the nation. The previous picture of Israel's growth in the promised land is replaced by one that illustrates damage and destruction.[17] The walls of the vineyard have fallen, and anyone who wants can come and go as they please and take fruit. Wild boars can now enter the vineyard and root up "the vines," and other animals can eat its young stems. Men can directly attack the vineyard by cutting it down and burning it.[18]

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[15] Erich Zenger, Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, and Linda Maloney, "Psalm 80." *In Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100,* edited by Klaus Baltzer (Minneapolis: 1517 Media, 2005), 316.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Trevor Shannon, *Understanding the Psalms a Spirituality for Today* (Chicago: Austin Macauley Publishers, 2019), 109.

[18] Ibid.

God had seemed to stop caring for the vineyard. If any restoration occurs, it will happen by God's will and His use of the king.[19] When this happens, God's restoration will once again provide salvation, and the nation will know that God never stopped caring, even if He punishes them. Their faith will be strengthened, and their worship restored. The Psalm ends with a final congregational urgent request.[20]

This well-written parable of "The Vine" teaches many truths. From Israel's perspective, having a vineyard and drinking its produce connotes a settled, peaceful life with prosperity.[21] After Israel's initial entry into the promised land, it would be some time before they could plant vineyards and drink from them. They had taken over the vineyards of the people in the land they conquered.[22]

Isaiah

The Book of Isaiah has always been valuable to both Jews and Christians. In the book of 2 Kings narrative, the book of Isaiah is referred to more than any of the other prophets. Isaiah's role is in 2 Kings 19-20, where King Hezekiah asked Isaiah to pray for assistance against the advances that King Sennacherib of Assyria was making. Isaiah is quoted more, excluding Psalms and Deuteronomy in the Second Temple Jewish Literature, including the references in the Dead

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

Sea Scrolls, than any other biblical book. The Qumran contains at least twenty manuscripts that make references to Isaiah.[23]

According to 2 Chronicles 26:22, Isaiah wrote about the events that centered on the life of King Uzziah, possibly meaning that he served as a royal scribe. Isaiah 6:1 teaches that Isaiah was called to his ministry when King Uzziah died around 739 B.C.[24] If Isaiah lived between the late eighth and the early seventh centuries B.C., he was alive during one of the most troublesome times in the history of Israel.[25] Isaiah's ministry took place between 740 and 680 B.C., and the purpose of his ministry was to encourage Israel to turn from their wicked ways and return to God so they could be a light that all other nations could follow.[26]

Isaiah 5:1-7

Chapter 5:1-7 of Isaiah articulates a long history between God and His chosen people. The parable of the vineyard is a parable of judgment. It begins with God's saving intervention but ends in trouble. The assignment of the roles in these verses is vague; however, the prophetic utterance is understood. God is the landowner devoted to the vineyard and provides everything it needs to flourish. Nevertheless, Israel failed to produce good fruit.[27] Isaiah 5:1-7 reads,

> Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it,

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[23] John Sawyer, *Isaiah Through the Centuries* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 3.

[24] Paul Wegner, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2021), xli.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., xlii.

[27] Walter Brueggeman, *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 1998), 46.

> and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

In verses 1-2 of Isaiah 5, an introduction establishes the setting of this pericope and introduces the singer as a person who knows the vineyard owner well. The vineyard is planted on a fruitful hillside. Along with the vineyard being grown on a fruitful hillside, it was also dug up, and any stones were removed; it was planted with choice vines, protected by a watchtower, and a winepress was constructed for wine production.[28] The vineyard's owner has spent much time and resources on the vineyard; however, his production was unexpected. The vineyard produced grapes that were worthless and sour.[29] Verses 2-4 share a common term in the Hebrew *bᵊ'ušîm*, which describes the grapes as poison berries or wild grapes.[30]

In verse 3, there is a shift in the song. The vineyard owner now speaks for himself and allows the readers of the song to be included in judging the case against the wayward vineyard, similar to when the leaders of the cities were called upon to settle disagreements.[31] After being

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[28]Paul Wegner, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 78.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Schmidt, Muhammad. *A Hebrew-English Reference Manual to the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament Based on the Leningrad Codex and Strong's Hebrew-English Lexicon* (Hamburg: Disserta Verlag, 2018), 71.

[31] Paul Wegner, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 78.

presented with the evidence, he calls for a judgment between the vineyard and himself and adds that there was nothing more that he could have done.[32] The vineyard owner's statement reflects some sadness because he realizes there was nothing else he could have done.[33] The vineyard owner will not destroy the vineyard as one may expect, but instead, he will remove his care and protection. He will stop cultivating the vineyard and let it take its natural course of destruction.[34]

In verses 4-6, the writer explains the vineyard owner's anger and frustration with the vineyard's lousy production. He believes that he is not to blame for the terrible condition of the vineyard; the vineyard itself caused the condition of the vineyard. There is a second "and now," like verse 3 in verse 5.[35] This informs the reader that a decision has been made, and it is up to the owner of the vineyard to decide its fate because he was the one who spent the time and effort on the vineyard. The owner's judgment begins immediately with the removal of protection. By removing the protection, the vineyard becomes more susceptible to damage by sheep and goats, further causing the vineyard to be turned into a wasteland that only contains briers and thorns.[36] Removing the walls will allow wild animals into the vineyard to eat the sour grapes and put the plants at risk.[37] The owner will no longer prune the vineyard, and eventually, they will grow too

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Leslie Hoppe, *Isaiah: Volume 13* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012), 18.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Paul Wegner, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 79.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Leslie Hoppe, *Isaiah: Volume 13* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2012), 18.

long to be able to support fruit production. Without hoeing the vineyard, the owner makes it possible for weeds to grow and take nutrients and moisture away from "the vines." Eventually, "the vines" will be overtaken by the weeds.[38]

In Hebrew, *šāmîr* and *šayiṯ*, or "briers and thorns," are terms that are utilized multiple times in the book of Isaiah (5:9; 7:23-35; 9:18; 10:17; 27:4; 32:11-13; and 55:13). They depict lands that are considered useless or wasted.[39] Within this pericope, the vineyard owner also commands the clouds not to produce any rain for the vineyard to flourish, which signifies that this vineyard owner is not ordinary.[40]

In verse 7, the writer again takes a turn; the identities of both the vineyard and the vineyard owner are in this verse. This verse ends with two sets of similar-sounding words in Hebrew. The words are "*mišpāṭ*," which means justice, and "*miśpāḥ*" which means oppression. The second set of similar-sounding words is "*ṣᵊḏāqâ*" which means righteousness, and "*ṣᵊʿāqâ*," which means a cry.[41] The song was designed to grab its listeners, so any objective listener would conclude that the vineyard owner was correct in destroying the vineyard.[42]

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Schmidt, Muhammad. *A Hebrew-English Reference Manual to the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament Based on the Leningrad Codex and Strong's Hebrew-English Lexicon* (Hamburg: Disserta Verlag, 2018), 430, 638.

[40] Paul Wegner, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 79.

[41] Spiros Zodhiates, and Warren Baker, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: Key Insights into God's Word: King James Version, Authorized Version* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2008), 1910, 1909, 1967, 1971.

[42] Paul Wegner, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 79.

Isaiah also utilizes "the vine" imagery and alludes to how God took extreme pains to care for His vineyard and did everything possible to make it prosperous. Nevertheless, it ended up producing sour grapes.[43] In God's anger, He destroyed the vineyard because it did not do what it was supposed to do. Isaiah's song regarding the vineyard concludes in verse 7: "For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."[44]

Jeremiah

Contextually, Jeremiah proclaims God's message to Judah and Jerusalem, hoping to reverse the idolatry that had taken place. King Josiah tried to change the situation, but after he died, the nation welcomed its neighbor's pagan worship.[45] Jeremiah challenged the nation's leaders and wanted them to repent, and he also informed them of the consequences should they continue to follow their pagan neighbors. Jeremiah's message contains three themes: repent, judgment, and hope for restoration.[46]

Jeremiah came from a family of priests and resided in a town called Anathoth near Jerusalem. Jeremiah was called to the ministry early and served for over forty years.[47] Like

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[43] Trevor Shannon, *Understanding the Psalms a Spirituality for Today* (Chicago: Austin Macauley Publishers, 2019), 109.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Daniel Hays, *Jeremiah and Lamentations (Teach the Text Commentary Series)* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 4.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid., 1.

Isaiah, his ministry was difficult because Judah and Jerusalem had rejected the message God gave him.[48] Most of Jeremiah's ministry centers on two kings, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, and their failures to follow God. This ultimately led to Jerusalem's exile in 597 B.C. and its fall in 586 B.C.[49]

Jeremiah 2:21

Chapters 2-6 of Jeremiah form a connected section and illustrate Jeramiah's preaching in his early years of ministry. The theme for chapter 2 is God's lament over Israel's betrayal.[50] The key to this betrayal was one of the central points of Jeremiah's message, which was that Judah had broken the Mosaic covenant. Jeremiah 2 illustrates a legal lawsuit against Judah for breaking the covenant. Judah is charged with idolatry, social injustice, and religious ritualism. At the beginning of the chapter, the main idea is the idolatry as the indictment. God uses the imagery of a husband and wife to reveal how He feels about Judah's betrayal.[51]

Jeremiah 2:21 reads, "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" In verses 20-25 of Jeremiah 2, dividing the verses into pairs is a fundamental way to interpret this pericope. There are changes in metaphors in verses 20-22, and in verses 23-25, there is more imagery. The first section pertains to Judah's apostasy, and the second section addresses the results of that apostasy.

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[48] Ibid., 2.

[49] Ibid., 3.

[50] Christopher Wright, *The Message of Jeremiah: Against Wind and Tide* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 59.

[51] Daniel Hays, *Jeremiah and Lamentations* (*Teach the Text Commentary Series*) (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 14.

In verse 20, Jeremiah speaks to the people about their sins and describes it as a revolt against Yahweh's lordship and a marriage to Baal. The accusation in verse 20, "upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot," described the Canaanite acts of worship. Hays asserts that in Canaanite religious practices, hilltops with large trees were the sites where fertility cults practiced. Verse 20 serves as a double analogy. The people leaving God to follow Canaanite gods are compared to the people prostituting themselves on the hills. It is plausible that there was also literal cultic prostitution taking place, and Israel participated in it.[52]

In verse 21, Jeremiah establishes his point by using a figure of speech that the people would be familiar with.[53] They were familiar with the country's many vineyards. Earlier, Isaiah would describe Israel as a vineyard that was supposed to produce good grapes. However, at harvest time, they only produced "stinking" grapes. God had provided the means for Israel to be stable, but they recklessly lost their heritage. The nation needed Yahweh's forgiving work, and no number of human efforts could change it.[54]

Anticipating the people's responses, Jeremiah refutes them and provides additional comments. The people behaved terribly in the Valley of Hinnon; many of them joined in the worship of both Baal and Molech, practicing child sacrifices and other ungodly rituals. Jeremiah's language is straight to the point and may also be offensive to some today. Regarding

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[52] Daniel Hays, *Jeremiah and Lamentations (Teach the Text Commentary Series)*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 16.

[53] Ross McLaren, and Fred Wood, *Holman Old Testament Commentary - Jeremiah, Lamentations* (New York: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 43.

[54] Ibid.

sexual immorality, the Old Testament prophets were detailed and direct when dealing with such matters.[55]

In verse 20, the first use of the word "for" connects verses 20-37 with verses 5-19. Like verses 5-7, it begins with ancient history. Israel is described as a plow animal that will not work for the plowman, and they destroyed their yoke and harness.[56] This imagery of a farmer with farm animals serves as a covenant metaphor. Using descriptive words to describe Israel connects verses 23 and 25. This connection allowed the underlying attitudes to be made clear instead of using quotations. The second part of the verse explains how Israel broke the covenant.[57] This metaphor may have been borrowed from Hosea 4:12-13. The metaphor is offensive and shows God's wounded love.

Correlation to verse 7, verses 20-21, highlights Israel's degeneration in the land. There is a sense of anger due to Israel changing its god.[58] An appeal is made to God's work of planting Israel in the land that highlights their initial entry into the land, as compared to now showing the digression of the type of vine they had become. Israel, as "the vine," was once able to produce luscious red grapes, but now they make an inferior product. Deuteronomy 32:32 and chapter 5 of Isaiah may have influenced Jeremiah's writing regarding this concept.[59]

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[55] Ibid.

[56] Leslie Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2008), 47.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., 48.

[59] Ibid.

Verse 21, like verse 7, reminds us how much Israel had fallen in the land. Verse 11 also reveals why Israel had fallen: they had exchanged God for gods. [60] In verse 21, the question is asked where "the vine" was supposed to produce luscious red grapes. Instead, it made a lesser product. Some of the background from Jeremiah may come from Isaiah's parable of the vineyard and its illustration of Israel growing wild grapes.[61] There is a contrast between verses 20 and 21; God had not only planted and provided for "the vine," but Israel, as "the vine," produced bad fruit because of their bad behavior.[62] There is a similarity between verses 21 of chapter 2 and 2-3 of the same chapter. Both contain an image that starts as marital and then shifts to agricultural. Israel is a "choice vine" that has become utterly wild and corrupt.[63]

From these verses, Jeremiah captures how bad the people's sin was and what it looked like to God using quotations and metaphors. In verse 20, Israel has taken off their yoke of serving Yahweh in their original covenant bond and begins to behave like a prostitute. Baal's fertility cults usually met in the wooded hills, so this verse is descriptive and captures Israel's behavior literally and figuratively.[64] In verse 21, Israel had changed from the "choice vine" into a "wild vine," producing nothing but useless fruit. It is evident in this verse of God's

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Hetty Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: An Introduction and Commentary* (Ann Arbor: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 82.

[63] Michael Brown, *Jeremiah, Lamentations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 124.

[64] Christopher Wright, *The Message of Jeremiah: Against Wind and Tide* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 73.

disappointment and frustration. Israel's guilt is in verse 22, and it was a stain that could not be washed away.[65] Jeremiah may have been attempting to assess King Josiah's reforms, which were externally cosmetic at best but had no real cleansing power.

In verses 23-25 of Jeremiah 2, the tone changes. Instead of describing Israel as the "choice or wild vine," Jeremiah now compares Israel's behavior to that of a female animal in heat and ready to mate with any male she can find. In addition, Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant established between them and God is open to the public to see and reduced to the instincts of an animal.[66]

Ezekiel

The Book of Ezekiel is in the first person, but its point does not come from Ezekiel; it comes from the LORD. Ezekiel may have served as a secretary as he hides behind the message that he proclaims.[67] God's judgment is the message in two-thirds of the book, which is harsh and unrelenting. Ezekiel, with intentionality, destroys every claim from Jerusalem that they are self-sufficient. However, Ezekiel also contains a message of hope, but this hope does not depend on Israel's righteousness or even their repentance; it is by God's grace.[68]

Dates of the events in Ezekiel are one of the characteristics of the book. At least sixteen times, Ezekiel provides a date of his visions or revelations.[69] Eleven of these events are specific,

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Steven Tuell, and Steven Tuell, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 6.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., 2.

and Ezekiel provides them in a year, month, and day format. Three of the events are in a year-and-day format, and two of the dates provide corrections to specific events. The dates are given by Jehoiachin's exile, which occurred because of his father's rebellion against Babylon. Ezekiel and Jehoiachin were exiled around 597 B.C. His ministry was conducted as an exile to those who shared his predicament.[70]

The Book of Ezekiel is divided into two distinct sections for this exposition. The first section, encompassing chapters 1-23, delves into Ezekiel's visions and oracles of judgment, particularly those concerning the fall of Jerusalem. This section sets the stage for the subsequent part of the book.[71] The second section, spanning chapters 38-48, takes a different thematic direction. Here, Ezekiel presents visions and oracles that offer hope and possibility. Notably, chapters 38-39 in this section contain oracles that refer to Gog, further expanding on the book's themes and messages. [72]

Ezekiel 15:1-8

In his book, Ezekiel describes the destruction of Jerusalem using a parable of the useless vine. Here, Ezekiel compares Jerusalem, symbolized as the "vine," and other trees. This symbolism is expressed throughout the Old Testament, identifying Israel as God's vine. Jerusalem, like the vine, cannot provide for itself without support. The text underscores the significance of Jerusalem's relationship with God and the privileges He bestowed upon it,

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., 4.

[72] Ibid.

making its fate all the more profound. Once pulled from the soil, the vine becomes worthless and is thrown into the fire, a fate pronounced by God on Israel.[73] Ezekiel 15:1-8 reads,

> And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work? Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for any work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned? Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them. And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord GOD.

In this passage, Ezekiel compares Israel to a vine. The comparison of Israel to a vine has historical value as far back as the book of Genesis. The value of "the vine" usually depends on whether it bears fruit. However, in this text, Ezekiel does not mention anything regarding fruit. Instead, Ezekiel draws a picture of "the vine" and analyzes the quality of the vine's wood. The quality of the vine's wood portrays a uselessness and is not worthy of being made into a peg to hang an item from, and it is even more useless after it has been burned in a fire.[74] In verse 2, the concept is that the wood of "the vine" is no better than any other wood or that the vine branch is no better than any of the different branches of the trees in the forest. Ezekiel's purpose in this metaphorical speech in this verse shows how insignificant Israel has become.[75] Duguid asserts that Israel, like the vine wood's fate, will be similar in that, like the wood vine, Israel will be

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[73] Carl Beckwith, *Ezekiel, Daniel* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 227.

[74] John Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 23c.

[75] Ibid., 23d.

metaphorically half-burnt vine branches, useless and thrown back into the fire for destruction.[76] In verse 3, the word "pin" refers to a tent peg or a wooden peg used to hang something. The pin also connotes an idea of someone becoming reliable, which Israel was neither reliable nor useful.[77] Verse 4 reveals that all of Israel is reflected in this chapter of Ezekiel and will face God's judgment.[78] The verse also suggests that Israel, as the vine's wood, can only be useful to be burned as fuel. However, this usefulness is ambiguous. The verse may also imply that because the vine's wood burns on the ends and not throughout; this inconsistency also denotes the uselessness of the vine's wood use for fuel. It is clear from this concept that "the vine" branch that remains attached to the vine will develop fruit, and the pruned vine will only produce wood worthy of burning, similar to John 15.[79] In verse 5, Ezekiel declares that, unlike a branch that remains attached to its vine, a branch disconnected is only suitable for fire. The word, "therefore," separates verses 1-5 and 6-8. Verse 5 questions the uselessness of the vine's wood by stating, "If it was not useful when it was whole, how much more is it useless after it has burned and become charred?"[80] Verse 6 is God's first statement regarding the fate of Israel, and He states that He will allow the burning of the wood of "the vine," and He will give the inhabitants of Jerusalem over to burning by fire. In verses 7-8, God describes that He will set His

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[76] Iain Duguid, *Ezekiel, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 200.

[77] Ibid.

[78] John Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 23d.

[79] Brad Kelle, *Ezekiel: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2013), 184.

[80] Iain Duguid, *Ezekiel, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 200.

face against Israel, they will go out from one fire, and another fire will consume them. Israel will know that God is LORD because He has set his face against them, not in blessing but judgment. God will make the land barren because the Israelites have sinned.[81]

The first burning occurred with the captivity of Judah in 597 B.C. and the subsequent exile, which did not achieve God's purpose. Contrary to its purpose, Israel became even more useless, leading to their destruction.[82]

Ezekiel 17:1-10

Chapter 17 of Ezekiel is the last of three discourses. Like the two previous chapters, the discourse begins with the term "son of man," which is how God addresses the prophet. The main narrative is in verses 3-10, and the interpretation is in verses 11-21.[83] Ezekiel 17:1-10 reads,

> And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel; And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, long winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffick; he set it in a city of merchants. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow tree. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs. There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof. Yea, behold, being planted,

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[81] Brad Kelle, *Ezekiel: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2013), 184-185.

[82] Iain Duguid, *Ezekiel, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 200-201.

[83] Brad Kelle, *Ezekiel: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2013), 198.

> shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew.

This pericope is both a riddle and an allegory. As a riddle, it is difficult and requires an explanation. The passage as an allegory is a *māšāl* in the Hebrew.[84] A *māšāl* is a literary type that covers everything from an epigram to a psalm. From its roots, it can mean "to compare," but that does not limit its use to just similes or parables.[85] The intrinsic nature of Hebrew poetry is that it contains parallelism and repetition, emphasizing one idea in different ways.[86]

Rooker asserts that Jerusalem was located on a mountain, and one of the buildings was known as "the palace of the Forest of Lebanon (1 Kings 7:2)," and the royal residence connects to Lebanon. In this parable, the eagle takes seed from the land, places it in good soil, and plants it next to a water supply, where it becomes a low-spreading vine. The vine prospered in this environment.[87] However, the vine began to set its roots toward another eagle even though God had planted it in good soil. God's rhetorical question regarding the vine changing allegiance was whether it would thrive or become uprooted and stripped and eventually wither away. God answers that the vine will be uprooted and stripped, producing no new growth. God also states that it will wither away with very little assistance by the east winds.[88]

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[84] John Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 23o.

[85] Muhammad Schmidt, *A Hebrew-English Reference Manual to the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament Based on the Leningrad Codex and Strong's Hebrew-English Lexicon* (Hamburg: Disserta Verlag, 2018), 382.

[86] John Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 23o.

[87] Mark Rooker, *Holman Old Testament Commentary – Ezekiel* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 106.

[88] Ibid.

Taylor provides specific details that assist with interpretation. A consensus among scholars is that the first eagle is King Nebuchadnezzar, who, with his enormous military, overtakes Judah and takes them away to Babylon.[89] Included in the removal of the people is Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah, who is of royal seed and transplanted by King Nebuchadnezzar to native Jerusalem, where he aptly flourishes. He is a low-spreading vine because of his position and limited power and influence. He depended on the Babylonian leadership, and his branches turned inward. Ezekiel 17 illustrates Zedekiah's betrayal of trust between his relationship with God and King Nebuchadnezzar.[90]

The second eagle represents Egypt, and Israel now turns toward Egypt for its nourishment. Zedekiah breaks the covenant with King Nebuchadnezzar to follow the Pharoah of Egypt. However, God conveys that following Egypt has no future. As "the vine," following Egypt will cause them to wither away and become uprooted by the king of Babylon with little or no effort.[91] Following the second eagle, the fate of "the vine" became sealed. Israel sought to gain more by pursuing the second eagle. Instead, they threw away everything the first eagle, King Nebuchadnezzar, provided for them. The second eagle will not assist Israel; all the vine accomplished was to upset the first eagle, who will tear up "the vine" fruit and pull it up from its place. The destruction of Israel by the first eagle will not require a lot of difficulty; the activity of

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[89] John Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 23o.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid., 23p.

the first eagle contrasts with "the vines" interaction with the second eagle. Israel's course of action in following the second eagle is suicidal.[92]

Ezekiel informs Israel that God judged them because of their lack of trust in the Lord, that they rely on Egypt for security, and Zedekiah's corruption as the leader.[93] In this chapter, Ezekiel utilizes a riddle the Lord gave to deliver His message. If King Zedekiah and Israel do not understand the riddle, they will either submit to the Lord or perish.[94] The historical narratives that provide the keys to understanding the riddle are in 2 Kings 24:6– 20, 2 Chronicles 36:8– 16, and Jeremiah 37, 52:1– 7. Judah's kings were not following the direction of the prophets; instead, they yielded to the Babylonians, whom God used as a tool for discipline during this period. Instead of seeking God, the kings sought security and help from Egypt, which was an issue of the heart in this chapter.[95]

In verses 9-10, God reveals that "the vine" can no longer flourish and produce fruit because it removed itself from the first eagle. The only thing left for the first eagle is to react to the injury against it.[96] This concept is the passage's meaning, and Ezekiel implies that "the vine" could not be preserved other than by the might of the first eagle that had planted it in good soil. When it moved on to follow the second eagle, Ezekiel declared that "the vine" was ungrateful

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[92] Iain Duguid, *Ezekiel, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 223.

[93] Ralph Alexander, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2017), 136.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Carl Beckwith, *Ezekiel, Daniel* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 263.

and betrayed the first eagle. As a result, the branches and leaves withered and dried up.[97] The term "withered" is repetitive in verses 9-10, illustrating its importance. In Hebrew, the term is *yāḇēš*, and it means to be confused or disappointed or to dry up, be ashamed, or confounded.[98]

The structure of this chapter is in three sections: verses 1-10 establish the riddle, verses 11-21 provide the interpretation, and verses 22-24 give the conclusion and epilogue. In verses 1-6, Ezekiel describes an eagle with long, great wings full of feathers and colors.[99] This eagle flew to Lebanon (the land of Canaan), took the top cedar and young twigs, and took them to the land of the merchants. The eagle also took seeds from Canaan and planted them in good ground. Because the seeds were planted in good ground, they grew into a vine that shot branches toward the eagle.[100]

Ezekiel 17:1-10 illustrates the actions of King Zedekiah, revealing that Jerusalem had broken an oath with God. King Zedekiah's actions indicate that his relationship with God is questionable. God will allow Zedekiah to be captured by the Babylonians because he broke the oath that was between him and God. Not only did he break the covenant with God, but he also rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar.[101] The importance of King Zedekiah breaking the oath

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[97] Ibid.

[98] Spiros Zodhiates, and Warren Baker, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: Key Insights into God's Word: King James Version, Authorized Version* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2008), 1849.

[99] Ralph Alexander, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2017), 136.

[100] Ibid.

[101] John Goldingay, *Lamentations and Ezekiel for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 71.

illustrates not only the breaking of the oath between King Zedekiah and King Nebuchadnezzar but also the breaking of the oaths between Israel and God. King Zedekiah broke the oath while living in a prosperous environment, causing a breach of a covenant relationship. Israel also displayed this pattern repetitively.[102]

Ezekiel 19:1-14

Chapter 19 of Ezekiel is one of three oracles that discusses who is responsible for Judah's exile. The chapter is a lament for the princes of Israel, which is Ezekiel's term for a monarchial leadership style. Ezekiel portrays the Judean rulers and their downfalls.[103] Ezekiel 19:1-14 reads,

> Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, and say, What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions. And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men. The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt. Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion. And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men. And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring. Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit. And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel. Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters. And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches. But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them. And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a scepter to rule. This is a lamentation and shall be for a lamentation.

[102] Iain Duguid, *Ezekiel, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 224.

[103] Brad Kelle, *Ezekiel: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2013), 214.

Chapter 19 of Ezekiel is in two sections, beginning in chapter 19:1 and ending in 19:14. Between these sections are the written failures of two of Judah's kings using the imagery of a lion cub (19:2-9) and a vine (19:10-14). The imagery of the lion and "the vine" may correlate to Genesis 49:9-11 which references the lineage of Judah in Ezekiel 19.

In verses 1-9, God directs Ezekiel to take up a lament for Israel, described in the following verses.[104] It describes the defeat of the Judean kings by using imagery of a lioness and her cubs. The nation of Israel was represented as the lioness, and the Judean kings were considered the cubs. The first cub raised by the mother lioness became strong and learned to tear up its prey. The nations reacted to this show of power by capturing the lion and taking it to the land of Egypt.[105] The scene points to Jehoahaz, who reigned briefly. However, Pharaoh Necho captured and relocated Jehoahaz to Egypt in chains. Once the mother lioness observed the capture of her cub, she took another one of her cubs and raised it to become a strong lion. This lion, like the previous lion, learned to devour its prey.[106] He displayed enormous power by overcoming strongholds and destroying towns. The nations trapped and led the second lion in bondage to Babylon like the first lion. The second lion refers to King Jehoiachin, who also had a short reign. The Babylonians held King Jehoiachin captive for thirty-seven years and then released him.[107] Duguid posits that there has been some debate about whether the second lion is

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[104] Mark Rooker, *Holman Old Testament Commentary - Ezekiel* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 119-120.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

King Jehoiachin or King Zedekiah. King Zedekiah may be the second lion if the lion metaphor describes a different unit. King Jehoiachin is the second lion if the chapter is a two-image picture. The use of either king does not alter the point of the passage; the idea of the passage illustrates Judah's lack of godly leadership. Duguid's position is plausible because the point of the passage is unchanged.[108]

At first, Jehoahaz succeeded his brother Jehoiakim. However, Ezekiel skips his story and moves on to Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin. He reigned for only three months before he became a victim of his father's past actions.[109] King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jehoiakim because he did not pay the tribute Nebuchadnezzar required when the young prince came to the throne. Subsequently, his reign was short and pitiful, and his exile to Babylon was lengthy.[110]

God destroys powerful kingdoms that follow sinful and terrible ways. At one time, Judah flourished like a vine with multiple branches, strong roots, and a plethora of wealth and power.[111] However, they sinned against God, and he angrily plucked them up, not sparring. Judah's continued flourishing is not never-ending; God has ways to weaken or ruin it. He used the Egyptians to chop up "the vine" and the Babylonians to "pull it up." God uses pagan groups of people to do His will to Israel and Judah.[112]

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[108] Iain Duguid, *Ezekiel, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 248-249.

[109] John Taylor, *Ezekiel: an introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 153.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Carl Beckwith, *Ezekiel, Daniel* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 110.

[112] Ibid.

In Ezekiel 19:10-14, the mother is no longer represented as a lioness; Ezekiel changes her description to a fruitful vine planted by the water. “The vine” is tall, and it has strong branches.[113] Even so, God uproots “the vine” and strips its fruit. The branches once considered strong have now withered so much that they are only suitable for fire. Biblically, fire sometimes connotes the idea of destruction. God relocates “the vine” to the desert, where it withered by fire and could not grow.[114] The Lord planted Judah in excellent condition. As a result, Judah created many kings capable of ruling; however, pride became Judah's downfall. God’s wrath resulted in uprooting Judah and replanting them in the desert of exile. The fire started with King Zedekiah, one of the branches, but this fire resulted in a loss of fruit and the destruction of any future leaders.[115] Several verses in this passage contain a repetitive term. The Hebrew term *hāyâ* means to exist, to become, a beacon, break, cause, come, or do. The term connotes various meanings throughout this passage in verses 19:3, 19:6, 19:10, and 19:14, each supporting Ezekiel’s main point.[116]

The interpretation of this image pertains to the Judean monarchy, which at one time was very impressive but eventually overtaken, and its inhabitants relocated. The removal of “the vine” illustrates the removal of the exiles to Babylon after Zedekiah was captured in the desert,

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[113] Mark Rooker, *Holman Old Testament Commentary - Ezekiel* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 119-120.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Iain Duguid, *Ezekiel, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 249.

[116] Spiros Zodhiates, and Warren Baker, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: Key Insights into God’s Word: King James Version, Authorized Version* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2008), 1812.

not too far from Jericho.[117] In Zedekiah, the ruling dynasty ceased, at least temporarily. This judgment from God is based on chapters 16-17 of Ezekiel. Israel had forgotten that God is the source of all blessings, including theirs.[118]

Hosea

There are twelve books in the Old Testament known as the "Minor Prophets," and Hosea is the first of them. Hosea is first because of its length and the multiple combined themes of religious apostasy and covenant unfaithfulness.[119] They are identified as "Minor Prophets" because they are significantly smaller than the larger prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The collection of the minor prophets is a single book in the Hebrew Old Testament.[120] That may be because the individual prophetic books were collected to fill a scroll or to stop any smaller books from being lost. The collection has been considered one book since the early development of the Old Testament canon. Recent discussions have concluded that the twelve books should be read as a single work.[121]

Hosea's ministry was for the northern kingdom, specifically against Israel, Samaria, the northern capital, and the shrines of the north.[122] His ministry took place in the eighth century

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[117] Iain Duguid, *Ezekiel, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 249.

[118] Ibid.

[119] David Hubbard, *Joel and Amos* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 91.

[120] Robin Routledge, *Hosea: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity press, 2021), 10.

[121] Ibid.

[122] Ibid., 2.

B.C.[123] His prophecy is focused on the Assyrian expansion and the erratic environment in Israel that followed King Jeroboam's death.[124]

Hosea 2:12

The second chapter of Hosea continues with the marriage metaphor from the previous chapter, describing God's actions against Israel for being unfaithful. In the latter verses of the chapter, God and Israel are restored and reconciled.[125]

Hosea 2:12 reads, “And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, ‘These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.’” A contextual reading of this verse should include verses 1-12 for interpretive clarification.

In the second chapter of Hosea, specific language points to the covenant established in Exodus 19:5 as broken and the destruction of Samaria because of political disloyalty. The metaphor in this chapter highlights God’s judgment and shows the destruction of the capital cities.[126] In verses 2-5, the absence of the covenant between God and the people is referenced, and the people are returned to their condition before the exodus. The woman in the chapter becomes a wilderness, and her fertility is lost. She will also be made into dry land and ultimately die of thirst.[127]

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[123] Ibid., 1.

[124] Ibid., 2.

[125] Ibid., 51-58.

[126] Bo Lim, and Daniel Castelo, *Hosea* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 64.

Verses 6-8 should be read as a description of the woman's prostituting activity. The language in these verses connotes a form of erotic speech that may be considered suggestive of Baal fertility rituals. In verses 5-7, the concept of political loyalty is similar to what is found in Hosea 5:11. The numerous references to land show that the woman in chapter two may represent the people and the land because the references include grain, wine, wool, and flax.[128]

Verse 9 begins with a "therefore," which is a warning. Israel's goal was to be better, but they attempted to become better by excluding God.[129] It is God who controls the productivity of agriculture and not Baal. Since they were following Baal, God was now going to take back Israel's agricultural produce and take away the source of prosperity from the wealthy farmers. God would also remove the sources that Israel used to produce fine clothes that their women loved to wear. Israel had left God, their faithful husband, and now they would have to fulfill the duties of a husband to their wives.[130]

Also, verse 9 can mean that God shall remove the grain and the wine in their season.[131] This view suggests that since Israel attributed their production of the seasons to other deities, God did away with and destroyed their means to produce. The Israelites could not claim to receive the benefits of agricultural productivity and materials for fine clothing from the

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[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Trent Butler, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 34.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Robert Cyril, and Robert Hill, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets Volume 1* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 76.

Canaanite gods she now followed. This idea is framed in terms of a lustful woman. In reality, it refers to Israel believing that they were being rewarded because they worshipped and paid homage to idols.[132]

In verses 10-12, the sexual misconduct in this verse describes both a woman's nakedness and her behavior. This is consistent with other passages that describe the destruction of other capital cities by using the description of stripping a woman and destroying the land.[133] The concept of openly disgracing an adulterous female spouse was written in different words in Hosea 2:5. Metaphorically, the condition of the punishment of the unfaithful wife was because there was no repentance for adultery and the fact that there was idolatry being practiced by Israel.[134] The reason the lady is naked who represents Israel is that God is withholding the materials needed for the lady to make clothing to cover herself. This rhetorical unit in chapter 2:11-12 illustrates God not only withholding grain and wine but also the fabrics like wool and linen so that this sinner, metaphoric Israel, will now become the victim. God, through Hosea, informs the listeners that no one can rescue Israel from their inevitable fate.[135]

God does change His heart concerning Israel because He is all-knowing. This change is based on the idea that Israel cannot be blamed, justified, forgiven, or declared innocent for not knowing that God is the trustworthy source of the grain, wine, oil, wool, flax, and everything

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[132] Ibid.

[133] Bo Lim, and Daniel Castelo, *Hosea* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015). 64.

[134] Mayer Gruber, "Chapter 2." *In Hosea: A Textual Commentary*, *The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017) 135.

[135] Ibid., 136.

Israel needs.[136] Contrary to what is seen in this pericope or what may be the thought regarding ancient Israel, Hosea, the Bible, and the God of Israel, it is God Himself who plans to take responsibility for Israel and rehabilitate this metaphoric marriage. Israel, who was once at enmity with God because they were unfaithful, will be taken by God on a "second honeymoon."[137]

God will also uncover Israel's "nakedness" for all to see so that she will be put to shame publicly. God and the people will reveal the true nature of the people who will be exiled because of their sexual misconduct. God's actions fulfill the covenant curse written in Deuteronomy 32:39. The covenant referenced is the Palestinian Covenant described in chapters 29-32 of Deuteronomy.[138] No one will be able to save Israel from God's curse. Worshippers of both God and Baal celebrated agricultural festivals, including thanking God for agricultural productivity. The difference was that those who followed God connected these celebrations to God's saving actions, particularly God's deliverance of His people from Egypt.[139] The Canaanite Baal worshippers joined their celebrations with mystical rituals that included sexual exploits. Instead of Israel continuing to celebrate as God prescribed, they borrowed rituals from the Canaanites. God was now going to bring this to a close.[140]

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[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Deanna Thompson, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 147.

[139] Trent Butler, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 34.

[140] Ibid.

In verse 10, Hosea informs the reader that the destruction will include losing what the figs and vines produce.[141] God ceased this production by allowing the figs and vines to become dominated by so much undergrowth that they could no longer be harvested. Only the wild animals were able to benefit from this unharvested land. God defined Israel's issue by stating that they had forgotten Him. And because of Israel's forgetfulness, God's pronounced judgment upon them.[142] The festivals in verse 11 connect to a specific harvest time. For example, the "Passover" was connected to the spring barley harvest; the feast of the "Weeks" was connected to the summer wheat harvest, and the feast of the "Booths" was for the grape harvest in the fall. God halted these festivals because they included sexual immorality as payment to Baal instead of celebrating in remembrance of God's blessings from Israel's history.[143] Because Israel was distorting the festivals, God stopped them and preferred no worship in this manner instead of false one. One of the definitions of a good life from the view of Israel was that they were living under one's owned vine and fig tree. Grapes and figs were important and valued because they were signs of the land's fertility and prosperity.[144]

Hosea 2:15

Hosea 2:15 reads, "And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she

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[141] Ibid., 35.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid.

came up out of the land of Egypt." Verse 15 compares Israel in the wilderness to now being able to enter the promised land again. The days of her youth reflect when Israel was born in the wilderness, where God made His covenant with Israel in Exodus 19 and will do so in the future in Ezekiel 20. This concept correlates with the day the children of God came out of Egypt.[145]

The Valley of Achor may be one of the entrances into the hill country coming from the Jordan Valley. The Valley of Achor is where Achan and his family were executed after he caused Israel to lose the battle at Ai.[146] But now, the Valley of Achor will be known as a "door of hope," with the idea of a new life. This idea of hope may correlate to the historical account of Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute who helped the Israelite spies as they were preparing to occupy the land.[147] The correlation is that Israel is the harlot in the book of Hosea. Israel will get the vineyards from the Canaanites that were in their inheritance from their ancestors.[148]

Hosea predicts in this verse that Israel will respond in the wilderness, which may correlate to the first wilderness period from Exodus 24:3-8. The first wilderness response occurred when Moses read to the people from the Book of the Covenant, and the people responded that they would obey the Lord. In this second wilderness, the response will be because God now speaks to the people's hearts, and the verse further reveals that Israel will respond

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[145] Andrew Dearman, *The Book of Hosea* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 99.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid.

positively.[149] The Hebrew term *ʿānâ* reinforces the idea of Israel's response. In Hebrew, *ʿānâ* means to eye, heed, respond, sing, shout, or testify.[150]

In verses 8-15 of Hosea 2, there are several punishments that God would impose on Israel. They are guilty of being unfaithful and ignorant because they did not know that it was God who was giving them gifts that they would later use and dedicate to Baal.[151] Verses 11-15 contain the most descriptive measures of punishment that God will take against Israel. God will take back His grain, wine, oil, wool, and flax; He will uncover her shame for all to see; allow nobody to rescue her; stop all festivals; destroy vineyards and fig trees; and punish her for being an apostate and forgetting God.[152]

After this judgment, the following verses change tone and images. Previously, the language showed that God was very angry with Israel, and it was illustrated by using language that correlated to a husband-wife relationship.[153] This new tone shifts to the husband wooing the wife and promising a renewed relationship. After the punishments run their course, this new tone illustrates how God will use tender words to request Israel come into the wilderness for a renewed relationship with the land and Himself.[154] God will give Israel her vineyards back and

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[149] Ibid.

[150] Spiros Zodhiates, and Warren Baker, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: Key Insights into God's Word: King James Version, Authorized Version*. Second Revised Edition (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2008), 1946.

[151] Carol Dempsey, *Amos, Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk: Volume 15* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 2013), 3k.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

[154] Ibid.

win her back to Himself as He had done in past times. Hosea prophecies that Israel will turn from apostasy to fully following God. God Himself will initiate this behavioral change.[155]

Readers of this chapter may be surprised to discover that God has reversed the punishments listed in previous verses. Instead of killing the woman in the dry land, God will now speak tenderly to her in the land.[156] With the land now barren of grain, wine, wool, and flax, God will establish a covenant, allowing it to flourish again with grain, wine, and oil. In previous verses, God rejected the mother as his wife, but in these latter verses, God will betroth her.[157]

The barren land will be where God and the woman will be remarried.[158] There is a disparity between whether verse 14 translates as "I will lead her into the wilderness" or "I will lead her through the wilderness," but contextually, both ideas may be in mind. The text teaches that the woman becomes a wilderness, led to the wilderness, and brought out of the wilderness, which may be about Egypt. This is not just a message of judgment but also redemption. It is a pattern seen throughout Hosea's message that, for the exiles, it will serve as both judgment and redemption. This duality is a crucial aspect of understanding Hosea's prophecy.[159]

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[155] Ibid.

[156] Bo Lim, and Daniel Castelo, *Hosea* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 65.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Ibid.

Yahweh's method of restoring the people is direct. He will take Israel back to the desert where it all began and give them back their vineyards, which were part of the blessings they received when they entered the land of Canaan.[160] Even though the people had attributed their prosperity to Baal, God will now cut off that relationship and remind the Israelites that He is the source of their blessings.[161] Israel's taking over the promised land was supposed to be an opportunity. Instead, sin made it a place where there was constant trouble. This reflects Israel's current state; because of continually sinning, they lost the blessings that came with the land. But Yahweh will initiate a new beginning, and the Valley of Achor will become a place of hope and a gateway to all God has for the Israelites.[162] A key verse to consider in Hosea's prophecy is verse 19, which reads, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies." God will help His chosen people, Israel, develop enduring qualities. This verse reveals that God's covenant has concluded. The marriage customs in Israel begin with courtship and end in marriage negotiations, where the bride's price is reached. The bride price for this divine union is "righteousness," "judgment," "lovingkindness," and "mercies."[163] In Hebrew, these terms are

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[160] Robin Routledge, *Hosea: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity press, 2021), 60.

[161] Ibid.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Allen Guenther, *Hosea, Amos: Believers Church Bible Commentary*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1998), 68.

ṣeḏeq, which means the right, equity, prosperity, or just.[164] Judgment in Hebrew is *mišpāṭ*, which means verdict, sentence, justice, or right.[165] The term *heseḏ* in Hebrew means kindness, piety, reproof, or beauty.[166] The last term from this key verse is *raḥam*, which means compassion, womb, or maiden.[167] These terms connote a sense of fairness instead of asserting the law.[168]

Chapter 2:23 of Hosea is noteworthy as it concludes the chapter and supports the previous verses 2:15-22 regarding the reverse of judgment and the restoration of the relationship between God and Israel. God shows mercy and affirms that Israel is His people and that they will say He is their God, reflecting a covenant formula. This verse refers to the exodus time frame and points forward to a complete restoration in the future.[169] Paul further reiterates that the relationship between God and Israel will be restored (Romans 9:25-26). But instead of the restoration focused solely on Israel, Paul considers that the hope of restoration due to Jesus' sacrifice is available to all people due to God's divine grace.[170] The Old Testament illustrates that

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[164] Spiros Zodhiates, and Warren Baker, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: Key Insights into God's Word: King James Version, Authorized Version*. Second Revised Edition (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2008), 1967.

[165] Ibid., 1910.

[166] Ibid., 1836.

[167] Ibid., 1990.

[168] Allen Guenther, *Hosea, Amos: Believers Church Bible Commentary*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1998), 68-69.

[169] Robin Routledge, *Hosea: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity press, 2021), 65.

[170] Ibid., 66.

God intended to bless all nations through His relationship with Israel, so Paul's argument in Romans aligns conceptually. Hosea and Paul share the common factor that scripture teaches those who were not God's people can become His people through God's acts of mercy and grace.[171]

Amos

Out of the twelve Minor Prophets, the Book of Amos is the third book in the collection. It appears between the prophets Joel and Obadiah in the Masoretic Hebrew canon. It was placed between Joel and Obadiah because it has similarities to both books.[172] However, in the Septuagint, the length of the books is one of the ways they are arranged, and because of this arrangement, Amos appears between Hosea and Micah. The Book of Amos is one of the books that contain the earliest collection of oracles considered literary works. Even though the book of Amos contains only nine chapters, it has been the source of much literature.[173]

Amos wrote his prophecy between 760 and 755 B.C., which scholars mainly support, during the end of King Jeroboam II's reign.[174] Amos's central theme is Yahweh's rejection of Israel's social and religious practices. Israel had said "no" to Yahweh and committed several crimes against Him. Some of the crimes they committed were that they enslaved their fellow

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[171] John Goldingay, *Hosea-Micah (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Prophetic Books)*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 67.

[172] Shalom Paul, *Amos a Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 1.

[173] Ibid.

[174] David Hubbard, *Joel and Amos* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 92.

citizens, perverted justice, practiced incest, demanded the people to pay higher taxes, and came against any prophet who spoke against them.[175]

Amos 5:17

Chapters 5 and 6 of Amos contain similar subjects about Israel's thin religiosity, pridefulness, and blindness. God has repeatedly attempted to get Israel to take corrective action, but they did not heed God's direction. Israel is at fault, and God will judge Israel with death and destruction.[176]

Amos 5:17 reads, "And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD." In the preceding verses and chapters, the divine speech was directed toward the "sons of Israel." God's divine speech is in three parts: (1) injustice, seeking God, and death (5:1-17), (2) the Day of the Lord and how Israel's worship became corrupt (5:18-17), and (3) Israel's prosperity and upcoming failures (6:1-14).[177] In chapter 5:1-17, at least three themes center around judgment, worship, and sin. The theme of judgment is throughout the entire pericope, and the other themes are in the following verses and chapters.[178]

Vineyards are places of joy; however, in this context, grief and sorrow reign throughout the town and countryside.[179] In the first part of verse 17, the term "wailing" is repeated and

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[175] Ibid., 113.

[176] Allen Guenther, *Hosea, Amos: Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale: Herald press, 1998), 294-295.

[177] Tchaydar Hadjiev, *Joel and Amos and Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 136.

[178] Ibid.

[179] Daniel Carroll, *The Book of Amos* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020), 277.

extends the grief and sorrow to the rural areas, emphasizing mourning and death. Since death and weeping are prevalent throughout, it illustrates how large-scale the losses are, as reflected in the connected pericope of Amos 5:1-3.[180]

In the second part of verse 17, God Himself, using the first person, declares that He will pass through the people. This informs the recipients of Amos's message that God Himself is the author of this judgment, even if He utilizes an unnamed army.[181] God passing through are echoes from the Exodus, where God struck down the firstborn of those in Egypt. The difference now is that God is speaking against His chosen people; Israel is no longer connected to God by the covenants but has now assumed the role of Egypt. In other places in the book of Amos, the Exodus is utilized reversely, counteracting the nation's confidence in Israel as the elected people of God.[182]

In the Book of Amos, the grief is so overwhelming that the farmhands who were required to work the land for minimal wages are gathered to assist the professional mourners in displaying grief in public.[183] The irony of the farmers helping in the funeral process is made stronger by mentioning the grief in the vineyards. In contrast, the workers used to sing joyfully in the happy times of the harvest.[184] These are the same vineyards; however, because Israel has become

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[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Ibid.

[183] David Hubbard, *Joel and Amos* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 185.

[184] Ibid.

prideful, there is now wailing in the vineyards. The last line of verse 17 reveals that God's people have become His enemy by defiling His name, practicing injustice and unrighteousness, stealing from their fellow citizens, and ignoring His call to return to Him. The people left God with no choice but to pass through and bring judgment.[185]

Because God will pass through, the people will experience sorrow and anguish. God's presence can bring either judgment or a blessing.[186] Amongst those living in sin, God's presence would be horrific, especially if there is no repentance. Amos was preparing the people to meet God. He also describes how that meeting will go. It would bring tears and sorrow like no other event had done in previous times. Israel had seen how God disciplines; now they would experience this discipline in the worst fashion, His presence in the final judgment. [187]

The method of judgment that God will use is not clearly stated. However, verse 3 in chapter 5 may allude to a military invasion, but the other option may be a plague. The fall of justice and righteousness cause social upheaval and God's divine retribution.[188] God's covenants between Himself and the people are indwelt with righteousness and justice with a purpose. They are not just for the conveniences of Israel to gloss over.[189] They are divine and needed for God's covenant people to be witnesses and demonstrate their uniqueness and God's righteousness.

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[185] Ibid.

[186] Trent Butler, and Max Anders, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2005), 208.

[187] Ibid.

[188] David Hubbard, *Joel and Amos* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 185.

[189] Ibid., 186.

When justice and righteousness are no longer the centerpiece of God's people, God can do nothing else but move on.[190]

Summary

"The vine" imagery was interwoven into the lives of the Israelites literally, historically, socially, and culturally. So immersed was "the vine" imagery that, in this chapter, it became the identity of the people. Psalm 80:8-16 sets the foundation of Israel's identity as "the vine" and illustrates God's divine intervention with them as He cast out other people and groups and planted Israel on good ground. But it was Israel who failed to follow God's command, and because of this lack of failure, God had to correct them by allowing them to suffer. Because of his love, God sends His prophets to the Israelites to teach them how to correct their ways.

In the Book of Isaiah 5:1-7, the concept of Israel identified as "the vine" continues. Isaiah's prophecy illustrates a more descriptive process of how "the vine" was planted, protected, and cultivated. Even though God had done all this for the Israelites, God asks, "What more could He have done?" Because Israel cannot answer God, Isaiah's prophecy demonstrates the consequences by describing how the vineyard will be destroyed. God will take away the hedge of protection from around them. He will take down their walls and lay them to waste. "The vine" will receive no cultivation from anyone, and God will even stop the rain from nurturing it.

From Jeremiah 2:21, there are two things learned from this verse. First, God not only planted Israel as a vine, but "the vine" was noble and had good seeds. But Israel allowed sin and lawlessness to run rampant and ultimately turned into a "degenerate plant" of a "strange vine." Israel had gone from the "noble vine" with "good seed" from Isaiah to the "degenerate plant" of a "strange vine." God asking them how they turned is a rhetorical question. The answer is that

[190] Ibid.

their behavior as God's chosen people was contrary to what God required of them. They had broken the covenant that they had with God to serve Baal and its sexually explicit cultic rituals. Even though they tried themselves to clean up, God would not allow them to continue in their current way of living. They did not realize that they needed God to restore them.

Ezekiel 15:1-8 is one of three chapters in Ezekiel that discusses "the vine" imagery. Ezekiel 17 and 19 provide more in-depth material regarding Israel's status as "the vine." Ezekiel 15 has no information regarding Israel producing good or bad fruit. From the passage, God, through Ezekiel, passes on a judgment because Israel trespassed against God. Israel is a detached vine that has no value and is useless. As such, it can only burn with fire. The captivity of Judah in 597 B.C. and the subsequent exile were the first burnings, and this did not change the people's hearts toward God. Israel trespassed against God, becoming even more useless.

In Ezekiel 17:1-10, "the vine" imagery compares two eagles in a parable. Ezekiel's method of illustration is different than Isaiah's and Jeremiah's. His description of Israel's plight is a depiction, showing them following one eagle (King Nebuchadnezzar) and leaving the first eagle to pursue a second eagle (the Egyptian Pharaoh). Ezekiel's depiction of Israel as "the vine" is descriptive. It also teaches how God cared for and supported Israel as "the vine" under Babylonian rule until they began to focus on what the Egyptians were doing in the land. When King Zedekiah broke the established covenant with God and rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, Israel lost focus. God would then use Ezekiel to question why Israel was not prospering and withering away as "the vine." They could not prosper because they followed the second eagle, who could not sustain them like the first. King Zedekiah's breaking of the covenant in a prosperous environment reflects the relationship between God and Israel. God

established the covenants with Israel, and they continually broke them. Ezekiel uses the term withered repetitively to provide a clear picture of Israel's fate.

In Ezekiel 19:1-14 "the vine" imagery compares Israel to a lioness or a mother, in the form of a lament. This lioness has two whelps; the first (King Jehoahaz) is captured and taken to Egypt. The second whelp (King Jehoiachin) is captured and taken to Babylon. The illustration using the lioness now shifts to a mother compared to a vine planted by the water. But her stature changed, and she became a vine that once flourished, plucked up, cast down, consumed by fire, and re-planted in the wilderness in dry ground. Ezekiel would write this lament to express God's wrath towards Israel. The fire that King Zedekiah caused resulted in a severe loss of possible fruit production and the temporary loss of producing godly leaders. The Hebrew term *hāyâ* was in several verses in this chapter, reflecting multiple meanings and supporting the main idea.

In the Book of Hosea 2:12, God judges Israel's apostasy. Hosea's prophecy describes how God will punish Israel as "the vine." Because adultery is a critical element of the book of Hosea, Israel is depicted as a harlot who is also a mother. God's judgment will include unveiling her nakedness for the public to see, stopping her joy, stopping all feasts, and destroying both "the vines" and fig trees. In this chapter, the reason why this is happening is because the Israelites had forgotten God and attributed their blessings to Baal.

Hosea 2:15 shifts the intent of God from the previous pericope. God moved with compassion and will now bring Israel back to Himself. God states that He will give Israel back her vineyards and the Valley of Achor as a sign of hope. In return, Israel will celebrate by singing like they did when they escaped Egypt. It is God who will initiate and complete this process.

Amos 5 is like Ezekiel in that it is in the form of a lamentation. Amos' key point is that Israel should seek God only instead of pursuing their neighbor's pagan gods. Contained within Amos's prophecy are two other vital elements. One is, because of Israel's predicament, there will be wailing throughout the land, including the vineyards. The second key element, and probably the most important, is that God Himself will cause this wailing by passing through the land, showing He is orchestrating the judgment.

Throughout the pericopes, the common theme of Israel as "the vine" is that God selected and identified the children of Israel as "the vine," transplanted them into the promised land, and allowed them to flourish. God utilized the Psalmist and Prophets to help them correct the errors of their ways. Each prophet used a different method of communication to convey God's message. Even so, the Israelites followed their neighbor's gods and their ways of living, ultimately causing them to be exiled and become known instead of a "choice vine" as a vine that produces sour grapes.

Chapter Four

The Pseudepigrapha Pericopes

Introduction

In the previous chapters, "the vine" imagery has been analyzed primarily from the Torah, Psalm 80, and the prophetic corpus. Chapter four will examine the Pseudepigrapha books of First Enoch 10:19, Fourth Ezra 5:23-27, and Second Baruch 36:3-10 to provide an expanded view of "the vine" imagery. This chapter will cover the importance of Pseudepigrapha, give a background of each Pseudepigrapha book, and expose the specific texts that discuss "the vine" imagery. These books contain material supporting the thesis even though they are not in the Hebrew or Christian Bible canon.

Pseudepigrapha

Judaism is known for its literary output, including material from the discoveries of the ancient scrolls found in the caves at Qumran. These sources provided instructions regarding Judaism in the New Testament era. Jews wrote other texts in the time frame between the testaments, which are not so well known. These texts are known as "Pseudepigrapha," and they contain an extensive range of genres that illustrate theological ideas, advance specific values, expound on the Scriptures, and educate both Jews and Gentiles about Jewish history and Jewish practices.[1]

The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha are writings that Christians consider to be "falsely ascribed" to the authorship of ancient writers. The authors of pseudonymous texts did not provide their names as the authors but instead gave credit for their works to exceptional people

[1] Susan Docherty, *The Jewish Pseudepigrapha: An Introduction to the Literature of the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 1.

from the sacred past. Pseudonymous writers prompted comparisons between the past and the critical issues they faced.[2]

Pseudonymity is good because it can validate a work by giving it a perception of authority and antiquity. Pseudonymity also helps with theological views and hermeneutical perspectives, allowing its reader to connect with Israel's history. For example, "Ezra," the priest, was also a scribe in the Old Testament. He played a significant role in helping the exiles who returned from Babylon's captivity in the fifth century B.C.E. Ezra is associated with the book of Fourth Ezra. In Fourth Ezra, he addresses similar situations after the destruction of the Second Temple.[3]

Even though pseudonymity may have some contributing factors for validating a work, to current readers, the idea of a work identified as being "falsely ascribed" carries a connotation of being a "forgery." This concept is one of the reasons why the Pseudepigrapha books were not included in the Hebrew or Christian canons. In antiquity, a writer's use of another name was considered questionable, and it could further challenge the work's authenticity and hinder its inclusion into other sacred collections.[4] A second reason Pseudepigrapha books are not included in either canon is because of doctrinal differences.[5] A text that was not widely known or

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[2] C. D. Elledge, *Early Jewish Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press Incorporated, 2023), 13.

[3] Susan Docherty, *The Jewish Pseudepigrapha: An Introduction to the Literature of the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 2.

[4] John Collins, and Daniel Harlow, *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2012), 187.

[5] Rachel Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed: Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Boston: Brill, 2009), 125.

contained doctrines that may have been considered questionable or promoted heresy was also identified as Pseudepigrapha. These texts were subsequently excluded from either canon.[6]

The Book of First Enoch

The Books of Enoch contain the heritage of ancient Judaism. They include the stories of fallen angels and demons, how evil began, and the world's end, all of which were important to the ancient Jews. These books contain material that pointed toward the first followers of Jesus, and Jude quoted from them, and early Christians, such as Tertullian, defended them.[7] Even though the end-of-the-world focus of the books was appealing in the Second Temple period, that was also why the rabbis in that century and the fourth and fifth centuries rejected them. This rejection almost caused these books to disappear until they were rediscovered in Ethiopia in 1773. The discovery of these books by James Bruce prompted a new scholarship that focused on the apocalypses from the Second Temple Judaism and how these books influenced Christianity.[8]

The Book of First Enoch is a collection of documents considered a Jewish apocalyptic composed around the fourth century B.C.E. The language of the collection is Aramaic, and it has been preserved in the Ethiopic translation of intermediate Greek in the fifth-sixth century C.E.[9] The place of composition may have been in Palestine. However, some traditions place its composition in Babylon. The collection's size, contents, historical context, and influences make

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[6] Lee McDonald, and James Sanders, *The Canon Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 88.

[7] Gabriele Boccaccini, Ariel Hessayon, and Annette Reed, *Rediscovering Enoch?: the Antediluvian Past from the Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 1.

[8] Ibid.

[9] George Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 1.

it one of the most essential books in Jewish literature. Its size is similar to the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament. It contains a wide range of material that covers categories such as religion, science, intellectual and social issues.[10] The story from the Enochic texts and traditions is a three-act drama containing an ancient flourishing part, a medieval loss, and a recovery. The recent scholarly narratives discussing Pseudepigrapha from the Old Testament, specifically since the early twentieth-century texts, are ancient Jewish texts.[11]

God spoke to Enoch several generations before Moses received the Torah. The Book of First Enoch contains written material reflecting wisdom from heaven, which Enoch received and communicated for salvific purposes to the last generations of those alive before God's final judgment. The Book of First Enoch does not contain the legalistic forms in the Mosaic Laws.[12] Enoch describes obedience to God's direction as walking the right path and disobedience as following paths contrary to God's word. First, Enoch contains several motifs reflecting wisdom instead of directions for pursuing legal forms. The text reveals a period where Israel's history and the Torah are made known; however, salvation is connected to Enoch instead of Moses' authority.[13]

The collection provided a unique view into the diverse world of Palestinian Judaism for over three centuries before the common era. It shows the Israelites' religion as it transitioned over

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Annette Yoshi Reed, *Enoch Lost and Found? Rethinking Enochic Reception in the Middle Ages*, in *Rediscovering Enoch?: The Antediluvian Past from the Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 19.

[12] Esther Chazon, Ruth Clements, and David Satran, *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 112.

[13] Ibid.

time. The Torah is not yet widely known; the consensus regarding biblical prophecy and proverbial wisdom mixes with views regarding the shape and future of the cosmos, and Hellenistic concepts and myths give way to Israelite traditions.[14]

One of the significant books found in 1 Enoch is the "Book of the Watchers," chapters 6-11 do not mention Enoch. However, tradition associates the name of Enoch with it, starting in chapters 12-16.[15] With the name of Enoch attached to the book, the text allowed the author to draw the audience further into a view and commentary from the ancient past and connect them to a figure from that period. Noah could have possibly been viewed in the same capacity. Still, the connection between Enoch and Elohim and the narrative of his life made him a better option from which the author could address fallen angels and divine authorization.[16]

The ideas and concepts in this collection further support and have an extreme impact on Christianity as they are written in the New Testament.[17] In the same time frame, the authors of the books of Enoch and the Christian authors became less important to many of the rabbinic teachers and their community of believers, as they combined their religious beliefs in seventy C.E. after the destruction of Jerusalem. Even so, the book of 1 Enoch, with its seeds of wisdom previously sown, will find its place in Jewish spiritualism. This book is a rich collection, and

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[14] George Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 1.

[15] Loren Stuckenbruck, *The Epistle of Enoch: Genre and Authorial Presentation*, Dead Sea Discoveries 17 (2010), 367.

[16] Ibid.

[17] George Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 1.

students of both the Jewish faith and Christianity can learn a lot about how some spiritual concepts developed and came to be what they are.[18]

Additionally, 1 Enoch, also known as "The Ethiopic Book of Enoch," is one of the most important writings of the latter part of the Second Temple period. Its contents are essential because they describe the development of Judaism and discuss the apocalypse. Its present composition is the result of material obtained over a period, and it contains literary seams and unexpected transitions throughout the book.[19]

The Book of First Enoch, chapters 6-11, is the earliest textual layer of 1 Enoch, and it is also one of the earliest traditions of the collection. In chapters 6-11, there are two narratives, one on Shemihazah and the other on Asael, both fallen angels. Most of the narrative is Shemihazah's story, which describes a group of angels referred to as "The Sons of Heaven" or "The Watchers," it describes the daughters of men and how the angels wanted them. Shemihazah, their leader, defines this activity as sinful and does not want to bear the weight of the sin by himself. Therefore, the Watchers meet on Mount Hermon to complete their plan. [20] The angels approach Enoch and ask him to intercede on their behalf with God with a request to release them from their punishment. God responds by denying their request and adds that when their children die, their spirits will remain on earth and continually cause harm to humanity until judgment day.

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[18] Ibid., 1.e.

[19] Michael Knibb, *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 17.

[20] Ida Fröhlich, "Mesopotamian Elements and the Watchers Traditions," In *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. by Angela Harkins, Kelley Bautch, and John Endres, 11–24 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 12.

First Enoch defines this day as the day of slaughter, destruction, and death, which will take place at an unknown time in the future, but until then, the Watchers will not have any peace.[21]

God rejects Enoch's intercession, but an angel gives him a tour of heaven, and he is shown all the important matters about the heavens and the cosmos. Enoch's heavenly journey is described in chapters 17-81, and these chapters also reveal that Enoch was allowed to come back to earth for one year to pass on what he had seen on his heavenly journey to his children.[22] The final chapters in the book provide information in the form of a testament from Enoch to his children in chapters 82-91, and in chapters 83-90, there is information regarding two visions that Enoch experienced. Chapters 91-105 deal with persevering during times of oppression, and chapters 106-107 discuss the birth of Noah, a type of salvation. Chapter 108 discusses persevering in the last days when evil is rampant; judgment is for those who do evil, and salvation is for the believers.[23] The critical theme of judgment in the book describes the coming judgment where God will deal with the many injustices illustrated by the authors and readers who experienced it. The guarantee of that judgment is attributed to the author's claims that what they had written is tradition and believed to have been received by Enoch as a revelation. The contents of this revelation include astronomical law, which was violated by the wicked, and future predictions and visions of hidden places in the cosmos.[24]

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[21] George Njeri, "Surprise on the Day of Judgment in Matthew 25:31–46 and The Book of the Watchers," *Neotestamentica* 54, no. 1 (January 2020): 6.

[22] Michael Knibb, *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 17.

[23] Ibid.

[24] George Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 7.

The Book of First Enoch is different than the Hebrew Bible and much of the Jewish literature in the Hellenistic period; its contents contain a mixture of prophetic and wisdom-related material in the biblical tradition, which has come together in various ways in texts like Tobit and Sirach.[25] Chapters 6-16 of First Enoch clearly illustrate that the Watchers are not equal to God but more than humans. They live in heaven and can understand more than humans. They live between the divine and the human worlds, where angelic beings and other beings may reside. "The Book of the Watchers" describes them as angels who became a different class due to their misconduct.[26]

The authors writing First Enoch seemed to have a singular mentality regarding religious matters. They believed that a small portion of Israelites would be divinely blessed and allowed to survive judgment. They also believed that Gentiles could receive salvation if they turned and followed the laws of God. These writings also contain encouragement and lift the righteous they celebrate.[27] First Enoch contains five significant divisions and two appendices. The Qumran MSS includes some Enochic stories about giants and the children of the Watchers.[28]

Enoch is in Genesis 5:21-24, and the King James Version reads, "And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Kevin Sullivan, "The Watchers Traditions in 1 Enoch 6–16: The Fall of Angels and the Rise of Demons*,"* in *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 91-92.

[27] George Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 7.

[28] Ibid.

sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Enoch lived before the flood and had a close relationship with God. The Book of Genesis does not provide any depth to his character; there is no mention of him being a scribe or an author of any books.[29] Enoch draws a particular interest in Judaism; he is a scribe, sage, and scientist.[30] He is a visionary who is taken to heaven and allowed to travel with angels. Enoch is a witness and a prophet; he detests sin, foretells Israel's history, and even intercedes with God on behalf of the wicked angels.[31] Enoch, as a scribe, is identified as having been written by him in most ancient writings. Enoch is credited with authoring the "Astronomical Book" and the "Book of The Watchers" around the fourth/third century B.C.E., and he is also credited with writing the "Book of Dreams" and an epistle in the second century B.C.E.

Archaeological discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls and Aramaic material provide textual witnesses to these books. Enoch, as their author, wrote these books well before Christianity came on the scene, thus confirming their Jewish origin.[32] Pieces from these books are in the ancient past, and Christians have circulated medieval Greek manuscripts, fragments, and excerpts. Of the books of First Enoch collection, the "Book of The Watchers" is the most challenging regarding its patristic allusions and quotations. With the discovery of the Aramaic

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[29] Gabriele Boccaccini, Ariel Hessayon, and Annette Reed, *Rediscovering Enoch?: the Antediluvian Past from the Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 3.

[30] Annette Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Gabriele Boccaccini, Ariel Hessayon, and Annette Reed, *Rediscovering Enoch?: the Antediluvian Past from the Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 3.

Enoch fragments found amongst the Dead Sea Scrolls, there were several changes prompted by scholarly research that contained essential elements for Judaism in the Second Temple period. These fundamental elements were apocalyptic literature, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Jewish sectarianism, demonology, and the ascent to heaven.[33] The "Book of the Watchers" teaches about understanding where evil began in the world, removing the responsibility from God and directing it toward the Watchers. Interestingly, there is no reference to Adam and Eve. Because of this lack of a reference, this account of the beginning of evil takes away the blame from Adam and Eve and places humanity's fallen nature upon those fallen angels.[34]

Some seers wrote their discourses based on the belief that their history reached past the era of empires and the great flood before the downfall of angelic beings and the knowledge of corrupt humanity. They wrote because they believed in the righteousness of the scribe Enoch. They dealt with imperialism, violence, and deceit and resisted persecution from leadership.[35] These writers formed the collection known as the "Enochic Apocalypse of Weeks" and "Book of Dreams." First Enoch comes from various sources, which help to change and expand the narrative found in chapters 6-8 of Genesis that pertains to the downfall of heavenly beings, humanity's corrupt ways, and God's judgment by Him using a flood to destroy the earth. These writers took into account man's sin, righteousness, and how God administers justice, and with these concepts in mind, they used them and wrote in response to challenges that the Judeans

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Kevin Sullivan, "The Watchers Traditions in 1 Enoch 6–16: The Fall of Angels and the Rise of Demons," in *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Minneapolis:2014), 93.

[35] Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 245.

experienced from 175-164 B.C.E.[36] The Book of First Enoch depicts how occult sciences and technology contribute to humanity's moral corruption and assigns worldwide corruption to be taught by Azazel, one of the sinful angels.

This idea was very compelling for early Church Fathers. Tertullian, for example, improvised an analogy between fallen angels, magicians, and astrologers who were persecuted and driven out of Rome.[37] Four of the five books of First Enoch provided material that significantly changed how scholars thought about Second Temple Judaism. Archaeology discoveries from the Qumran support the idea of the antiquity of texts that were only known through later translations. These texts provided a way for scholars to affirm the dates of early Enochic literature in a time while other texts that would later be in the bible were written and edited.[38]

Enoch, as a biblical character, is a minor character in the ancient history of Genesis. There was nothing of significant importance regarding his birth (Genesis 5:18). The text teaches that he was sixty-five when he became a father to his son, Methuselah (Genesis 5:21).[39] He lived three hundred and sixty-five years on this earth and had sons and daughters (Genesis 5:22); in Genesis 5:24, the verse reads, “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” His name comes up again in 1st Chronicles 1:3 and Sirach 44:16; 49:14. Although there is not a

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Kyle Fraser, “Zosimos of Panopolis and the Book of Enoch: Alchemy as Forbidden Knowledge.” *Aries* 4, no. 2 (July 2004): 129.

[38] Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014), 245.

[39] Ibid.

lot regarding Enoch's character profile, the information contained in the Book of First Enoch is unique, there is a connection between sin and its properties, the descent of the angels known as Watchers, and the flood.[40]

The "Book of the Watchers" contains five sections: an introduction found in chapters 1-5, the description of the fallen angel's sin in chapters 6-11, the conversation between Enoch and the Watchers and his commissioning by God in chapters 12-16, Enoch's first journey is in chapters 17-19, and his second journey is depicted in chapters 20-36.[41] Part of chapter 82 may also be considered a part of the book of the Watchers, or it may be regarded as a bridging narrative that correlates to either Dream Visions or the Epistle.[42]

First Enoch 10:19

First Enoch 10:19 reads, "They will plant vines on it, and every vine that will be planted on it will yield a thousand jugs of wine, and of every seed that is sown on it, each measure will yield a thousand measures, and each measure of olives will yield ten baths of oil." Contextually, the complete narrative is in First Enoch 10:1 – 11:2 and details the commissioning of four Archangels to do God's bidding regarding the sins of the fallen angels. God's four angels are Sariel, Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael.[43] The history of First Enoch consists of many interconnected parts. Scholars have concluded that the present text comprises five distinct works

[40] Ibid.

[41] Grant Macaskill, *Revealed Wisdom and Inaugurated Eschatology in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 30-31.

[42] Ibid.

[43] George Nickelsburg, and James VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 27.

and two appendices.[44] The text that discusses viticulture is found in First Enoch, the "Book of the Watchers." Chapters 6-11 illustrate the angels' revolt and make up the book's center."[45]

The Most High commands the first angel, Sariel, to go to Noah's father, Lamech, and task him with informing Noah of the upcoming flood and how he should prepare for it. Verse 10:2-3 reads, "Go to Noah and say to him in my name, 'Hide yourself.' And reveal to him that the end is coming, that the whole earth will perish; and tell him that a deluge is about to come on the whole earth and destroy everything on the earth. Teach the righteous one what he should do, the son of Lamech, how he may preserve himself alive and escape forever. From him, a plant will be planted, and his seed will endure for all the generations of eternity."[46]

The second angel, Raphael, is commanded to capture the fallen angel, Asael. Chapter 10, verses 4-5 read, "To Raphael, he said, 'Go, Raphael, and bind Asael hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness; And make an opening in the wilderness in Doudael. Throw him there and lay beneath him sharp and jagged stones. And cover him with darkness and let him dwell there for an exceedingly long time. Cover up his face and let him not see the light.'"[47] The flood and its devastation represent the purifying of the earth. The stories of Shemihazah, Asael, and the flood are vital components of the origin of evil. The narrative of Shemihazah is similar to the flood

[44] Stephen Carlson, "Eschatological Viticulture in 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch and the Presbyters of Papias," *Vigiliae Christianae* 71, (2017): 38.

[45] Ibid.

[46] George Nickelsburg, and James VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 27.

[47] Ibid., 28.

story found in Genesis 6:1-4, which also depicts a flood.[48] Even though such an interpretation is in harmony with the text, it is not a standard element in the narrative structure. The flood overrides the healing rites of the three angelic beings and makes their messages ineffective. It may be considered a response to humanity's failure to follow the teachings of Asael.[49]

The third angel Gabriel is commanded to go and destroy the offspring of the giants in 10:9-10, and it reads, "And to Gabriel, he said, 'Go, Gabriel, to the bastards, to the half-breeds, to the sons of miscegenation; and destroy the sons of the watchers from among the sons of men; send them against one another in a war of destruction.' Length of days they will not have; and no petition will be (granted) to their fathers in their behalf, that they should expect to live an everlasting life, nor even that each of them should live five hundred years."[50]

The final angel from this chapter is Michael, tasked with imprisoning Shemihazah and his associates and destroying the giants. He is also charged with overseeing the restoration of the earth. Chapter 10:11-12 read, "And to Michael he said, 'Go, Michael, bind Shemihazah and the others with him, who have mated with the daughters of men, so that they defiled them in their uncleanness.' And when their sons perish, and they see the destruction of their beloved ones, bind them for seventy generations in the earth's valleys, until the day of their judgment and consummation, until the everlasting judgment is consummated."[51]

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[48] Ida Frolich, "Mesopotamian Elements and the Watchers Traditions," in *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions,* ed. Angela Harkins, Kelley Bautch, and John Endres (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 13.

[49] Henryk Drawnel, "1 Enoch 6–11 Interpreted in the Light of Mesopotamian Incantation Literature," in *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality*, ed. Loren Stuckenbruck and Gabriele Boccaccini (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 265.

[50] George Nickelsburg, and James VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 29.

The results from the previous commands to destroy are illustrated in verse 17. In this pericope, the chapter's tone changes; the righteous are said to have a way to escape from the atrocities that the fallen angels have committed. In addition to escaping, they are allowed to have families, live to old age, and live in peace.[52] Chapter 10:17-19 contains language that depicts a picture of humanity that is fruitful and has blessings from the trees, vines, and olive trees. This is not set up by the preceding parts of Enoch's narrative except possibly in chapter 7:3-4, which covers how the demons destroy what the humans produce. These verses strengthen the concept expressed in verse 10:16, where the plants of righteousness refer to Israel appearing blessed along with the deeds of righteousness.[53] In verse 18, the earth also benefits from the angels' work. The world is now ready to be cultivated with trees that will fill it, and the trees also contain a blessing.

This type of blessing is described as "trees of joy." In verse 19, now that the earth is ready for cultivation, along with the trees, vines will also be planted, and the number of vines is so much that each vine will provide enough juice to fill a thousand jugs of wine. Along with the trees and vines, every seed planted will give a thousand measures, and every olive will provide ten baths of oil.[54] In verse 20, Michael is instructed to cleanse the earth from all wrongdoing,

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[51] Ibid., 27.

[52] Ibid. 30.

[53] Henryk Drawnel, "1 Enoch 6–11 Interpreted in the Light of Mesopotamian Incantation Literature," in *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality*, ed. Loren Stuckenbruck and Gabriele Boccaccini (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 266.

[54] George Nickelsburg, and James VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 30.

including impurities, lawlessness, sin, and godlessness. In verse 21, the results from Michael's cleansing of the earth are seen. Because of the cleansing, the sons of men will become righteous, all the people will worship the Most High, and they will prostrate and bless the Most High. Verse 22 describes how now that the earth has been cleansed, God will not send any more wrath. The chapter's conclusion is described in chapter 11:1-2 of 1 Enoch, where God decides to open the storehouse of blessings in heaven so that the "sons of men" may receive them. Upon receiving these blessings from heaven, God's truth and peace are for all people for eternity.[55]

In chapters 10:15-11:2, God's commands should not be seen as only for Raphael when interpreting the previous verses. They are a completion of what God commanded to all four angels.[56] Using the verbs in future tense is a continuation of God's commands from verses 10:1-14, where the results of the actions of the four angels are described. Verse 15 supports verse 9 regarding the punishment of the fallen angels. There is a connection between the injustice described in verse 16 and the plant of righteousness that may correlate with verse 3. In verse 20, God's command to cleanse the earth relates to verse 22.[57] In addition, there is a gap in time between the earliest generation and the restoration found in verse 10:12, which provides specifics regarding the Watcher's imprisonment, which will be in the valleys of the earth for seventy generation periods up until the final judgment. In the text, no other chronological periods are

[55] Ibid., 31.

[56] Loren Stuckenbruck, and Gabriele Boccaccini, *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality,* Vol. 44. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 266.

[57] Ibid.

described in the future last times.[58] In that period, the events illustrate the erasing of the sins of the Watchers and giants to the end of the days. The flood as punishment and a final judgment followed by redemption is an analogy utilized in other contemporary sources. However, First Enoch 6-11 may be one of the oldest texts containing this idea. The entire scene is communicated divinely to the four archangels.[59]

God's commands in the last few verses can be in two parts: fruitfulness of humanity and nature (1 Enoch 10:17-19), and the worship of God, the cleansing of the earth, and the storehouse of blessings that will be opened by God post flood (1 Enoch 10:21-11:2). First Enoch 10:17-19 speaks about longevity of life, humanity being fruitful and living together with the blessings from the large quantities of produce from the vines, seeds, and olive trees.[60] However, these verses are not developed from previous verses. In the same pericope, the idea presented in 10:16 is that the plant of righteousness and truth may be about Israel, which will be blessed with the results of living righteously.[61] Carlson adds that God's command to Michael is to "destroy all perversity from the earth and let every wicked deed be gone, and let the plant of righteousness (and truth) appear, and it will become a blessing."[62] Enoch's vision from verse 10:22 explains

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[58] Devorah Dimant, *From Enoch to Tobit: Collected Studies in Ancient Jewish Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 85.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Loren Stuckenbruck, and Gabriele Boccaccini, *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality*, Vol. 44. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 266.

[61] Ibid., 267.

[62] Stephen Carlson, "Eschatological Viticulture in 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch and the Presbyters of Papias," *Vigiliae Christianae* 71, (2017): 40.

that the earth will be cleansed from defilement, impurity, wrath, and plague, and it is linked to the evil that the fallen angels had done. Because this heresy and impurification are connected to the fallen angels having sexual relationships with women, their offspring are also considered impure. God condemned this impurity, so the command was to destroy all impurification, including their offspring.[63]

The terminology points toward the finality of God's judgment.[64] Verses 10:6 and 10:12 read, "And on the day of the great judgment, he will be led away to the burning conflagration" and "until the everlasting judgment is consummated," both verses support the idea. The language found in other verses, 1:9 and 10:14-16, is also crucial to understanding the finality of the judgment, and these verses leave no room for misunderstanding. The "Book of the Watchers" discusses humanity's sins and the fallen angels' results.[65] The Watchers are fallen angels best described as a unique subset of angels who crossed God's boundaries, committed sin, made themselves unique, and created giants that dwelt with humanity.[66]

The imprisonment and the ultimate destruction of the Watchers and humans who followed the way of the Watchers indicate that an end to all that was going wrong in the world will reach its conclusion. The inference to the destruction of all iniquities found in chapter 10:16

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[63] Loren Stuckenbruck, and Gabriele Boccaccini, *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality*, Vol. 44. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 267.

[64] Grant Macaskill, *Revealed Wisdom and Inaugurated Eschatology in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 33.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Kevin Sullivan, "The Watchers Traditions in 1 Enoch 6–16: The Fall of Angels and the Rise of Demons," in *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 102.

and the idea of "truth" and "righteousness" after the destruction makes sense.[67] With the natural result of the destruction of iniquity comes a tensity in the restoration and renovation process to return to the perfect state of creation. Verses 10:16 – 11:2 illustrate the restoration of creation, and these verses are similar to Isaiah 65:17-25, where Isaiah describes a world that is free of trouble and full of life.[68]

This imagery is meant to be typological for eschatology. Nickelsburg writes, "In its eschatological dimension, this aspect of the story promises a new start after the destruction caused by a great judgment."[69] The Book of Enoch plays an essential role by providing an example of an apocalypse. The "Book of the Watchers," the oldest Jewish apocalypse in possession today, is decades older than the Book of Daniel, which also contains apocalyptic texts. The material that discusses apocalypses and eschatology correlates to the literature in the Hebrew Bible.[70]

The genres in books that illustrate apocalypses, visions, and heavenly journeys go as far back as the prophetic texts from the biblical books of Ezekiel and Zechariah. The concepts of judgment, salvation, resurrection, and messianism that make up apocalyptic eschatology can be found in books like Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.[71] Two things will be required for this

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[67] Grant Macaskill, *Revealed Wisdom and Inaugurated Eschatology in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 33.

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Michael Knibb, *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 24.

[71] Ibid.

eschatological interpretation: first, the idea of a perfect earth (10:22), and a cleansing of iniquity (10:16, 20, 22), then a shift in men becoming righteous (10:21), and it all being united by truth and peace (11:2). That fact that this turn of events has not taken place supports the idea that these verses are pointing toward an eschatological event. Secondly, the idea behind the "plant of righteousness" being a pathway to blessings (10:16) also points toward an eschatological event.[72]

"The Vine Motif" in First Enoch

Michael's renewal of the earth correlates to the theme found in the Genesis narrative regarding Noah. Noah was a righteous man (Gen 6:9), and he planted a vineyard (Gen 9:20). Chapter 10:19 of 1 Enoch extends the effect of "the vine" motif by explaining the productivity of "the vine" after the earth has been cleansed. The agricultural motif of a vine multiplying and producing thousands of jugs of wine is in narratives like Isa 5:10. Wine, grain, and oil refer to agricultural produce.[73]

"The vine" motif in the book of 1 Enoch has very distinct differences from the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. For example, in the book of Isaiah 5:1-7, "the vine" motif illustrates how God chose a place for His chosen people, protected them, and nourished them. However, Israel did not produce the right fruit, leaving God asking, "What more could he have done?" Because of their lack of productivity, God allowed them to be destroyed. This idea of Israel being the chosen people and their repetitive failures is throughout the Old Testament,

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[72] Grant Macaskill, *Revealed Wisdom and Inaugurated Eschatology in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 34.

[73] Stephen Carlson, "Eschatological Viticulture in 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch and the Presbyters of Papias," *Vigiliae Christianae* 71, (2017): 40-41.

especially in the books of the major prophets. In the book of 1 Enoch, "the vine" motif is different in that it points toward prosperity after all evil is destroyed.

The "Book of the Watchers" describes a period of judgment and the ultimate doom for those who conduct themselves wickedly, and it also discusses the reward for those who live righteously. The judgment was in the form of the flood, which correlates with the flood narrative in the Book of Genesis. Just as Noah and his family were saved from the flood, the righteous will be protected from the wickedness on the earth.[74] The agricultural metaphor in the Book of the Watchers teaches that the faithful will increase from one seed of righteousness, and their continual growth will cause a peaceful world. In this new world, vineyards and oil trees will produce much wine and oil. This imagery of the righteous planting is eternal and will never be uprooted. However, it should be noted that this scene is for a future era where there will be a garden oasis, blessings, and prosperity.[75]

An observation can be made that 1 Enoch's presentation of "the vine" motif differs from the presentation of the major prophets in the Old Testament. The major prophets of the Old Testament identified Israel as "the vine" in their passages. In 1 Enoch, "the vine" motif was more about the blessings that followed the cleansing of the earth. The Old Testament prophets wrote to encourage the Jews to turn back to God because Israel had strayed away from God and followed the gods of the surrounding nations.

The Book of First Enoch and the minor prophet Hosea contain a similar theme of restoration and blessings for the Israelites. In Hosea (2:15), the prophet uses "the vine" to explain

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[74] Jennifer Pantoja, *The Metaphor of the Divine as Planter of the People: Stinking Grapes or Pleasant Planting?* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 185.

[75] Ibid.

the blessings that Israel will receive only after God re-establishes His relationship with them. The Book of First Enoch does not contain this same sentiment as the prophecy from the minor prophet Amos. The two books show a distinct difference. Amos' prophecy (5:17) reveals that "the vine" motif will be where God will reveal his wrath on Israel as a judgment against them. Even though there is a common theme with Hosea's prophecy and a distinct difference from the prophecy of Amos, 1 Enoch provided a more in-depth view of the quantifiable amounts of the blessings that "the vine" would receive once the earth was cleansed.

The Book of Fourth Ezra

Ezra's name is in multiple ancient works in Jewish and Christian faiths. Over the centuries, there has been confusion over the lack of uniformity and terminology. The present view of 4 Ezra is that it is a book composed of chapters 3-14 of a work titled "*Liber Quartus Esdrae*" (or *Ezrae*) in the Latin Vulgate. In some manuscripts, the work is titled "II Esdras" or, from the Anglo-Saxon perspective, "Second Esdras."[76] With the difficulties of the terminology in the Vulgate, the book is divided into three books: chapters 1-2 contain work related to Christianity and are titled "5 Ezra". Fourth Ezra, the Jewish Apocalypse, has chapters 3-14, and chapters 15-16, which may also be Christian related, is titled "6 Ezra."[77] The text is divided into seven visions. However, the visions found in 4 Ezra 4-6 are the only visions considered accurate and received by the seer. One of the visions occurs while the seer is awake, and two come through dreams. Visions one through three are dialogues between Ezra and an angel, and vision

[76] Juan Widow, *The Origins of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible, An Analysis of Josephus and 4 Ezra* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 87.

[77] Ibid.

seven depicts Ezra's zeal for writing several sacred books.[78] This division of the books is not a hypothesis because 4 Ezra does not include either 5 or 6 Ezra.

Regarding genre, 4 Ezra is an apocalypse with no disputes. Fourth Ezra's role as an apocalypse is essential, and it was used to define the genre in Semeia, which is also apocalyptic.[79] The Latin text in the Vulgate is the most commonly utilized version, followed by the Syriac version, which is related and may come from the same Greek manuscript tradition. There is also an Arabic version translated into Greek; another translation was written in the Oriental language from the Greek translation.[80] The Latin version also contains four additional chapters, two up front and two at the end, making up a 16-chapter book in the Vulgate appendix referred to as "2 Esdras."

These chapters are missing from some of the versions of 4 Ezra and, with some textual issues, are an attempt at making the book Christian.[81] Scholars commonly agree that 4 Ezra was written close to the end of the first century C.E. The support for this date is internal. It is in the eagle's vision (4 Ezra 10:60-12:36), which discusses the Flavian emperors and was written near the time of the death of Domitian in 96 C.E. The author of 4 Ezra may have resided in Rome

[78] Kenneth Jones, "4 Ezra and the Delayed Punishment of Rome," in *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 41.

[79] Juan Widow, *The Origins of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible, An Analysis of Josephus and 4 Ezra* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 87.

[80] Kenneth Jones, "4 Ezra and the Delayed Punishment of Rome," in *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 44.

[81] Jonathan Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 27-28.

because Ezra was in Babylon. Babylon was equivalent to Rome. If this is accurate, it may have brought Ezra close to Josephus.[82]

The most common view for the location of 4 Ezra is that it was written in Judea, or perhaps the author was from there since the book was written in Hebrew. The first part of 4 Ezra reveals three conversations between Ezra and the angel Uriel (4 Ezra 3:1-9:25). The second part pertains to the three visions seen by Ezra, and it also contains the interpretation of the visions by Uriel (4 Ezra 9-26; 13:58).[83] The originality of the conversations in 4 Ezra is self-contained, but they also have a skeptical characteristic. Ezra poses the question of justice to God as Job did, but Ezra, at first, is not ready to accept the revelations that are revealed. However, in the fourth unit, this changes, and Ezra recognizes the angel's point of view. This acceptance is in the context of "the eagle" and "the man from the sea" visions. After understanding these visions, Ezra becomes a mediator and shares the revelations with the people.[84] Fourth Ezra is considered to be the conclusion of the book.

Fourth Ezra contains three dialogues, three visions, and a conclusion. The sevenfold sections of 4 Ezra have been chiefly agreed upon because it is how the text reads.[85] The first three visions are dialogues, and the seventh begins with a conversation between Ezra and God and concludes with the restoration of the Torah and Ezra's assumption of heaven. Some authors

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[82] Ibid., 91.

[83] Ibid., 91-92.

[84] John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2016), 201.

[85] Juan Widow, *The Origins of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible, An Analysis of Josephus and 4 Ezra* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 87.

believe that the term visions may be inaccurate and that the book should be broken down into "parts" or "episodes." These terms are vague, and it seems more proper to divide 4 Ezra into large categories containing "dialogues" or "visions." It is important to note that "episode" has a technical meaning that will not correlate to a sevenfold breakdown of 4 Ezra.[86]

The first section of 4 Ezra 3:1-5:19 provides the location of Ezra and places him in Babylon, where he is on his bed praying to the Lord regarding what has happened to Israel (4 Ezra 3:1-36). Ezra is perplexed because he is confused about the fortunes of both Babylon and Israel. And after reviewing the history of the nations of Israel from Adam to the present, he wonders if Babylon is thought to have been better than Israel.[87] In 4 Ezra 4:1, God sends the angel Uriel to him. The angel attempts to inform Ezra that he cannot understand how God moves, but Ezra seeks to answer why Israel was captured by the Gentiles (4 Ezra 4:2-25). The angel begins to discuss with Ezra the things that will happen in the last days and provides Ezra with signs (4 Ezra 4:26-5:12).[88] However, Ezra continues complaining, and his questions are specifically regarding the final judgment, how it will happen, and for how long. Ezra does not dispute Uriel's responses but asks for more information, which Uriel answers using nature. The completion of the dialogue with the eschatological signs disrupts the natural order.[89]

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[86] Ibid., 91-92.

[87] Kenneth Jones, "4 Ezra and the Delayed Punishment of Rome," in *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 42.

[88] Juan Widow, *The Origins of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible, An Analysis of Josephus and 4 Ezra* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 93.

[89] Karina Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra: Wisdom Debate and Apocalyptic Solution* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 106.

After the first conversation between Ezra and Uriel, Ezra is commanded to fast and pray for seven days (4 Ezra 5:13-15). Ezra wakes up in chapter 5:14, and it is there that the reader learns that the prayer and the dialogue occurred while Ezra was dreaming.[90] In the second vision (4 Ezra 5:21-6:34), Ezra meditates on Israel's being God's chosen people, chosen from the multiple groups of people to dedicate themselves to God. Unfortunately, the relationship between God and His people is troublesome because they have been delivered to the Babylonians. The angel reappears and asks Ezra if he loves Israel more than God.[91] Ezra and the angel converse about the world's end, and the angel reaffirms that it is coming. Then, a voice that sounds like a roar of many waters is heard, and the ground begins to shake. The signs of the last days are detailed. The third vision is the longest (4 Ezra 6:35-9:25).[92] In these dialogues with Ezra, Uriel never claims to be all-knowing; in fact, he reiterates on several occasions that he is entirely different than God. In the dialogue with Uriel, Ezra calls him "Lord" or "sovereign Lord," Uriel speaks for God mainly in the first person. An example is in 4 Ezra 6:6, where Uriel, speaking for God, states, "Through me alone and not through another, just as the end shall come through me alone and not through another." The visions eventually replace Uriel, and Ezra continues conversing with the Highest.[93]

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[90] Juan Widow, *The Origins of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible, An Analysis of Josephus and 4 Ezra* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 93.

[91] Kenneth Jones, "4 Ezra and the Delayed Punishment of Rome," in *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 42.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Karina Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra: Wisdom Debate and Apocalyptic Solution* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 108.

After reviewing the history of the beginning of the world, starting with Adam, Ezra reiterates God's claim that the world was established for His people. Ezra asks why Israel does not possess what was supposed to be its inheritance, but instead, they have been placed under the authority of other nations.[94] Ezra is informed that there are two worlds, one that contains a plethora of trials and a world that will be in the future where those that are will live in peace and harmony. Upon hearing these words, Ezra considers that those who will see this peaceful and harmonious life will be a small number. He believes that most will face torment because of how they have lived. Ezra then begs for God to have mercy because not all of Israel has lived in sin, and perhaps the whole sum of God's people can be saved because of the righteousness of a few (4 Ezra 8:24-36).[95] The angel redirects Ezra and tells him to focus on the signs that will reveal when the world is coming to an end. The fourth vision is (4 Ezra 9:26-10:59), a turning point in the text, and it begins similarly to the preceding three visions, but in this vision, there is an interruption when Ezra takes note of a woman who is mourning.[96] This woman is not ordinary; she represents a heavenly Zion, discovered after the conversation when she is transformed into a city. Ezra's conversation with the woman bridges the conversations with Uriel and the dream vision in which Uriel serves as the interpreter.[97] Ezra, upon hearing the woman's story, changes his role to being a comforter and, with a severe tone, scolds the woman for solely focusing on her

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[94] Kenneth Jones, "4 Ezra and the Delayed Punishment of Rome," in *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 42.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Karina Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra: Wisdom Debate and Apocalyptic Solution* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 159.

problem while Zion has suffered much more. He advises the woman to keep her grief to herself and bear her calamities, and if she accepts God's verdict, she will get her son back and be exalted among women. However, she refuses, and Ezra again persists, but it is during his persistence that the woman transforms into a city.[98] The angel tells Ezra what he has just seen; the woman represents "Zion." The interpretation and symbolism regarding the woman's story are then explained to Ezra. However, the son's death is never precisely defined. Ezra is invited into the city and enters it. The fifth vision is (4 Ezra 11:1-12-51), the vision of the eagle.[99]

After these visions and dialogues between Ezra and Uriel, 4 Ezra contains two more visions along with an authorization of Ezra to write down what has transpired. The first is the "Eagle Vision," which correlates to Daniel seven regarding a kingdom that is eviler than most and considered the last of the worldly kingdoms.[100] The following vision is the "Man from the Sea," which pertains to the future of the Messiah, who uses divine power to battle evil forces and ultimately bring peace to the earth. These visions, however rich they are, reveal that the earth must suffer destruction by God because of its wickedness, which will increase over time until God's divine judgment is rendered.[101] Ezra dreams of seeing an eagle come from the sea. It has twelve wings; eight smaller wings grow out of it and go against the twelve. This eagle has three heads. Over time, the wings disappear one at a time; the first head disappears, and the third head

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[98] John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2016), 207.

[99] Kenneth Jones, "4 Ezra and the Delayed Punishment of Rome," in *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 43.

[100] Dereck Daschke, "Chapter Three. 4 Ezra: Because Of My Grief I Have Spoken,*" City of Ruins Mourning the Destruction of Jerusalem through Jewish Apocalypse,* Vol. 99. (Leiden Brill, 2010), 136.

[101] Ibid.

eats the second one. A lion comes from the forest and confronts the eagle because of its wickedness.[102] The lion announces to the eagle that the Most High had created it as the last of four beasts, allowing it to reign over the world as a segue way to "the end of the times."[103] The lion further lists the atrocities that the eagle caused and emphasizes its arrogance and haughtiness, and the lion reiterates to the eagle that the ages of the Most High have concluded.

At this conclusion, the earth will be revitalized, refreshed, and free from the eagle's dominion. During the dialogue between the eagle and the lion, Ezra witnesses the eagle vanishing until it is completely burned, leaving the earth in tremendous fear.[104] The angel informs Ezra that this eagle represents the fourth empire Daniel saw in a vision. The wings and heads represented rulers, while the lion was the Messiah.

Vision number six is in 4 Ezra 13:1-58, and it begins with a man coming from the sea who flies over the earth, and those who hear his voice tremble in fear. Men from around the world come together to go and fight against the man. The man creates a mountain from an unseen place and sits on top of it to meet his attackers.[105] The man sends a stream of fire from his mouth that burns his attackers to ashes. The man then gathers a less hostile group of people. The angel interprets and informs Ezra that the man is the Messiah, those that came against him are

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[102] Kenneth Jones, "4 Ezra and the Delayed Punishment of Rome," in *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 43.

[103] Lorenzo DiTommaso "Dating the Eagle Vision of 4 Ezra: A New Look at an Old Theory" in *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 20 (1999): 12-13.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Kenneth Jones, "4 Ezra and the Delayed Punishment of Rome," in *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 43.

the evil nations, the mountain is Zion, and the less hostile group of gathers are the ten tribes taken into captivity by the Assyrians.[106] Both visions of the Eagle and the Man from the Sea illustrate the victory of Israel over its enemies, with the Messiah being the center. The vision of the Man from the Sea also reveals the ingathering of the lost tribes, and the mourning woman develops the revelation of Zion on earth in the messianic time.[107]

The eschatology of the visions is a national one derived from prophetic traditions, which is different from Uriel's point on individual salvation, which is based on eschatological wisdom. The visions are examples of apocalyptic theology that show that the Most High is in control of humanity and will soon end suffering.[108] The last vision is in 4 Ezra 14:1-49, and in this vision, Ezra is commanded by God to write the books of the Law and publish them for the people. However, before this commissioning by God, Ezra had informed the people that they were in their current predicament because they left following God's laws. Mercy would only be achieved by them disciplining themselves and following the laws. Ezra then drinks a cup that contains a fiery liquid, and afterward, he writes ninety-four books; twenty-four were published for all to read, and the last seventy were set aside for only those considered wise to read.[109]

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[106] Ibid.

[107] Karina Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra: Wisdom Debate and Apocalyptic Solution* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 160.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Kenneth Jones, "4 Ezra and the Delayed Punishment of Rome," in *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 43.

Fourth Ezra 5:23-27

In 4 Ezra's second vision, "the vine" imagery appears, starting in 4 Ezra 5:23 after Ezra has fasted, mourned, and wept for seven days. Verse 5:23 reads, "And I said, 'O, sovereign Lord, from all the forests of the earth and from its trees thou hast chosen for thyself one vine.'" This verse, along with verses 5:24-5:27, pertains to Ezra asking God in the context of Israel being punished for why God chose one vine, one region, one lily, one river, Zion, one dove, one sheep, and one people. God gave them the Torah, and Ezra's inquiry concludes with asking why "the one" has been given over "to the many" and why that one root has been devalued and scattered amongst the many.[110] In Ezra's contrast between "the one and the many," he suggests that if God hates his people, they should be punished by his hand (4 Ezra 5:28-30). Perhaps a better word than "hates" is "repudiates," similar to how God described his feelings towards Israel in chapter two of the book of Hosea.[111] Even so, it is clear that Ezra does not have a problem with Israel being God's elect; he is struggling with the idea of Israel being God's elect and their fate. Uriel responds by informing Ezra that it is impossible to discover the goal of God's promises to Israel. Uriel continues the dialogue with Ezra by redirecting the conversation toward eschatological judgment.[112] In Ezra's mind, Israel is God's people, the only people who have believed in God's covenants. In verse 5:29 of 4 Ezra, "the many" are described as those against God's promises, implying that every other nation was at odds with God.[113]

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[110] Ibid., 59.

[111] John Collins, "The Idea of Election in 4 Ezra," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (2009): 84-85.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Karina Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra: Wisdom Debate and Apocalyptic Solution* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 128.

"The Vine Motif" in Fourth Ezra

A series of biblical examples teach God's preferences for one thing out of its class; these are not all symbolic of Israel, but many symbols lead to this concept. For example, "the vine" in verse 5:23 is the most common symbol representing Israel, but other symbols have biblical connotations. Another example is the lily in 5:24 of 4 Ezra and Hosea 14:5, the dove in 4 Ezra 5:26, and Psalm 74:19. These symbols show Israel's election and God's love for them as a people.[114]

An observation can be made that "the vine" motif, as seen in the book of 4 Ezra, contains some of the same concepts from the major prophets from the Hebrew Bible. For example, 4 Ezra is similar to Isaiah 5:1-7 in that it identifies Israel as the chosen people and illustrates God's judgment against Israel. In addition, 4 Ezra utilizes imagery identical to Ezekiel 17:1-10. In this text, Ezekiel uses a narrative that involves the parable of "the eagles" and "the vine." It should be noted that even though 4 Ezra shares some similar concepts with Isaiah and Ezekiel, there is no mention of "the vine" imagery in the book of Ezra in the Old Testament. "The vine" imagery extends beyond the Hebrew Bible and is carried on through this pseudepigrapha book of 4 Ezra.

The Book of Fourth Ezra and the minor prophets of Hosea and Amos also contain some corresponding material. For example, the "vine" motif from 4 Ezra identifies Israel as "the vine," and the concept of Israel being God's chosen people is in the minor prophets. From Hosea's prophecy, there is initially suffering identified (Hos 2:12), then restoration by God (Hos 2:15). The prophecy from Amos (Amos 5:17) goes further into the suffering of Israel. A difference between the books is the prophecy of Hosea (Hos 2:15), which depicted a change of God's heart

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[114] Ibid.

resulting in "the vine" motif representing a literal blessing of vineyards. In the book of Amos (Amos 5:17), God's wrath is revealed, and "the vine" motif represents a place that should have been joyous, now becoming where God's wrath is.

The narrative from 4 Ezra 5:23-30 reveals the uniqueness of Israel through God's eyes. God chose one vine, one region, one lily, one river, one city, one dove, one sheep, and Israel as one people. In this passage, "the vine" motif is equated with Israel; the region is the land, and the river is the Jordan. However, there is no one city identified, but from all of the cities that have been built, Zion is the city that is identified as being consecrated.[115]

The Book of Second Baruch

The Books of 2 Baruch, 3 Baruch, and 4 Baruch are considered a continuation of Jeremiah or the "Paralipomena Jeremiah." These books draw much of their material from the prophet Jeremiah and the events in A.D. 70.[116] These books focus on the sufferings of the generations living in the Holy City after the Romans conquered it. Third Baruch briefly covers the destruction of Jerusalem and further discusses the cosmos. 2 Baruch and 4 Baruch center their material on the historical events that consumed Jerusalem in A.D. 70 in its entirety. Second Baruch and 4 Baruch cover the events before, during, and after Jerusalem fell to the Romans.[117]

Second Baruch was written because the word of the Lord came to Baruch and informed him that Jerusalem was facing devastation because of its many sins. Baruch questioned God's

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[115] Philip Church, *Hebrews and the Temple: Attitudes to the Temple in Second Temple Judaism and in Hebrews* (Boston: Brill, 2017), 203.

[116] Kenneth Jones, "4 Ezra and the Delayed Punishment of Rome," in *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 79.

[117] Ibid.

divine plan in his distress; however, God was not fazed by his questioning of Jerusalem's destruction.[118] There is uncertainty regarding whether Baruch was concerned with the righteous or humanity. However, God's concern with the destiny of those He declares righteous is undeniable. God eventually corrects Baruch's thinking; the rights of dominion are secure for those living in this era but will belong to those obedient to God in the future.[119] Seeing that God's decision could not be changed, Baruch gathered Jeremiah and the other leaders of Jerusalem to inform them of what God had spoken. The following day, the Chaldeans surrounded the city, prompting Baruch to leave immediately.[120]

Baruch found himself sitting under an oak tree, feeling distressed over what was transpiring with Jerusalem. A strong wind lifted him to see above the city wall. Baruch saw angelic beings holding torches at each corner of the city and one angel removing items from the "holy of holies" and placing them in the "earth's keeping." Then, the angels were commanded to overthrow the walls, and a voice was heard inviting the enemy into the city.[121] Jerusalem's destruction is a disaster, and the humiliation caused by the Gentiles is real. In the text, there is a powerful lament (2 Baruch 10:1-12:5) that reveals how deep the grief from the destruction as.[122]

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[118] Ibid., 82.

[119] John Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2015), 132.

[120] Kenneth Jones, "4 Ezra and the Delayed Punishment of Rome," in *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 82.

[121] Ibid., 83.

[122] John Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2016), 216.

Even though there is hope after the lament, Baruch informs the Babylon rulers that this state of affairs is temporary and that God's wrath will eventually deal with them. God's everlasting care for Israel is never in doubt; those that God deems righteous are spared, the holy vessels are protected, and even the Gentiles will not be allowed to violate the city walls.[123] Baruch would reenter the city only after the Chaldeans carried away the people, including King Zedekiah, into Babylon's captivity. Both Baruch and Jeremiah were spared from captivity. However, God spoke to Jeremiah and informed him that he must go with the captives to Babylon, and Baruch was tasked with staying in Zion to be shown what God had planned to do at the end of the days.

When Jeremiah went into captivity, Baruch lamented for some time, but he eventually began to focus on Babylon and talked about their future problems.[124] Baruch would subsequently find himself on Mount Zion having a conversation with God, where God would inform him that he would live for a while and witness the Lord's administration of retribution to the nations. While in this conversation, Baruch would ask questions regarding the value of righteousness and ultimately discover that due to Jerusalem's captivity, which he believed was more righteous than other nations, God would make his understanding of righteousness clear. God would answer Baruch in two parts: first, the law makes a man responsible for his actions because he knows the law. Second, God informed Baruch that the righteous would receive their reward in the coming world if they persevered in the present world.[125]

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[123] Ibid.

[124] Kenneth Jones, *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 83.

[125] Ibid.

After God and Baruch spoke, Baruch was tasked with praying and fasting to receive further revelations.[126] Baruch prays for a quick revelation of God's glory; he is distressed by humanity's vanity and short life span. God reveals to Baruch that He will finish what He has started. Twelve periods of oppression will follow, but the time of salvation will come with the advent of the Messiah. After the messiah has been resurrected and returns to heaven, the dead shall rise, and the final judgment shall occur. Baruch informs the elders that the temple in Zion will be destroyed one more time, and then it will be reconstructed permanently in glory.[127]

The Book of Second Baruch is known as a Jewish apocalyptical and eschatological book written in Palestine because of the Second Temple destruction in A.D. 70. Second Baruch is also known as "The Apocalypse of Baruch, the son of Neriah." As the scribe to the prophet Jeremiah, Baruch writes with authority in the last part of his life at the end of the first temple period.[128] However, it is known that 2 Baruch also contains material that discusses the destruction of the Second Temple and the destruction of Jewish power and worship in the first centuries. Second Baruch has multiple narrations, including prayers and laments, visions, interpretations of the visions, public addresses, and speeches. The last ten chapters of 2 Baruch are an epistle titled the "Epistola Baruch."[129] Baruch's actions, as seen in the biblical book of Jeremiah, painted a picture of who he was, and as such, it is not surprising that his story would become a pseudonym. There

[126] T. C. Vriezen, and A. S. van der Woude, *Ancient Israelite and Early Jewish Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 619.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Liv Lied, *The Other Lands of Israel Imaginations of the Land in 2 Baruch* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 1.

[129] Ibid.

is some overlap between the stories of Baruch in the biblical accounts and the books that bear his name; the significant difference is that 2 Baruch is a story that Baruch himself is telling. Second Baruch contains multiple dialogues between God and himself, and he wrote them from his perspective.[130] God spoke with Baruch in Jeremiah 45, giving him a divine promise that he would not perish due to the exile. Baruch talked with God, led the exiled people, and prompted them to confess sin and pray (Bar 1:5-3.8).[131] The narratives and dialogues between God and Baruch in 2 Baruch unite the composition. In addition, the conversations between God and Baruch help Baruch understand the current problem and provide him with an in-depth understanding of how God plans to redeem Israel. The continual dialogue between God and Baruch eventually convinces him that all that is happening to Israel is part of God's master plan, including the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.[132]

God instructs Baruch not to worry about Israel's current dilemma because he will be allowed to witness these catastrophes, which are necessary for Israel's redemption.[133] Those who continue to show obedience toward God and His laws will live past the current afflictions of the wicked world, and they will be redeemed in both the Messianic era and in the world of incorruptibility, along with the righteous who will be resurrected from the dead. During the last days of Baruch's life, he prepared his followers for the judgment and redemption of the righteous

[130] Matthias Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism in Late First Century Israel: Reading 'Second Baruch' in Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 128.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Liv Lied, *The Other Lands of Israel Imaginations of the Land in 2 Baruch* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 1.

[133] Ibid., 2.

by writing letters to the tribes that had been dispersed. Baruch pleaded with them to return to God and His righteousness so they could participate in the upcoming blessings.[134]

In the Hebrew canon, Baruch is referenced in four chapters of the book of Jeremiah. He is first mentioned twice in Jeremiah 32:12, 14."[135] Baruch was tasked with overseeing the deeds from a purchase of a field in Anathoth. Jeremiah directed him to place the documents into a container so that they may be protected for a lengthy amount of time (Jeremiah 32:14). Baruch is next referenced in Jeremiah 36:4, where Jeremiah directs him to write down the words that God has given him on a scroll and further to read those words to the hearers in the temple (Jeremiah 36:5-6).[136] After the scroll is read, King Jehoiakim destroys it; his rejection of Jeremiah's message illustrates a finality. The hope of the people repenting is cut short due to King Jehoiakim's actions.[137] However, God commands Jeremiah to dictate another scroll; it may be that God was showing the king that his actions would not be able to stop the word of God.[138] After he finishes his reading, he is asked by the leadership to meet with them (Jeremiah 36:13-19).

When the leadership heard what was read, they immediately perceived the danger of Jeremiah's words that Baruch read. When King Jehoiakim heard them, he ordered the capture of both Jeremiah and Baruch (Jeremiah 36:26). Due to God's protection, the attempt to capture

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[134] Ibid.

[135] Sean Adams, *Studies on Baruch: Composition, Literary Relations, and Reception* (Germany: De Gruyter, 2016), 5.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Pauline Viviano, *Jeremiah, Baruch: Volume 14* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 38.

[138] Ibid.

them was unsuccessful (Jeremiah 36:32).[139] Baruch is not heard from again in the book of Jeremiah until chapter 43, following an accusation from Jeremiah. In chapter 42, it seems that Jeremiah was acting from his time of waiting and hearing from the Lord; this passage conflicts with chapter 43 because there is no trace of Baruch in chapter 42. It twists the roles of the prophet and his secretary, making the secretary seem dominant in the scenario.[140] The text does not clearly state why Baruch is blamed for causing Jeremiah's reaction toward the people; Jeremiah is consistent with his message. Both Jeremiah and Baruch end up in Egypt, but it is believed that they went to Egypt because they were taken, even though that is also not clearly stated in the text.[141]

Baruch is mentioned lastly in Jeremiah 45. Jeremiah receives a word from God to encourage Baruch in his sorrow (Jeremiah 45:3). The text clarifies that Baruch is a little too eager, given all that is happening around him (Jeremiah 45:4-5). Baruch is a close companion to Jeremiah, the prophet, and he is subordinate to him. Baruch receives God's message from Jeremiah and writes what God has given Jeremiah on a scroll. Baruch depends on Jeremiah and does not act individually until he complains about what is transpiring with his fellow countrymen.[142]

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[139] Sean Adams, *Studies on Baruch: Composition, Literary Relations, and Reception* (Germany: De Gruyter, 2016), 5.

[140] Ibid., 6.

[141] Pauline Viviano, *Jeremiah, Baruch: Volume 14* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013), 41.

[142] Sean Adams, *Studies on Baruch: Composition, Literary Relations, and Reception* (Germany: De Gruyter, 2016), 6.

Second Baruch 36:3-10

The imagery of "the vine" is in 2 Baruch 36:3 – 40:3, and it is in a vision that Baruch has after he lamented in the previous chapter because the holy place is in ruins. "The vine" imagery is in verse 36:3 and takes place in a forest. Accompanying "the vine" is a "fountain" that begins to flow gently but increases in velocity until the entire forest is submerged, including the mountains.[143] The only remaining item is a cedar tree. "The vine" and "the fountain" enter the forest in 36:6 in preparation to converse with the cedar. In verses 36:7 – 36:10, "the vine" begins to have a monologue with the cedar in which the cedar is accused of being wicked, taking things that were not his, not showing compassion, exhibiting evil power over those afar, drawing people into wickedness, and self-exaltation.[144] The forest surrounded by mountains symbolizes the Roman empire, and the Messiah and his kingdom are represented by both "the vine" and "the fountain." The cedar tree is cut down and brought to "the vine," which condemns it for its wickedness and reduces it to ashes.[145]

The interpretation of "the vine" imagery in 2 Baruch is in verses 38:1 – 40:4 after Baruch wakes up from his vision and prays. The understanding of the vision begins in 39:2, where God informs Baruch that the forest surrounded by the mountains represents the word. In verses 39:3 – 39:5, each of the four kingdoms is described as defeating Zion, then each kingdom succeeds the

[143] Michael Stone, and Matthias Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Translations, Introductions, and Notes* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 106.

[144] Ibid.

[145] Richard Bauckham, "The Messianic Interpretation of Isa. 10:34 in the Dead Sea Scrolls, 2 Baruch and the Preaching of John the Baptist," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 2, no. 2 (1995): 207.

next, and the fourth kingdom will be the worst and last and exalt itself higher than the cedars.[146] In verses 39:6 – 39:7, the forest is described as retaining secrets and those who choose to live in their iniquities. However, there will be a time when the forest will fall, leading to the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom, described as a "vine" and a "fountain."[147] In verses 39:8 – 40:1, the meaning of the cedar is further mentioned along with the words that were conveyed by "the vine," which are that the last ruler of the fourth kingdom will eventually be bound and taken to Mount Zion, where the Messiah will judge him for all of his evilness along with his cohorts. Verses 40:2 – 40:3 teach that the last ruler after the judgment from the Messiah will be killed, and the Messiah will then protect the people, and His rule will stand eternally. Verse 40:4 affirms that this is the interpretation of the vision.[148]

"The Vine Motif" in Second Baruch

A key component of "the vine" imagery is that Israel is metaphorically referred to as a plant, and most specifically, Israel is referenced as a vine. As a vine, God may discard, plant, or uproot Israel. Some texts connect the imagery directly to the land. For example, Psalm 80:8-9 in the King James Version reads, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land."[149] The idea of planting and uprooting Israel in the land goes beyond the concept

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[146] Michael Stone, and Matthias Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Translations, Introductions, and Notes* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 106.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid., 107.

[149] Liv Lied, *The Other Lands of Israel Imaginations of the Land in 2 Baruch* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 279.

of Israel, identified as a vine. The idea of planting and uprooting is not just applicable to Israel but to other nations as well. Jeremiah 1:10 demonstrates how this concept may also apply to foreign nations. Nations that are uprooted are usually uprooted because they are wicked or they have acted wickedly toward Israel.[150]

After the fountain destroyed everything until the cedar was the only thing left, the cedar was brought to "the vine" and convicted of its acts. "The vine" then proceeded to pronounce judgment against the cedar, informing it that it would be tormented at the end of time. When the cedar burned, "the vine" grew, and the valley was engulfed with flowers.[151]

An observation can be made that 2 Baruch's use of "the vine" motif partially correlates to the Old Testament prophets. However, one key element absent from the Old Testament major prophet's narrative of "the vine" motif is the concept of the Messiah and his role. An example is in 2 Baruch, where "the vine" is referenced as the Messiah and "the fountain" is referenced as the force that destroys the wicked forest and the cedar, a reference to the last sinful kingdom. After the destruction described in 2 Baruch, there is a scene where "the vine" changes the valley into flowers.[152]

Second Baruch's identification of the Messiah as "the vine" is also absent from the minor prophetic books of Hosea and Amos. The prophecies of Hosea and Amos are centered on the destruction and restoration of Israel. Second Baruch's prophecy focuses on "the vine," judging

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[150] Ibid.

[151] Kenneth Jones, *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 84.

[152] Liv Lied, *The Other Lands of Israel Imaginations of the Land in 2 Baruch* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 280.

the cedar tree, symbolizing the Roman empire. The vine further destroys the Roman empire, filling the valley with flowers representing one of "the vines' many blessings.

It has been suggested that the author did not write the vision in 2 Baruch but that it may have come from an independent origin and was added by the author. This belief is because this vision contains no references to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. Even though the Roman Empire was punished, there is no direct connection to any actions that were taken against the Jews nor any references to anything that happened to the Holy City.[153]

However, the vision changes this argument by showing that Romes might was a cause for its arrogance and further cause of God's wrath upon the empire. Through this vision, the author can reveal his understanding of the sins of Rome, which was its oppressive manner towards all peoples. The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and its temple and were ultimately destroyed by God. The Romans in the Cedar vision are more wicked, but the Jews, as God's elect, are privileged.[154]

Summary

This chapter revealed that "the vine" imagery is not only utilized in the Hebrew and Christian canons. It is also used in the Pseudepigrapha books of 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch. Enoch as a biblical character is found in Genesis 5:21-24; his text in the Book of 1 Enoch, which discusses "the vine" imagery, is located in chapter 10:19. First Enoch's complete narrative of "the vine" motif is illustrated in chapter 10:1-11:2. The chapter pertains to four angels being commissioned to bring discipline to angelic beings that have fallen. This imagery is in "The

[153] Kenneth Jones, *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 98.

[154] Ibid., 99.

Book of the Watchers," It references Israel being blessed once the fallen angels, depicted as the originators of evil, have been destroyed. The Book of the Watchers explains how the fallen angels prompted mankind's downfall and how the Most High deemed that corrections would be made. Enoch served as the intermediary between God and the fallen angels, but God informed Enoch that they, along with their children, would be punished. Contextually, "the vine" and its meaning correlate to the Hebrew bible's meanings in many ways, except Enoch's visions contain more details regarding eschaton.

In 4 Ezra, "the vine" imagery is in chapter 5:23. Ezra is struggling with Israel being punished and questions why God has chosen one vine, one region, one lily, one river, one sheep, one people, that is now being devalued and given over to the Gentiles. 4 Ezra also depicts the problematic impression from the prophet regarding Israel's punishment. In addition, the reminder that Israel is God's elect is also a familiar concept seen in this passage. One key difference between 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra is how Ezra weighs "the one" against "the many," illuminating Israel. 4 Ezra has some concepts and imagery similar to Isaiah and Ezekiel. Still, there is no mention of "the vine" motif in the Old Testament book of Ezra.

In 2 Baruch, there are a lot of similarities that are in 4 Ezra. Baruch's use of "the vine" imagery is in 2 Baruch 36:3-40:3, and it also references the destruction of Israel, the four kingdoms, and how the Messiah will ultimately rule. However, "the vine" in 2 Baruch's narrative is the Messiah, and in his narrative, "the vine" along with "the fountain" confront the cedar tree, which is a representation of Rome. "The vine" not only convicts the cedar for its wickedness but also destroys it. The concept of "the vine" being identified as the Messiah is how 2 Baruch differs from the major prophets in the Old Testament. Second Baruch also includes material that reveals what will happen after the last wicked kingdom is destroyed.

A commonality between all three pseudepigrapha books is the idea that Israel is God's elect, and "the vine" imagery supports that idea. In addition, visions, dialogues with God and angels, and dreams seem to be the methods of communication. All three pseudepigrapha books agree that God punished Israel and that Israel would be redeemed. Still, the books of 1 Enoch and 2 Baruch illustrated what a post-eschaton would look like.

Pseudepigrapha books provide some excellent support for validating a work. Still, a reader must be reminded that these books do not appear in the Hebrew or Christian canon because of their pseudonymous nature, and there is also the concern that they teach a separate doctrine.

Chapter Five

The New Testament Pericopes

Introduction

In examining "the vine" imagery in the Old Testament, the imagery appeared in multiple biblical books, and it was revealed that it was deeply embedded in the lifestyle of the Israelites. "The vine" imagery is in the Old Testament as functioning in a literal sense, metaphorically, as an identity, and as a symbol. In the Gospel of John, all of the historical meanings and references of "the vine" come to their climax under the declaration from Jesus when He stated that He is "the true vine" in John 15. Chapter 5 will continue the examination of "the vine" imagery in the New Testament. The New Testament, in its entirety, will not be examined. This chapter will focus on the pericopes of Matthew 21:33-43, John 15:1-5, Revelation 14:18-20, and Jesus' "I am" sayings. These specific choices are because the three pericopes and the "I am" sayings are interconnected and support the thesis.

The Gospel of Matthew

In the early stages of Christianity, the Gospel of Matthew was the most widely disseminated out of all the gospels. Beginning in the second century, Matthew's narrative regarding the life of Jesus was in homilies, pastoral letters, theological writing, and catechetical instructions. Even after the other gospels had become recognized as authoritative, the orthodox leaders still held Matthew in higher esteem. Matthew's gospel is held in higher esteem because the early church usually turned to Matthew first when contemplating the life of Jesus. Another reason the Gospel of Matthew might be first is that it was the first Gospel that bore the name of one of the twelve disciples.[1] The gospel of Matthew is well organized, and that assists the reader

[1] Curtis Mitch, and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 21.

or listener with memorizing the concepts that Matthew offers. The Gospel of Matthew paints a balanced picture of Jesus, illustrating His miracles and candid discourses. The Gospel of Matthew also connects the Old and New Covenants, providing teachable instructions for the early Christians on what it meant to live as Christians instead of living off Jewish traditions.[2]

Even though the Gospel of Matthew was a favorite with the early church, modern scholars consider the Gospel of Matthew to be a revision of the Gospel of Mark. This concept was considered in the "testimony of Papias," and this patristic text asserted that the gospels of Mark and Matthew were based on oral traditions and handed down by Peter and the other apostles who were with Jesus. This assertion led to the belief that the Gospel of Mark was based on Peter's religious instructions. Similarly, scholars considered Matthew's Gospel as the Gospel that authentically preserved Jesus' sayings, which were initially documented in Hebrew or Aramaic and translated into Greek later.[3]

Upon further review of the "Testimony of Papias," the document revealed that its main focus was not the sources of material contained in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. It attempted to explain the differences between the Gospels and highlight the Gospel of Matthew. The author of the "Testimony of Papias" concluded that Matthew contained two contradictory features. The Gospel seemed to be a literary enhancement compared to Mark, and because of its wording and position, it appears to be Hebrew-centered and a primitive Jewish Christian Gospel.[4]

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Bartosz Adamczewski, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Hypertextual Commentary* (New York: Peter Lang, 2017), 11-12.

[4] Ibid.

In the twentieth century, the two-source hypothesis dissipated much of the tension between scholars and the relationship between the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. This two-source hypothesis asserted that there was a mutual correlation between Matthew and Luke and the hypothetical "Q source." In the twenty-first century, the relationship between Matthew and Luke has been challenged. Scholars now believe the relationship between Matthew and Luke against Mark is better treated as a synoptic hypothesis.[5]

Conservative scholars know that the writers of the Gospels used multiple sources. For example, the genealogies of Matthew and Luke were probably written based on records kept in the temple. In the first chapter of Luke, he asserts that many had written factual information concerning Jesus Christ. This illustrates that Luke could have written his Gospel based on multiple sources. The individual writers using different sources is a probable conclusion. However, critical scholars view sources as writings that skilled editors have joined together to create their accounts on religious matters.[6]

Matthew 21:33-43

Chapters 21-23 of the Gospel of Matthew review church history and discuss Jesus's old and new relationships with Israel.[7] Matthew 21:33-43 also prophesies the relationship between the early church and the Jewish people. The question of Israel's standing concerning the church is essential to the church's survival. The Apostle Paul wrestled with this issue in Romans 9-11.

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[5] Ibid., 14.

[6] Louis Barbieri, "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Gospels*, ed. John Walvoord (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook 2018), xi.

[7] Frederick Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary, Volume 2* (Chicago: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2007), 20q.

Chapters 21-23 of Matthew's Gospel contain similarities to Romans 9-11.[8] Matthew 21:33-43 reads,

> Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

This pericope is in the form of a parable. In this parable, Jesus provides a symbolic synopsis of the history of salvation. God the Father is identified as the householder. The vineyard is God's chosen people, Israel, and the tenants are Israel's leaders, past and present. The fruit represents repentance and an obedient life dedicated to God. The two sets of servants represent the major and minor prophets from the Old Testament. Beatings, killings, and stoning are the forms of execution of these prophets. Jesus is the son in the parable, and this is a vague reference to himself, and it is also the first public revelation of his true identity. The killing of the heir in this parable correlates to Jesus dying on the cross.[9]

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Sean Douglas, *Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth. Preaching the Word* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 375.

The story, in its simplistic form, illustrates how much God loves the world and how he chose Israel from all other people groups to bless and be His example for all nations to learn how to follow God. God brought the Israelites to life. He cared for them and rescued them from slavery in Egypt.[10] While in the wilderness, He provided for them, gave them the Law, and inspired them to build cities, temples, and altars. He then sent the prophets to lead them, but the people, instead of doing what God was requiring, killed the prophets. In God's divine patience, He sent other prophets who met the same fate as the previous prophets. Finally, God sent His son Jesus, who was plotted against, falsely accused, arrested, and killed. Jesus was killed outside the vineyard or, as the Hebrews state it, "outside the gate."[11]

In verse 33 of chapter 21, Jesus informs the leaders that they should listen attentively to this parable because it is about them. This verse illustrates the attentiveness that the landowner takes in building the vineyard. He put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower, and once it was completed, He rented it out. In verse 34, once it is harvesting time, the landowner sends out his slaves to collect his share of the harvest.[12] One of the slaves was beaten, the other killed, and one was stoned. In verse 36, the landowner sends out more slaves, but the results are the same. Osborne asserts that, in reality, the landowner would have sent soldiers.[13] If the landowners were Romans, then the offenders would have been either killed or placed into slavery. The landowner's long patience correlates to God's patience with Israel

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[10] Ibid., 376.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Grant Osborne, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2010). 845.

[13] Ibid., 846.

throughout the Old Testament. In verse 37, the landowner sends his son because he has his father's authority. In verses 38-39, the son is thrown out of the vineyard and killed. In verses 40-41, Jesus asks the leaders what they think the landowner will do to the tenants when he comes. They answered that the landowner would destroy those who committed the offense.[14]

Matthew 21:33-41contains several elements that mirror Isaiah's vineyard prophecy in Isaiah 5. Matthew, like the Old Testament prophet Isaiah, writes because he is concerned about the relationship between God and Israel.[15] Both pericopes illustrate a vineyard, with Israel identified as the vineyard planted by God. In Isaiah's prophecy, Israel sins against God, ultimately producing terrible fruit identified by Isaiah as "bloodshed" and "a cry" instead of the excellent fruit of righteous judgment and justice. Isaiah's prophecy reveals that God will destroy the hedge and wall surrounding the vineyard and let natural causes destroy it. However, this may only be a temporary punishment for Israel as they will not permanently be destroyed or rejected by God.

The contrast between Matthew's and Isaiah's narratives is that in Isaiah, the unfruitful people are the tribe of Judah, but in Matthew's narrative, the vineyard and vines produce good fruit.[16] The same way the leaders in Jesus' era mistreated him was the same way the leaders treated the prophets. The Jewish leaders understood that Jesus was referring to them in this parable. In Jesus' time, the priest owned the lands; some added houses or joined fields together (Isaiah 5:8), but in Matthew's narrative, they represent the wicked tenants who should be

[14] Ibid., 847.

[15] Anthony Saldarini, *Matthew: Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Chicago: Eerdmans, 2021), 109.

[16] Ibid.

punished. The landowner eventually destroys the wicked tenants and rents the vineyard to others who will produce good fruit.[17]

In verse 43, Bock asserts that the "kingdom of God" is not in the Hebrew Bible. However, God's rule is understood as the scriptures declare. God is king. He rules over Israel, the earth, and creation. He sits on a royal throne, and His reign is indefinite. Matthew alone uses the term "kingdom of God" twenty-seven times. Each use of the term is referent to the narrative in which it is used. Considering the term contains one meaning, the reader misses out on subtle differences in the different narratives.[18]

The parable provides critical information regarding the kingdom of God being taken away from Israel and given over to a "new nation" that will produce good fruit. This "new nation" is the church composed of both Jews and Gentiles. In this verse, the term "*ethnos*" in Greek connotates the new nation as singular instead of plural. The term is used 162 times in the New Testament and has two meanings: "nation" and "Gentile." The Gentile references point to non-Jews or groups that are foreign to Israel and do not have faith in God. The term also refers to non-Israelite Christians.[19] This intriguing use of "*ethnos*" in a singular form rather than the plural

[17] Samson Uytanlet, and Keim-Kok Kwa, *Matthew: A Pastoral and Contextual Commentary* (Carlisle: Langham Creative Projects, 2017), 218.

[18] Darrell Bock, *Jesus the God-Man: The Unity and Diversity of the Gospel Portrayals*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 16-22.

[19] William Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2006), 405.

ethne points toward a transformed Israel which has Jews and Gentiles in it, which was promised by the prophets.[20]

The Gospel of John

John's unique presentation of Jesus has caused much discussion about its place amongst the other Gospels. Clement of Alexandria stated that "the other evangelists had written down the things that regarded the body," John, encouraged by his pupils and moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote a spiritual Gospel. The Gospel of John differs from Matthew, Mark, and Luke because of its authorship, content, structure, and nature. John wrote a different kind of Gospel.[21] Interpreters of the Gospel of John continue to be perplexed and often use descriptive words like "maverick," "enigma," or "riddle" to attempt to explain the specific details of Jesus' ministry. However, not all of John's readers find it hard to interpret. Still, one can easily see several differences from the other Gospels, which could prompt questions regarding the origin and character of the Gospel.[22] Some of the questions that may be asked are: how does one account for the Gospel of John? What exactly is this Gospel? Is it an eyewitness account of Jesus' life and ministry or a source from an unattested tradition about Jesus? Is the Gospel of John a theological interpretation with the narrative cast of Jesus and His life as the focus? Is the Gospel of John a different view than the view presented in Matthew, Mark, and Luke?[23]

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[20] Frederick Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary, Volume 2* (Chicago: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2007), 20u.

[21] Marianne Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, First edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 2.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

John's gospel does not directly identify who his audience is, and there are a few speculative reasons why John may have written his Gospel. Kruse argues that John wrote his gospel with the purpose of showing readers that Jesus was the Christ and to prompt them to have faith in Jesus and receive the gift of eternal life as it is recorded in John 20:31. Also, John's gospel was meant to strengthen the Jewish believers that their unbelieving countrymen were persecuting.[24] However, there are other thoughts regarding the purpose of the Gospel of John. For example, Irenaeus believed that the apostle John was the author and that the gospel was written in Ephesus; if so, it is plausible that the audience was the people who were living in and around Ephesus at that time.[25] They would have been a community made up of Diaspora Jews and Gentiles. John would have written his gospel with the thought of proselytizing and not limiting his gospel to one exclusive group. This concept is supported by the genre of John's book, which, when it is all said and done, John's gospel is a gospel that promotes the worldwide truth of the good news of Jesus Christ.[26]

John's Gospel is filled with information that illuminates the Jewish world in the first century.[27] John was a Jew from the Holy Land and was familiar with the land's geography and Jewish liturgical and biblical traditions. Theologically, John was acquainted with symbols such

[24] Colin Kruse, *John* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 21.

[25] Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 84.

[26] Ibid., 85.

[27] Francis Martin, and William Wright, *The Gospel of John* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture) (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 18.

as light and dark, also revealed in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In addition to the gospel being written for believers, John was also written for Gentiles, hoping they would become believers.[28]

The temple destruction in AD 70 was a devasting time for Jewish people; it left a void for how they would continue their rituals and worship. It is plausible to consider that the temple destruction may have been another one of the reasons for John's writing of his gospel.[29] Similar to the Babylonian exile, which caused a crisis in Jewish worship as they were removed from the First Temple, the destruction of the Second Temple would have also prompted a change in Jewish worship. John may have written because he saw an opportunity to evangelize Jews and share the good news with those in the Diaspora. John's evangelism method would have centered on Jesus Christ being crucified and a risen Messiah who would have replaced temple worship and fulfilled the symbolism included with the Jewish festivals.[30]

Another possible reason for John's Gospel was to support the early Gentile mission and counter the Gnosticism movement, which began in the latter half of the first century. John wrote to Jews and Gentiles who were considering Judaism. Since his Gospel was written approximately fifty years after the church had begun, it is reasonable to assume that missions were also a focus

[28] Ibid.

[29] Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 84.

[30] Ibid.

of John's writing.[31] According to Beutler, the Gospel was written to strengthen one's faith in Jesus and lead one to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.[32]

Chapter 15 of John begins suddenly, and there is no transition leading up to Jesus' final "I am" saying. This reveals that this speech by Jesus is still in progress from the previous chapter. Jesus uses the vine and branches analogy to describe the relationship between God the Father, the Son, and their new community.[33] In the previous biblical books, several narratives show that Israel and Judah were supposed to be a fruit-bearing vine, but they failed. In John 15, Jesus is pictured as the source of all that anyone will need if they abide in him so that they may produce good fruit pleasing to God. John 15 shows that Israel and Judah failed, but those who abide in Jesus' love and continue in His word will bear fruit to God's glory.[34]

John 15:1-5

John 15:1-5 from the King James Version reads, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me

[31] Ibid., 85.

[32] Johannes Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing CO., 2017), 16.

[33] Jey Kanagaraj, *John: A New Covenant Commentary* (Havertown: Lutterworth Press, The, 2013), 180.

[34] Ibid.

ye can do nothing." This statement by Jesus was in response to a question that Judas had asked (John 14:22). Jesus explains the unity between Him and His believers and how it is sustained by exalting God the Father and through the Holy Spirit. Jesus uses imagery that would have been common to the disciples historically and in their era. Jesus also describes how He fulfills Israel's destiny for God's salvific purposes.[35]

In this pericope, "the vine" image also supports the mission theme in this chapter in two ways. "The vine" itself was an illustrious symbol in Israel. A golden vine draped over the temple porch and minted coins contained "the vine" symbol during their revolt against Rome in A.D. 68-70.[36] As noticed in the previous chapters of this dissertation, the Old Testament contains a plethora of allusions to "the vine" imagery. However, Psalm 80 may have the most references that support Jesus' claim to being the "true vine." Within Psalm 80, there is a blend of the text that teaches about Israel being a vine from Egypt and "the son of man whom thou made strong for thyself."[37] However, due to Israel failing to be the light for the non-believers and failing to bring God's salvation to the ends of the earth, "the vine" was metaphorically burned with fire. Israel's ultimate failure was its interest in following the gods presented by their neighbors instead of applying God's idea of missions.[38]

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[35] Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 241.

[36] Bruce Milne, *The Message of John Here Is Your King!* (Westmont: IVP Academic, 2020), 219.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

Edwyn Hoskyns argues that Jesus' statement that He is “the true vine” is a denial of Jewish claims and the fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Jesus is “the vine” of God and not Israel, and Jesus’ disciples, not the Jews, are the branches of “the vine.” The church supersedes the synagogue.[39] In an article written about Israel in John’s Gospel, John Painter uses John 15:1 as a verse to argue against John describing how Jews might be considered “the true Israel” because if Jesus is “the true vine,” then the people of Israel can no longer be regarded as such. If both Hoskyns and Painter are correct in their positions, then “the future of Israel” is not something that Jesus brings tradition into, but instead, He is a reality that swallows tradition up. However, the fact that Jesus is understood to be a figure of eschatological fulfillment presents an obstacle to their ideas because of what is written in John’s Gospel.[40] Jesus is portrayed as the word, He is king, He was sent from God, He is a Shepherd, a sufferer, the living water, the bread from heaven, and the Messiah. With all these descriptive titles, interpreters should delay concluding that John changes in John 15:1 from describing Jesus as a deliverer and provider of the eschatological blessing to the people of God to John writing that Jesus replaces Israel with All of the symbolism and characters. Jesus is the one who fulfills the hope of Israel, and because of this fulfillment, John 15 should be read with this narrative in mind.[41]

The imagery of “the vine” has another purpose.[42] “The vine” is a practical plant designed to bear fruit. It essentially is designed to give its “lifeblood,” its flower is small in stature, but it

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[39] Christopher Blumhofer, “Crisis: John 11-20.” *In the Gospel of John and the Future of Israel* Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 188-189.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Bruce Milne, *The Message of John Here Is Your King!* (Westmont: IVP Academic, 2020), 219.

provides a large amount of fruit, and when that fruit becomes mature, the value of "the vine" increases, and in a moment, it is marvelous. Then, it is torn down, and "the vine" is cut down to its stem.[43] In Jesus' time, Josephus described the golden vine that hung over the entryway to the Jerusalem temple as "completely covered with gold, and the entire wall around it was also in gold."[44] Above the golden vines on the entryway were grape clusters the height of a man. Jesus' teaching on "the vine" may have been given in the temple courtyard, and as a backdrop, the golden vine may have been shining in the moon's light.[45]

Early practices of viticulture provide essential background information. Two methods were involved in viticulture; "the vines" had to be trained and pruned. Pruning was not a painless process for the viticulturist, and it seems more harmful than productive at first glance. However, orchardists and farmers teach us that this procedure suits the plant or vine and allows for more fruitful production.[46] Vines had to be trained by being allowed to follow along on the ground until the branches that bore fruit were lifted using rocks or poles to receive air to produce better grapes properly.[47] Another method was for the vines to begin on poles, and the branches lifted to allow a better chance of producing good fruit. Pruning "the vines" was also another part of the life of a viticulturist. Pruning usually occurs in the spring when the vines are flowering. The

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Colin Kruse, *John* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 310.

[45]Ibid.

[46] Frederick Bruner, *The Gospel of John: a Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 849.

[47] Colin Kruse, *John* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 310.

process of pruning entailed at least four steps: removal of vigorous shoots, properly cutting off the growing shoots, removal of flowers or grape clusters, and the removal of suckers.[48]

In the first verse, Jesus states He is the "true vine." He identified Himself as the authentic Israel in person. This is the last of seven "I am" statements and may be considered the most magnificent. Jesus is as key to humans' livelihood as a root and trunk are to a tree.[49] The "I am's" in Greek are *Ἐγώ* and *εἰμι* and mean "I" or "I am, exist," and these meanings make Jesus' self-identification even more critical.[50] In this passage, Jesus uses imagery to explain who He is and how to answer the purpose of human existence. When Christians connect to Jesus of Nazareth, they believe they are in contact with the core of reality. Jesus also defines God the Father as the Husbandman within this verse.[51] The Husbandman carefully tends to the believers and tries to draw non-believers to himself through Jesus. Jesus, in this chapter, is at the center, whereas God the Father is in the background.[52]

God is depicted as the one who prunes "the vine" in verse 2 of chapter 15. Jesus is speaking to His disciples, identified as the branches in the following verses. An implication could be that in this pericope, there are those who are not faithful and those who need further

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[48] Ibid., 311.

[49] Frederick Bruner, *The Gospel of John a Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 848.

[50] Richard Goodrich, and Albert Lukaszewski, *A Reader's Greek New Testament* Third edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 581.

[51] Frederick Bruner, *The Gospel of John a Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 848.

[52] Ibid.

pruning.[53] This is evident from the disciples' actions in previous chapters and verses and the further revelation that they did not fully understand what was happening to Jesus.[54]

From this pericope, God desires fruit, as mentioned multiple times in verses 2, 4, 5, 8, and 16 of Chapter 15. There are at least three levels of fruit bearing mentioned in the text. The first mention of "fruit" is found in the second verse, and then there is "more fruitful," which is also found in the same verse. Lastly, "much fruit" is located in verses 5 and 8. In Greek, the word is "*karpos*," which literally and figuratively means fruit plucked.[55] The fruit that God wanted from Israel was the fruit that produced obedience, righteousness, and justice. Subsequently, verse 2 also teaches that every believer who claims to be Jesus' disciple may not be a faithful follower.[56] Judas Iscariot, who witnessed Jesus' signs and miracles during his earthly ministry, is a prime example of someone not being a true disciple. Nevertheless, he would go on to betray Jesus. Believers are designated as branches; they are considered dead and removed if they do not produce fruit. In Palestine, gardeners can be found pruning "the vines" in their vineyards every year by cutting off the dead vines that contain no life and trimming the living ones so they can continue to produce more fruit.[57]

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[53] Martin Scott, *John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 95.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Muhammad Schmidt, *A Greek-English Reference Manual to the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament Based on Tischendorf's Greek New Testament Text and on Strong's Greek Lexicon with Some Additions and Amendments* (Hamburg: Disserta Verlag, 2018), 273.

[56] Edwin Blum, "John," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Gospels*, ed. John Walvoord (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook 2018), 485.

[57] Ibid., 20.

MacArthur argues that true believers are those who bear fruit. Contextually, the focus is on the eleven disciples; even so, the imagery illustrates a concept that includes all believers down through time. The branches that do not produce fruit are those who may proclaim to be believers, but because of their lack of fruit production, this may mean that they have not truly accepted Christ and salvation, and as a result, they have no connection to "the vine."[58]

Hart adds that this verse teaches that there are two kinds of branches: one that is fruitless and another that bears fruit. The fruitless branch equates to a person associated with Jesus who has no actual union with Him and bears no fruit. This fruitless branch is thrown away, and because it now lacks connection to any nourishment, it dries up and is ultimately burned. The branch that bears fruit abides in Jesus and is pruned to bear more fruit.[59] Blum asserts that "burned" branches are about those who profess Christianity but are not truly saved, and they are judged. They are a spiritually dead branch because they are not connected to Jesus, "the true vine," and they will be condemned to damnation.[60]

Even though the disciples did not quite understand completely, verse 3 of chapter 15 teaches that they had been washed literally, as seen in chapter 13:10 and by their response to Jesus' words.[61] Jesus' remark may have been about the earlier event of foot washing when He

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[58] John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time* (Nashville: Tomas Nelson, Inc, 2005), 1406.

[59] John Hart, "John," in T*he Moody Bible Commentary*, ed. Michael Rydelnik, and Vanlaningham Michael, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 2661.

[60] Edwin Blum, "John," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Gospels*, ed. John Walvoord (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook 2018), 486.

[61] Martin Scott, *John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 95.

informed the disciples that they were clean in John 13:10. He may have been reiterating that they were clean because the disciples had listened to Him, and they were now cleansed, pruned, and He had cut them back. Whoever purposefully listens to Jesus' words is being cut to their core.[62] Jesus' words cut, cleanse, purify, and purge. All disciples have experienced this power from Jesus, often with sharp words. Church Fathers such as Luther remind believers that Jesus' words have cleansing power for disciples and that His words are not just for suffering or bad experiences.[63] Additionally, all disciples are cleansed by faith in Jesus and the application of His words. The public display of baptism cleanses them, and they are washed when they hear the word repetitively.[64]

The key to showing that they were Jesus' disciples is their "abiding," which explains the mutual indwelling and direction illustrated in Chapter 15:4.[65] The purpose of "abiding" is so those who do can produce fruit continually. Abide in Greek is *μένω,* and it means "be in a situation for a length of time, remains, stays, being in a location whether it is geographical a dwelling, person, or thing, or continuation in a state or condition, or sameness."[66]

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[62] Frederick Bruner, *The Gospel of John a Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 849.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Martin Scott, *John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 95.

[66] Frederick Danker, and Kathryn Krug, *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 227.

In chapters 14 and 15, John used two terms, "indwelling" and "abiding." Both terms correlate with "branches" abiding in Jesus as "the true vine." Those who abide are more than new members of God's kingdom; they also become a crucial part of it.[67] Abiding in Jesus as "the vine" is not just staying connected; believers are supposed to be an extension of Him.[68] It is vital to notice that these verses point to a continual dependence on Christ and the believer having a relationship with Him. Those who come to believe in Christ must abide in Him, and the relationship between Christ and the believer will never fall short on Christ's side.[69]

A question may be asked: how can believers "abide" or "remain?" First, believers can achieve this by continual exposure to His word and love and by keeping the commands given in Scripture with an emphasis on loving one another, as Jesus demonstrated (John 15:1-17).[70] Jesus expressed His love by sacrificing himself on the cross, the most significant expression. Second, believers can follow this kind of love and should be willing to show each other. In this pericope, love is the most essential fruit a disciple can share.[71]

Unfortunately, the type of fruit produced is unidentified, but by following Jesus' teachings, things like witnessing and leading others to follow Christ are implied. The second "I

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[67] Gordon Fee, and Robert Hubbard, *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible* (Chicago: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2011), 760.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Matthew Henry, *The Gospel of John-Complete Bible Commentary Verse by Verse* (Balneário Rincão: Grupo Oxigênio Ltda-ME, 2016), 2d.

[70] Andreas Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 242.

[71] Ibid.

am" in this pericope leads to a discussion regarding the type of fruit produced and who will make it. However, this does not remove the critical element of needing to be attached to Jesus. Verse 6 teaches that a branch not connected to "the vine" is useless and becomes withered and burned.[72] This is a natural course of the image of the vine dressing; if it is discarded, it is fit for burning only. A key consideration to remember is that Jesus is only talking to insiders and not the "world." Some had detached themselves and could not bear the proper fruit because of this detachment. Again, we look to Judas Iscariot, who was with Jesus but betrayed him for money. The disciple that abides will be able to continue to serve Jesus and will receive the support needed from God.[73] The term "abides" or "remain" is utilized multiple times in this chapter, forty times in John's complete Gospel, and repeated at least twenty-seven times in John's epistles, illustrating its importance. The terms may mean accepting Jesus as savior, continuing and persevering in one's belief, and believing and being obedient. Without faith, God will not come; without God in an individual's life, no spiritual fruit can be produced.[74]

In verses 5-6, an illustration of the importance of the mutual dwelling between Jesus and His disciples shows how being fruitful is achieved. These verses also describe what happens when the relationship with Jesus has not been completed.[75] At least three possible interpretations are rendered from Jesus's symbolic words to clarify a burned vine. First, the "burned" branches

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[72] Martin Scott, *John* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 96.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Edwin Blum, "John," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Gospels*, ed. John Walvoord (Colorado Springs CO: David C. Cook 2018), 486.

[75] Ibid.

may be Christians who have lost their salvation. Second, the "burned" branches may be believers who lost their rewards but not their salvation. Third, the "burned" branches may be those who falsely profess Jesus as Lord, but they do not have a genuine connection and are spiritually dead and headed toward eternal damnation.[76] This concept is illustrated in verse 6, which describes the plight of an individual who does not abide in Jesus; that individual is thrown away, withers, and cast into the fire. This well-known language is found in multiple New Testament texts (Matt 3:10–12; 5:22; 7:19; 13:40, 42, 50; 18:8–9; Mark 9:43, 48). From the Old Testament, the thought of fire and texts that deal with a vineyard, or "the vine," are common in Ezekiel 19:12, 14; Ps 80:16.[77]

From this pericope, nothing in the text says that the fruitless branch is cut off, only that the useless branch will be either "taken away" or "thrown out." If a branch does not "bear fruit" or "abide" in Jesus, it is plausible that they are already dead, but this is not the doing of the husbandman or Jesus.[78] These are seen as those who decided to leave the community of believers. It is reasonable to consider that this concept is reflected in 1 John 2:18-19 which reads, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Stott argues that John

[76] Ibid.

[77] Johannes Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2017), 307.

[78] Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub., 2010), 489.

referred to these verses as those who left the church because they had not persuaded the church leaders to follow their direction.[79] Since they failed in achieving their objective, they removed themselves from the body of Christ. John explains that they demonstrated their true character by removing themselves from the body. John was very familiar with this deception and may have remembered Judas Iscariot's deception as he wrote this text.[80]

In this pericope, Jesus describes the importance of the communion between Himself and the disciples. "The vine" is a biblical image of Israel given by God.[81] Jesus is the perfect example of Israel's calling to obey God. Jesus obeyed the Father's will up to His death on the cross. The disciple who chooses to follow Jesus is a branch and is supposed to practice the same unconditional obedience.[82]

God the Father wants to care for the fruitful vine because it produces love. The disciples who do not produce works that show love will be cut off from "the vine" by God the Father. For the disciples who produce works that show love, God the Father will prune them so they can produce even more works of love.[83] The verb "purgeth" means "to cleanse from filth to clear by pruning, prune."[84] The theme of purging is also found in the Old Testament book of Ezekiel

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[79] John Stott, *The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 109.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Francis Martin, and William Wright, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 255.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] William Greenfield, *A Greek English Lexicon to the New Testament* (Boston: H.L. Hastings, 2021), 89.

15:4, where the branches are removed and thrown into a fire at the yearly pruning. However, in the book of Ezekiel, pruning is meant as destruction, punishment, or discipline, but in John's gospel, it is intended to ensure the vine is fruitful.[85]

God the Father was already working in Jesus' disciples by using His word to purify them, which they received and followed. For the disciples to display God's love, they had to stay attached to "the vine." Abide in me, and I in you was Jesus' direction because He is "the true vine," and His disciples were the branches.[86] John's teaching on "the vine" and the branches illustrates the vital union shared between Jesus and His disciples, which flows over to every believer. John teaches that life's flow comes from Jesus as "the vine" and reaches out to his disciples. Jesus is the key to being the source of life and empowering His disciples. As disciples, they must depend on Jesus because if they do not, Jesus said, "Without me, you can do nothing."[87]

In John's pericope, there are three key elements to consider, "the true vine," "the vinedresser," and why there is a purging process.[88] Jesus is "the true vine," He compares himself to "the true vine." His fruit is far sweeter and more significant than any other fruit from any other vines or trees. Although Jesus was hated by his kind and publicly humiliated, He still produced

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[85] Marianne Thompson, *John: A Commentary,* First edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 324.

[86] Francis Martin, and William Wright, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 255.

[87] Ibid., 256.

[88] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 13-21* (Washington D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 96.

the best fruit.[89] Jesus as "the vine" is true. True in this text is "*alēthinos*," which means genuine, authentic, or real.[90] True or truth in Western culture centers around the idea that truth may be proven with logic or science. Still, in the New Testament, truth deals with faithful, genuine, and dependable behavior instead of behavior that hides or conceals things.[91] Often, what is true is as different from its resemblance as a man is from his picture. Sometimes, what is true is as different from what is unnatural or damaged as wine is from vinegar, which is spoiled wine.[92] When Jesus states that He is "the true vine," He uses the term "true" to differentiate Himself from the unnatural or damaged vine, which was the title the Jewish people held for themselves.[93]

Jesus's statement of being "the true vine" is also an instance where He shows humility by comparing Himself to a lowly vine. Two of His many divine names are the "Sun of Righteousness" (Mal 4:2) and "the Bright and Morning Star" (Rev 22:16), yet He compares Himself to a vine.[94] As "the true vine," Jesus was planted on the earth because He was the word that was made flesh (John 1:14). Jesus is "the true vine" because His truth is in opposition to

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Michael Burer, and Jeffrey Miller, *A New Reader's Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2008), 229.

[91] Ralph Martin, and Peter Davids, *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Development* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1184.

[92] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 13-21* (Washington D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 97.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Matthew Henry, *The Gospel of John - Complete Bible Commentary Verse by Verse* (Balneário Rincão: Grupo Oxigênio Ltda-ME, 2016), 2a.

anything counterfeit. He demonstrates what a fruitful plant looks like, and He is renowned, unlike a wild vine that deceives those who gather it. Unfruitful trees may lie, but Jesus, as "the vine," will not lie or deceive. Whatever greatness there is in anything created by mankind, it is but a shadow in comparison to the grace of Christ Jesus.[95]

Israel had previously been identified as "the vine," producing an inferior product because they produced wild grapes.[96] Jesus states that God the Father is the vinedresser. If Jesus is "the vine" with a divine nature, God the Father would also be "the vine" like Jesus. Equally, if Jesus is "the vine" because of His human side, then God the Father is connected to Him as "the vinedresser" to "the vine," and Jesus Himself, as God the Son, is also a vinedresser.[97]

Given the parables in Mathew 21:33-43 and John 15:1-7, it is not surprising that God the Father is depicted as the vinedresser, and this imagery is also seen in the Old Testament. Israel is described as God's vineyard, illustrated in Psalm 80:8-18 and Isa 5:1-7.[98] As the vinedresser, God the Father cultivates "the vine." Cultivating can take one of two methods. The first is to cultivate and make something better, like a field. The second is cultivating to improve oneself, which leads to cultivating wisdom.[99] Conversely, God cultivates to make believers better by

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[95] Ibid.

[96] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 13-21* (Washington D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 97.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Pub 2010), 485.

[99] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 13-21* (Washington D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 97.

rooting out the evil in their hearts. Augustine stated, "God opens our hearts with the plow of his words, plants the seeds of the commandments, and harvests the fruit of devotion."[100] God the Father, as "the vinedresser," is focused on "the vine" and the attached branches. "The vine" in this passage is in a state of perfection, so the focus of the vinedresser is not "the vine" but the branches. The branches from "the vine" contain the same nature as "the vine," so those who believe in Christ are united like branches to "the vine." [101] As "the vinedresser," God has multiple priorities; He cares for "the vine" and the branches. It is God who plants, waters, and gives the increase. He kept His eyes on Christ, who is the root, lifted Him, and made Him flourish out of the dry ground. God also keeps His eyes on the branches by pruning them and watching over them to ensure that no harm comes to them. There has never been a vinedresser who is wise, watchful, and caring for His vineyard.[102]

God the Father is the vinedresser; His role is described: He "prunes" the good branches and "discards" the branches that do not produce fruit. The verbs utilized are not specific to the art of viticulture, and John may have written this way to keep with his style of discourse.[103] Some branches are cut off from Jesus because they sinfully conduct themselves, and others are cut off because they choose not to do good. To become fruitful or produce more fruit for God, He must

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[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid., 98.

[102] Matthew Henry, *The Gospel of John - Complete Bible Commentary Verse by Verse* (Balneário Rincão: Grupo Oxigênio Ltda-ME, 2016), 2b.

[103] Johannes Beutler, *A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing CO., 2017), 305.

remove things that stagnate growth, and He uses troubles and temptations to prune us and make us stronger.[104]

The takeaway from this pericope is that the relationship between Jesus and believers is continually abiding. Jesus is "the true vine," believers are the branches, and the connection between the branches of "the vine" and the main stem is a picture of that abiding. It is the entire identity of the branch's life.[105] There is no life if the branches are separated from the main stem. The sap and juice flow from the stem, maintaining the leaves, buds, blossoms, and fruit production. Should they be cut off from the primary source, they will die. Believers without Christ have no true life, strength, or spiritual power.[106] Believers in fellowship with Christ draw from Jesus a continual supply of grace, help, and faith. Believers are united with Christ, spirit-led, and can stand and preserve the Christian race. But everything good done by them is because of the union with Christ as their spiritual head.[107]

Chafer argues that even though "the vine" imagery in the Old Testament connected Israel and God, Christ is now "the true vine," as illustrated in John 15. Chapter 15 of John explains both a union and communion with Christ.[108] Believers are to abide in an unbroken relationship

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[104] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 13-21* (Washington D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 98.

[105] J. C. Ryle *Bible Commentary - the Gospel of John* (Balneário Rincão: Grupo Oxigênio Ltda-ME, 2015), 211.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Lewis Chafer, and John Walvoord, *Major Bible Themes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2010), 17.

with Christ; the expected results will be pruning, prayer, joy, and truth. The critical truth to "the vine" and branches is that the believer will not have the joy of Christian living nor bearing any spiritual fruit unless they stay connected to Jesus, "the true vine."[109] Scott adds that the importance of the believer's abiding is that without constant abiding in Christ, there will be no production of spiritual fruit. Even though the fruit is not identified, the believer should be a witness and bring other unbelievers to Christ. The spiritual fruit that the faithful believer will eventually bear is the fulfillment of the command to love, inferred in the subsequent verses in John 15.[110] Christ is the true vine, and believers are the branches where the fruit is produced. However, before fruit can be made, the believer must abide in Christ, and Christ must abide in the believer. After all, the commandment in John 15:1-7 is to "abide," not to bear fruit.[111]

The "I am" Statement's

One underdeveloped method in studying the Christological picture of Jesus in John's Gospel is the role of the "I am" sayings. Many authors have written various works that provide origin and background and examine the meaning of these sayings individually.[112] These discussions usually follow the structure of studying the sayings by clarifying the difference between using the predicate or nonpredicate in the "I am" sayings in Scripture.[113] For this

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[109] Ibid.

[110] Martin Scott, *John (*Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 96.

[111] John Hart, "John," in T*he Moody Bible Commentary,* ed. Michael Rydelnik, and Vanlaningham Michael, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 2661.

[112] Stanley Porter, *John, His Gospel, and Jesus: In Pursuit of the Johannine Voice* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), 106.

[113] Ibid.

section, the texts that contain the "I am" statement will be reviewed as a group and not individually. The "I am" statements will be analyzed in this fashion because the "the vine" metaphor is in this group and contains collective and individual importance.

One of the ways to better understand Jesus as Lord and Savior is to analyze the "I am" sayings in the Gospel of John. There are several locations within the gospel where Jesus utters the words "I am," and sometimes they stand alone, and at other times, they are followed by a word or phrase to complete His thought.[114] For example, when Jesus declares that "Before Abraham was, I AM" in John 8:58, He takes upon Himself the divine name revealed to Moses during the burning bush narrative in Exodus 3:14, and He identifies Himself as God.[115] Another example is where Jesus utilizes the "I am" statements and a phrase to complete His thought, and this type of example is found in several passages in John's gospel; John 15:1 is an example where Jesus states that He is "the true vine." Each "I am" statement in the gospel teaches the reader about who Jesus is, and collectively, they reveal that Jesus is the great "I am." Jesus is God who came from heaven and became flesh; He lived with mankind to offer salvation to those who are lost.[116]

In these phrases, Jesus speaks in a method that aligns Himself with how God describes himself as the creator and sovereign from the book of Isaiah. These sayings illustrate Jesus'

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[114] John Fesko, *Who is Jesus? Knowing Christ through His "I Am" Sayings* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), 11.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Ibid.

distinct role as the revelation and way to the presence of God.[117] A proper interpretation of these sayings should include the Old Testament because, on their own, they can be interpreted as an ordinary way a speaker may identify him or herself. Within the gospel of John, they may also be interpreted the same; however, in John's gospel, they have a more distinctive usage. These sayings may reflect God's identification of Himself in the format of "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will be."[118] A name in Hebrew may contain a description of the person's character. 1 Samuel 25:25 is a prime example of this, and it is reasonable to believe that God's name is difficult for a human to understand and know thoroughly. The word "Yahweh" or *hāyâ* in Hebrew by itself is a third-person masculine singular of the verb "to be" in a future tense: "he will be." The subject and predicate that would describe who God is and what he will be are not defined.[119] The mystery of the name is further made vague even though it is referenced using common terms such as "I shall be," and even when adding a relative clause, the mystery remains because the elusive verb is repeated. Perhaps a reasonable method of defining God's name is to consider the phrase "I shall be who I shall be." This will allow one to safeguard the mystery of God as a divine being and His actions. Only God can truly affirm who and what He is.[120]

In the Hebrew Bible, "I am the one who is" defines God's existence as ongoing. A first-century exegete, Philo often called God "the one who is" or "that which is." Philo also

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[117] Marianne Thompson, *John: A Commentary,* First edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 156.

[118] Ibid.

[119] William Johnstone, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2019), 33.

[120] Ibid.

commented, "God really does not have a proper name to be spoken of, but simply "to be."[121] The Septuagint and Philo's use of the sayings infer that God's existence is understood and He simply is. Within John's Gospel, there are specific "I am" sayings that show that Jesus is as God is (John 8:58). The Old Testament contains several verses where God identifies Himself to both Israel and the patriarchs with "I am" statements. For example, in Genesis 15:7, God identifies Himself as the Lord; in Genesis 26:24, identifies Himself to Abraham as "I am the God of your fathers."[122]

Jesus's multiple "I am" sayings can be analyzed by placing them in a few categories. Some are connected with a predicate and reveal who He is and what He provides for believers. The sayings that contain the predicates are "I am the bread of life (John 6:35). I am the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5). I am the door for the sheep (John 10:7, 9). I am the good shepherd (John 10:11, 14). I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). And I am the true vine (John 15:1)." These statements by Jesus are self-identities, and they are statements that also identify with life.[123] Sometimes, these sayings contain both the positive and negative results of belief. For example, John 8:12 reads, "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."[124] Regarding content, the images attached to

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[121] Marianne Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, First edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 154.

[122] Ibid.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Joel Green, Jeannine Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 397.

the “I am” sayings work on a material level, emphasizing tangible truths. On a more in-depth view, these sayings move past the material and reveal Jesus’ true identity.[125]

With the predicates, the “I am” sayings provide an image that illustrates the relationship between Jesus and His believers, but this is considered more Christological than ecclesiological. This was a severe issue during John’s ministry. Still, Christology determines ecclesiology because believers are defined as having an allegiance to Christ and Christ alone to get to God the Father.[126] Most “I am” sayings contain a predicate pointing toward a relationship between Jesus and the believer that human understanding may be unable to comprehend. For example, Jesus as the “living bread” from heaven and “the bread of life” illustrates that people depend on bread as a fundamental need to live. Jesus asks that believers rely upon Him with the same need and determination to obtain it.[127] Other images supporting this are the Spirit as living water, Jesus as the giver of wine, and the sacrificial Lamb to be eaten. The synoptic Gospels also utilize some of the images, metaphors of light (Matthew 5:14), bread (Matthew 13:33), and drinking (Mark 10:38-39); however, only on occasions are the Synoptics using these metaphors to describe Christ.[128]

A similar category to the “I am” sayings with a predicate are the statements that provide a self-identification because a predicate can be derived from the passage's context. For example,

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[125] Ibid.

[126] Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John a Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 378.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid.

John 4:26 reads, “Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he,” or John 18:5 reads, “They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.”[129] Several additional passages use “I am” to depict self-identification; even so, these do not necessarily infer a Christological importance. However, with intentionality, John’s Gospel partakes in various possible meanings of “I am,” sayings including common ideas for the more theologically astute, all pointing to Jesus' divine self-declaration.[130]

A second category of the “I am” sayings are those that do not contain a predicate. The “I am” in these statements is a way the speaker acknowledges himself when he is responding to a question of identification: “Who is it?” or “Is that you?” or something similar.[131] There are a few occasions when Jesus would use “I am” to confirm He was there. For example, John 4:26 reads, “Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.” And John 6:20 reads, “But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.” It is possible that these types of sayings that do not contain a predicate would be essential had it not been for the “I am” sayings with the predicates.[132]

The sayings without predicates can also be known as absolute “I am” sayings. Jesus utilizes these statements to declare what He claims to be. For example, in John 8:24, Jesus declares to those who oppose Him, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins,” and in John 8:58 when Jesus said unto

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[129] Joel Green, Jeannine Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 398.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Marianne Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, First edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 157.

[132] Ibid.

them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."[133] It has been believed that the "I am" sayings in John's Gospel echo God's revelation to Moses found in Exodus 3:14, where God declares to Moses, "I am who I am." If Exodus 3:14 influenced John's use of "I am" in an absolute form, then that may have been done indirectly through other self-declarations from the Old Testament that may shed further light on interpreting Jesus' words.[134]

In the third category of "I am" sayings, Jesus uses the "I am" sayings without a predicate, and a verb for "know" or "believe" is followed by "that" plus an "I am." Examples of this utilization are found in John 8:24 and 8:28. Also, in this group, the "I am" sayings represent the object of what someone believes, which could change the perception of what all Jesus' "I am" sayings in John mean. To correctly interpret the "I am" sayings, beginning with the Old Testament and reviewing how God the Father self-identified may be appropriate.[135]

John's audience may have known and recognized the roots of the "I am" sayings. For example, Jesus claims to be the bread that came from the Old Testament, His claim to be the light came from Isaiah, and as the shepherd, it may have come from Jeremiah, and as "the vine," there are many Old Testament references.[136] While there may be some disagreement regarding a connection between specific images and where they align with Old Testament passages, the Hebrew Bible would have served as the most natural source for John's audience to consider for

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[133] Joel Green, Jeannine Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 398.

[134] Ibid.

[135] Ibid.

[136] Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John a Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 377.

interpretation. The images depicted from the "I am" sayings also would have been familiar enough to daily Mediterranean life that even those outside of believing would have understood the critical premise of the sayings, some even more precise than those who considered themselves biblically competent.[137]

John's use of the "I am" sayings and Jesus' self-identification come from the Greek; however, the meaning is also similar to the Hebrew meaning used for Yahweh from the Hebrew Bible. In his Gospel, John attempted to connect Jesus and Yahweh.[138] Dorothy Lee comments, "In seeing Jesus in the Gospel of John, one also sees God the Father because John only sees God's presence through the son." God, who was invisible, is made visible through John's Gospel. It must be noted that John is not claiming that Jesus is Yahweh, which is not seen in his Gospel. John continually shows the submission of Jesus to the Father and His will. John was attempting to show that Jesus was equal to God.[139]

The "I am" sayings are found in other religious cultures in the ancient Near East. Because of that, various parallels have been considered, some from the Isis Aretalogies, the gnostic texts from Hammadi, and Yahweh's statements in the Old Testament. Some scholars maintain a broad religious context for John's "I am" sayings to draw a culturally diverse reader into the Fourth Gospel's specific textual and symbolic ideas.[140]

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[137] Ibid.

[138] Brian Peterson, *John's Use of Ezekiel Understanding the Unique Perspective of the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 130-131.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Joel Green, Jeannine Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 397.

John's "I am" sayings have an equivalent concept found in the Old Testament and ancient Jewish Traditions. For example, Israel is seen as a flock (Psalm 77:20; 78:52) or a vine (Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5:1-7), and in John 10, two of Jesus' "I am" sayings correlate to sheep and a shepherd, and in John 15 Jesus' "I am" saying connects to being a "true vine." Perhaps John is attempting to use the imagery of the "I am" sayings to cause the audience to respond with a greater need.[141] "I am" may be the most direct definition of who God the Father and Jesus are in any language.[142] All the sayings have a common factor: they come from scriptural promises of God's salvation. And they all point toward Jesus eternally as the source and provider of life.

Three of the sayings point directly to Jesus regarding life (John 6:35; 11:25; 14:6), and two others indirectly refer to life (John 8:12; 10: 9-10).[143] In John 10:11, Jesus gives His life for the sheep, and the continual theme of life is also found in (John 15:1-2, 4-5) where Jesus declares that He is "the true vine," and He provides life to the branches so they will produce fruit. The connection between the life of Jesus and the "I am" sayings is seen throughout the Gospels as He performs His miracles. For example, Jesus feeding the five thousand illustrates His ability to be the "bread of life" from John 6:1-14. Another example is Jesus' claim that He is the "light of the world," which correlates to the healing of the man who was born blind, which is in the pericope of John 9:5-41.[144]

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[141] Ibid.

[142] Frederick Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2012), 989.

[143] Joel Green, Jeannine Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 397.

[144] Ibid.

The "I am" sayings in the Gospel of John are about the miracle signs. These sayings amplify the personal attributes of Jesus that allowed Him as God the Father's son to continue God's work, further allowing believers to receive eternal life and fellowship with God the Father.[145] Also, when Jesus states that He is "the true vine," He replaces Israel and becomes God's vineyard. The concept of Israel losing its identity as God's vine is mentioned in Jeremiah's prophecy in Jeremiah 2:21.[146] Jesus is the Son of God incarnate. He personifies the fullness of life, and believers who accept Him can share in that abundant life. In addition, the "I am" sayings illustrate Jesus' ability to give life and explain why His miracle signs are acts of re-creation before His resurrection. They point to eternal life for those who come to God the Father by having faith in Jesus.[147] These sayings describe the divine attributes of Jesus, and they were conceived by Him simply being "I am." As the son of God, Jesus is one with the Father and has the same divine attributes.[148]

Regarding John 15:1-5, it is essential to note that branches live in "the vine" but have a greater dependence than someone who lives in a house; branches entirely depend on "the vine" for fruit production and their continual way of life. Without Jesus, the disciples would not be able to produce godly fruit; similarly, Jesus would not be able to do anything without God the Father. Like the branches attached to "the vine," Jesus is the center of every believer's life who

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[145] Thomas Weinandy, *Jesus Becoming Jesus. Volume 2, A Theological Interpretation of the Gospel of John: Prologue and the Book of Signs* (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 92.

[146] Grant Osborne, *John Verse by Verse* (Ashland: Lexham Press, 2018), 230.

[147] Thomas Weinandy, *Jesus Becoming Jesus. Volume 2, A Theological Interpretation of the Gospel of John: Prologue and the Book of Signs* (Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021), 92.

[148] Ibid., 93.

calls upon Him as Lord and Savior.[149] Jesus offers a life of the resurrection that illustrates the coming age. Still, Jesus' life also requires complete dependence on Him, which affirms that His character is duplicated throughout every believer's life, and this way is distinct from early Judaism.[150] Those who are connected, fixed, and rooted in Jesus come to share in His nature by allowing the Holy Spirit to guide them; they are the branches.

This illustration of "the vine" and the branches connected to "the vine" is a choice.[151] Jesus is "the vine," and His relationship with the branches is relational. Believers are drawn toward Jesus by faith and now have their relationship established with God the Father.[152]

Symbolically, eating and drinking Jesus and complete dependence upon Him are similar to branches connected to a vine. This reveals that Christ is at the center of every believer's life and that all their life comes from His indwelling. This concept may come from the experience of the Spirit, which was spoken of by early Christian sources and also conveys the ideals of the early New Testament writers.[153] Whatever imagery the "I am" sayings provide, their collective imagery offers a picture that all hearers are familiar with. The images of these "I am" sayings

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[149] Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John a Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 319.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Joel Elowsky, "Book Ten." In *Ancient Christian Texts: Commentary on John: Volume 2*, ed. Joel Elowsky (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 210.

[152] Ibid.

[153] Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John a Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 320.

provided were familiar to the hearers in that era. These sayings also illustrate how John connected the study of Christ to the Christian experience.[154]

The Book of Revelation

When reading the book of Revelation, one must understand that John was writing about a future event that had not occurred yet. He begins by explaining this in the first verse of chapter 1, informing the reader that he is about to write about an apocalypse, which translated means "revelation," and it is reiterated in verse 3 of chapter 1.[155] The two following verses in chapter 1 refer more to the formal aspect of ancient letter writing. The reader is faced with a lot of information at the beginning. What is distinct about the Book of Revelation is that it contains three types of literature: apocalypse, prophecy, and letter, all in one book.[156]

Earlier generations of scholars attempted to prioritize the differences between prophecy and apocalyptic literature. They understand that apocalyptic literature has its roots in the prophetic; even so, they believe that the arrival of proto-apocalyptic texts illustrated a radical change in orientation.[157] Where the biblical prophets wrote to encourage during trying times, the proto-apocalyptic literature discarded hope for curing this world and focused on cosmic destruction and re-creation. Interpreters are now researching how proto-apocalyptic texts

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[154] Ibid.

[155] Gordon Fee, *Revelation A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2013), xii.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Greg Carey, *Apocalyptic Literature in the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 26.

correlate to earlier prophetic literature. This type of research increases the awareness of historical and literary connections between prophetic and apocalyptic texts.[158]

Several literary devices make up apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptists recorded visions and dreams, but whether they were actual experiences could not be determined. The language of the apocalyptic was intentionally cryptic and symbolic, especially as it related to imagery.[159] The apocalyptists are also usually writers who utilize many symbols, including numbers. Events and time are sectioned and numbered, illustrated in Revelation in at least three significant sections in chapters 6-7, 8-11, and 15-16.[160]

The author of the Book of Revelation identifies himself as "John" four times within the book, three times in verses 1:1, 1:4, and 1:9, and the last self-identification occurs in verse 22:8. He associates himself with the audience by addressing them directly at the beginning of the epistle and also by identifying himself as a "brother" and "companion" in verses 1:4 and 1:9.[161] John's claim as the author is supported by details found in subsequent chapters of Revelation. His message has numerous details that correlate to the cities and cultures. In many parts of the text, John was familiar with the workings of the Roman Empire, which is mentioned in detail,

[158] Ibid.

[159] Gordon Fee, *Revelation A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2013), xii.

[160] Ibid., xiii.

[161] Ian Paul, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 7.

describing the loss of merchandise that the merchants would never be able to trade again (18:11-13).[162]

Historically, John wrote the book of Revelation for the seven specific churches dealing with theological and ethical problems that needed to be discussed. These churches were persecuted by several groups, mainly by the government and false teachers who were also attempting to get into the body to spread their false ideologies.[163] The churches also contend with the Graeco-Roman culture, which taught different morals and beliefs. These believers faced continual issues from false teachers, pleasure-seeking, and persecution from the government, prompting them to leave their faith. These believers were dealing with a choice to follow God or follow Satan. John's message was simple, and it was for them to remain faithful to God until the end.[164]

In Revelation 1, John immediately tells the reader about the book. John tells the reader that certain things in the church's life will happen soon because the time is now.[165] Church history provides a picture of what happened to the churches in Asia in John's approaching future. Eusebius, a church historian (263-339), recorded the persecution against the church. It occurred on two fronts: one from an irritated Judaism and Synagogue and the second from the Roman

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[162] Ibid.

[163] Matthew Emerson, and Craig Bartholomew, *Between the Cross and the Throne: The Book of Revelation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 11.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Ian Fair, *Conquering with Christ a Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2011), 12.

provincial governors trying to keep peace in the Roman provinces. Eusebius describes in detail the struggles the early church faced with persecution.[166]

Most conservative scholars agree that the Book of Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian around 95 A.D. Others date the book before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.[167] Those who hold to the earlier date see the gospel of John as a mandate against those who left the Jewish faith. The earlier date also correlates with the persecution of Christians by Nero in 65 A.D. Those who hold to the book being written in the 90s believe that the gospel was written because of the lifestyle that Christians lived under the rule of Domitian; that lifestyle was an issue because some considered Domitian as a persecutor and others considered his reign as benevolent.[168] With either date in mind, the interpretation of the critical elements of the text can be exposed. Also, with either date, the book can be interpreted as being written against Rome, especially against their ungodly culture. No single arguments point to either the early or late date.[169]

Revelation contains a series of scenes that compare and contrast things happening in heaven and on the earth. Vertically, the scenes in the book of Revelation center on God, the Lamb, and the saints, whereas horizontally, the center of the scenes are on Satan, his followers,

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[166] Ibid.

[167] Gregory Beale, *The Book of Revelation a Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 47.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Ibid.

and those who dwell on the earth.[170] Even so, the victor of this conflict has already been identified, and Satan, because of his defeat, is consumed with frustration and rage. At the same time, God remains sovereign and is over everything, including evil forces. This book demonstrates this conflict and connects it to eternal destiny. Chapters 12-14 of the book of Revelation can be divided into two sections: chapters 12-13, where there is a war between Satan and his cohorts against God and His people, and chapter 14 reveals the response of God as the determining factor of the futures of those people who either follow Him or follow Satan.[171]

Chapter 14 contains the actions of three Angelic beings and the final judgment. The passage can be divided into sections containing metaphors of a grain harvest, a grape harvest, and the treading of a wine press. The grain harvest is in verses 14-16, and the grape harvest is depicted in verses 17-20.[172] Ryrie posits that in verse 15, the harvest is mentioned as ripe, and in verse 18, the grapes from "the vine" are also said to be ripe. However, the meanings of the words are different.[173] In verse 15, the ripe harvest depicts a withered humanity that is ready to be harvested, and in verse 18, the grapes on the vine are fully ripe, signifying they are ready to burst. The grapes on this vine contrast with Christ, "the true vine," and it may be because they have followed false human religions and are apart from the life of God.[174] John may have written

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[170] Grant Osborne, *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 155.

[171] Ibid.

[172] Loren Stuckenbruck, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 71.

[173] Charles Ryrie, *Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2018), 94.

[174] Ibid.

these narratives with Joel 3:13 in mind. Joel 3:13 reads, “Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.” Also, the references to “wrath” and blood found in verses 19-20 may have been influenced by Isaiah’s prophecy in chapter 63:2-3.[175] Isaiah 63:2-3 reads, “Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people, there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.” References to “wrath” is a common metaphor that correlates to judgment. Although the writer does not clarify, the judgment imagery is double-edged. Those who own or receive the fruits from the vineyard will have joyous times. But there can be no wine without first smashing grapes and siphoning their blood. The harvest in this pericope involves pain and suffering.[176]

The Book of First Enoch 100:3 describes a similar scene where a horse walks through sinners' blood up to its chest. The location of this scene correlates with Joel 3:2, 12, and First Enoch 53:1, and it is also the location of the final judgment against non-believers in the valley of Jehoshaphat, which is not too far from Jerusalem.[177] It is a common agreement amongst many scholars that the vision regarding the wine press describes the punishment of the wicked. However, there is some ambiguity regarding the meaning of the grain harvest. Some possible interpretations are that the grain harvest may be the judgment of both the righteous and the

[175] Loren Stuckenbruck, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 91.

[176] Catherine Cory, *The Book of Revelation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 17f.

[177] Loren Stuckenbruck, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 71.

wicked, it may only be for the righteous, or it may represent the faithful being the "first fruits."[178] With the concept of the grain harvest being ambiguous, perhaps it is best to interpret these verses as two significant parts of the rest of the Book of Revelation, with the grain harvest serving as encouragement for those who have suffered for God and their anticipation described in chapters 21:1-22:5, and the trampling of the grapes found in chapters 15-20.[179]

Chapter 14 describes two types of harvests: grain and grapes, which relate to food and drink in the form of bread and wine. The grain harvest is connected to the one who is like the "son of man."[180] This son of man is defined as bringing the believers into final safety, which correlates to other New Testament images of a harvest. In contrast, the grape harvest being conducted by the angel draws on Old Testament images and represents a judgment on nations that are against God and his people.[181] God's wrath is an expression of His righteousness and holiness during times of injustice and evil, and His righteousness and holiness are a part of His covenant love.[182]

John provides two perspectives of judgment. This judgment is good news for the believer, but for the unbeliever, it is not. The previous angel uses this two-sided perspective of

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[178] Ibid.

[179] Gordon Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013), 206.

[180] Ian Paul, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 256.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Scott Duvall, *Revelation: Teach the Text Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014), 205.

good and bad news in chapter 14 and other New Testament passages.[183] In the last two sections of this chapter, the good news is given before the bad news, and in the subsequent chapters, the news is provided in the opposite order. This leads to the completion of judgment in chapters 18-20, and the peak of the entire narrative reveals a vision of hope and life that will be conceptualized in New Jerusalem.[184]

Chapter 14 of the Book of Revelation is the high point from chapters 12-13. This chapter illustrates the vindication that the followers of Jesus will receive and the judgment that those who follow the beast will receive. However, this judgment is not the final judgment but a future announcement that reveals God's judgment on the beast of Rome. This is not a picture that illustrates either earth or heaven; it's a symbolic scene that draws its imagery from Psalm 2. The second Psalm connotes a messianic implication.[185]

Revelation 14:18-20

In this pericope, there are three small visions, or they may be extensions of the previous vision, and they follow one after the other, and collectively, they announce the "good news" of the coming judgment from God.[186] The job of the angel wielding the sickle is to harvest grapes of the earth, and he follows the order of the angel in charge of the fire, who is positioned by the altar. The angel at the altar is the same one who earlier offered up prayers for the "holy ones"

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[183] Ian Paul, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 256.

[184] Ibid., 257.

[185] Ian Fair, *Conquering with Christ: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2011), 270.

[186] Catherine Cory, *The Book of Revelation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006), 17e.

and filled the censor with fire and threw it at the earth.[187] In the same instance, the martyrs reside under the altar, eagerly waiting to be vindicated by God. This vision that John sees is in response to a question that the martyred souls raised. The question is, how long will it be before you sit in judgment and avenge our blood on the inhabitants on the earth?" The answer, "no longer," judgment has come![188]

Revelations 14:18-20 reads, "And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs."

The angels in these verses bring both positive and negative messages. The temple serves as the location and authority of God, and it also is a place where God's judgment is made and revolves around justice. God's judgment brings joy to believers and disaster to those who do not believe.[189] This is reaffirmed by the angel who oversees the fire from the altar, and it reaches back to Revelation 8:5, where the angel takes the censer filled with fire and throws it down to the earth. God's judgment is partly an answer to the saints' requests for justice and vindication found

[187] Ibid., 17f.

[188] Ibid.

[189] Ian Paul, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 255.

in Revelation 6:9-10.[190] This imagery may have come from Isaiah 63:3-6, in which God declares His judgment against the nations.[191] Two of the scenes in the narrative are connected by a sickle, but they differ because one had a sickle and was like a "Son of man," in the other scene, it was an angel that possessed the sickle. Although everything happening in this chapter is under God's authority, God seems to be delegating as He did with the release of the horsemen in Revelation 6. The metaphor of "the vine" has previously served as a picture of Israel, but in verses 19-20 of Chapter 14, "the vine" image is now a picture of those against God.[192] Everything in this pericope suggests that it was intended to be connected to the prior verses, 14-16. However, the connection is not distinguishable. Even though the connection may not be apparent, verses 17-20 of chapter 14 of Revelation are clear. These verses depict a scene where God's judgment is being applied, and the power of the angel is on display.[193]

In verses 17-20, several scenes are similar to other verses in the book of Revelation.[194] For example, the angel in verse 17 has a sickle like the Son of man in verse 14. The angel granted authority over a fire in verse 18, which correlates with the fiery judgment from verses 8:5 and 14:10. Angels with authority over earth's elements, such as fire and water, reflect Jewish traditions. These angels are also granted authority over elements such as wind, clouds, and

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[190] Ibid.

[191] Gordon Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013), 205.

[192] Ian Paul, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 255.

[193] Gordon Fee, *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013), 205.

[194] Grant Osborne, *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 163.

thunder. However, the angel given authority was usually associated with delivering a judgment or punishment on the people.[195] Earthly temples were sometimes composed of two altars with specific purposes. One was used for incense, and the second was utilized for burnt offerings; however, in Revelation, one altar seems to be used for both purposes.[196] From the text, the angel may have come out of the altar itself because it also contained the martyrs underneath it, and some voices came from it. But because the angel is beside the altar, it may be more plausible that the angel stepped out from behind it.[197]

In these verses, there is also a similarity in that an angel executes God's command.[198] In verse 19, the winepress of God's wrath continues the metaphor of God's judgment, also found in Joel 3:13 and Isaiah 63:3. The symbolic image of "the vine" has previously represented Israel in the Old Testament. Still, in this context, it refers to God's enemies.[199] The vineyard produced the wrong kind of fruit in this pericope and had to be trodden down in the great winepress. The feet and garments of the treader were stained with the redness of treading on the grapes, and this provided a picture of divine judgment against those who were not a part of the martyrs.[200]

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[195] Craig Koester, *Revelation a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 625.

[196] Ibid.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Grant Osborne, *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 163.

[199] Robert Thomas, *Revelation Exegetical Commentary-2 Volume Set* (Chicago: Moody Publishers 2016), 17d.

[200] Ibid.

It may be uncertain if verses 15-16 of Revelation 14 depict the redemption of those identified as righteous or if they depict judgment on those identified as wicked. Because this scene in Revelation 8:3-5 is interpreted as a scene that introduces punishments that begin at the sound of the trumpets, it is plausible that the scene in Revelation 14:17-20 contains the same meaning. In addition, the connection between verses 8:3-5 and 14:17-20 of Revelation is that these judgments stem from the answered prayers of the saints.[201]

The conclusion regarding judgment from verses 17-20 supports the concept of "treading a wine press," which may correlate to judgments found in the Old Testament. The phrases "the wine of the wrath of God" in Revelation 14:10, "the great winepress of the wrath of God" in Revelation 14:19, and "the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" in Revelation 19:15 support the concept of Revelation 14:19 continuing the theme of judgment from Revelation 14:10.[202]

These images infer that this death will be gruesome in contrast to images of New Jerusalem found in chapters 21-22 of the book of Revelation.[203] The Book of Revelation was written with the view of a temple in heaven, and this thought is also found in other Jewish and early Christian literature. Traditionally, Israel believed the construction of the early sanctuary followed a heavenly plan, and some felt there was an actual sanctuary in heaven.[204] This holy

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[201] Gregory Beale, *The Book of Revelation a Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 726.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Ian Paul, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 255.

[204] Craig Koester, *Revelation a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 624.

temple is the location where God resides. Angels in the temple perform the priest's duties by serving at the altar and pouring out the contents of the bowls. Another essential part of the heavenly temple is the believers on earth, who are a temple even though the nonbelieving world continually threatens them.[205] The temple theme is in New Jerusalem, a city containing a sanctuary where the faithful can worship. Even so, the term "temple" in the book of Revelation demonstrates the presence of God and Jesus the Lamb instead of a city. [206]

When the grapes were crushed, the juice was sometimes referred to as blood (Gen. 49:11; Duet. 32:14), and this allowed Jesus to use this natural symbol of blood during the Last Supper. The winepress trodden on outside the city parallels another passage of God's judgment found in Jeremiah 51:33, which reveals that God will judge Babylon. This scene is in Babylon's fall in chapter 18 of Revelation.[207] The illustration regarding the depth of the blood flow is typical in apocalyptic literature in ancient and modern times. For example, similar apocalyptic language is in Ezekiel 32:5-6 and the Fourth Book of Ezra 15:35, which discusses horses walking through blood up to their chest.[208]

The angels in chapter 14 are the hosts of heaven and are there to carry out God's judgment on the earth. There is no escape from God's judgment; humanity will gather before the judgment seat. In a similar scene from the Gospel of John 15:6, the angel will cut down "the

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[205] Ibid.

[206] Ibid., 625.

[207] Ian Paul, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 255.

[208] Ibid., 256.

vine" and throw it into the winepress of God.[209] Israel God's "vineyard" had produced the wrong fruit, and this bad fruit had to be trodden on in the great winepress, an expression of God's anger.[210] Winepresses in ancient times usually contained two vats, one in an upper position and the other in a lower position. The upper vat contained the trodden-on grapes, and the lower vat was used to catch the juice. This process used to be a joyous time. While this chapter of Revelation demonstrates a horrible picture, the destruction described in this pericope, once completed, will be excellent for the believers but terrible for unbelievers.[211]

The angel is the executioner of the harvest, God is the judge, and Christ executes the penalty as He did in Revelation 19:15, where He "treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." The reference to the judgment being conducted outside the city infers that this judgment will occur apart from God's covenanted people. This amount of blood is a symbol of the complete judgment rendered by God against those who have mistreated both God's people and defiled God.[212]

In John's vision, the amount of blood is significant, perhaps up to five feet deep. It appears to be a traditional eschatological battle in which unbelievers destroy one another until a stream of flowing blood is deep enough to reach the horse's bridle. Any chariots will sink to their

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[209] Grant Osborne, *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 164.

[210] Robert Thomas, *Revelation Exegetical Commentary- 2 Volume set* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2016), 17e.

[211] Grant Osborne, *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 164.

[212] Ibid.

tops.[213] Revelation illuminates this war imagery by connecting it to the previous vineyard imagery. Like the stream that flows from the winepress, showing how much juice was contained in the grapes, the bloodstream reveals the depth of violence the earth's vineyard contained. In John's vision, the earth's violence has reached a disastrous level. The river illustrates how much blood the earth contains and shows the need for God's judgment against it.[214]

In verse 20, the reader is informed that the grapes were crushed outside the city. What is not known is who did the trampling and what city is referenced. Perhaps the city is part of the overall image because trampling grapes was usually done outside of any city, so naming a specific one was not as important.[215] John may probably have had Rome in mind, and that idea may be supported by the following judgments found in chapters 15-18 of Revelation. God's judgment is horrifically expressed in terms of the shedding of blood, which connotes the idea that it may represent an Empire. The verse clearly shows how much blood flowed and its distance, illustrating the degree of God's judgment on Rome when it finally takes place. In chapters 17-18, John further describes God's judgment on the city of Babylon, which represents Satan's empire and is also described as "the great city."[216]

If readers only read chapters 12 and 14 of Revelation, they may gain a sense of hopelessness, but chapter 14 reveals that Satan is no longer in charge as God is as He always

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[213] Craig Koester, *Revelation a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 624.

[214] Ibid., 626.

[215] Gordon Fee, *Revelation A New Covenant Commentary* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2013), 206.

[216] Ibid.

was.[217] While unbelievers worship the beast, believers worship the Lamb. While the false prophet declares that Christianity is a crime, God sends His angels to destroy the enemies of the saints. However, there is still some hope for the earth as God sends out angels of destruction and the angel with the "eternal gospel," whose goal is to offer salvation for the unbeliever.[218]

Summary

The Gospel of Matthew was widely disseminated in the early second century. There were a few reasons for this, but one of the primary reasons was that it was written by one of Jesus' disciples who shared in his ministry. Another reason for its popularity is the way it is written and its organization. Matthew uses a parable to illustrate "the vine" imagery in 21:33-43. The point of Matthew's imagery narrative was a response by Jesus to the Jewish leaders. In its context, it correlates to Isaiah 5 regarding God's love for his chosen people. A crucial point for the Jewish leaders is that the kingdom of God will be taken away from them and given to those who will produce fruit. This is only temporary. There is a contrast between Isaiah's vine imagery and Matthews. In Isaiah's prophecy, the vineyard is the tribe of Judah who do not produce good fruit. In Matthew's narrative, the vineyard and the vines produce proper fruit. Matthew's narrative connects with Isaiah's prophecy by imagery and content, but it differs from Isaiah's because of fruit production.

The Gospel of John is written to show its readers who Jesus is so they may come to believe in Him. In the pericope of John 15:1-5, an explanation utilizing agriculture supports the primary purpose of the Gospel. In John 15:1-5, Jesus declares He is "the true vine." Not only

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[217] Grant Osborne, *Revelation: Verse by Verse* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), 164.

[218] Ibid.

does He say it, but He also describes God the Father's and the believer's roles. "The vine" in the Old Testament served multiple purposes for the children of Israel in many ways; they grew vineyards, and owning vineyards alluded to one being wealthy and living a prosperous life. The children of Israel even had the image of a vine on the Jerusalem temple. They were identified as vines and brought to the promised land by God. However, they did not produce the fruit they should have because they did not stay connected to God. Jesus, as "the true vine," exemplifies the kind of relationship God desired with Israel. In the Gospel, Jesus points toward God the Father as the Husbandman, a position that God wanted to be for the children of Israel. The believers in Jesus are considered the branches. However, to understand "the vine" imagery in its entirety, the Old Testament passages should be consulted.

The "I am" statements were not analyzed individually but were reviewed as a group because John 15:1 is included as the last "I am" statement. These statements describe who Jesus is and how intricate He is to man's salvation. These sayings also placed Jesus on equal footing within the God head as He is equal to the Father. The sayings can be divided into a few categories to study: those that contain predicates, those that contain implied predicates, and those that do not have predicates at all. Some scholars infer that the "I am" sayings in John's Gospel originated from the Old Testament. In addition, they correlate the "I am" sayings to Jesus' seven miracles found in John's Gospel. An essential concept for believers today to understand is that these "I am" sayings uttered by Jesus in John's Gospel are just as crucial for believers today as they were when John originally wrote them.

In the Book of Revelation, it is essential to remember that John is writing about future events. In his description of the events, John utilizes a lot of imagery. From Revelation 14, the imagery may be connected to Old Testament prophets like Isaiah and Joel. The imagery depicted

in verses 17-20 of chapter 14 discusses two types of harvest, one with grain and the other with grapes. There are similar scenes found in Revelation 8:5 and 14:10. The key to understanding this pericope is that it is a judgment from God on those who have chosen not to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. They are now receiving God's judgment, which an angel is administering. When this judgment will occur is a subject of much debate, but only God the Father knows. The imagery of the grapes being trodden on outside the city is the image of a large quantity of bloodshed from those who worshipped the beast.

Chapter Six

Judaism and Christianity

Introduction

In John 15:1-7 Jesus states that He is "the true vine." In his gospel, John also asserts that Jesus is the Messiah (John 1:41; 4:25). However, this is a point of contention between Judaism and Christianity. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an analysis of Judaism and Christianity, the messianic view from each faith, and illustrate how "the vine" motif is essential to each faith. In addition, the connection of "the vine" motif between Judaism and Christianity will be analyzed.

Judaism

After 586 B.C.E., Judaism had three major components: God, the Torah, and Israel. The Torah contains detailed references to sacrificial rituals, including where, when, how often, and by whom they were to be practiced. The Torah reveals that the Israelites practiced sacrifices in the wilderness after they left Egypt. Even after the Babylonians destroyed the temple, the Jews who returned from exile restored the buildings, rituals, and sacrifices and continued until the Romans destroyed the second temple in A.D. 70.[1] Judaism is the oldest faith with a monotheistic view of God; it believes that God is one, eternal, and the creator of all. In addition, the Orthodox Jews believe that God has a special relationship with Israel, and in turn, Israel was supposed to be the "light of the nations."[2] Judaism has no expectation or requirement for people to become Jewish. However, there is a desire within Judaism that the world will come to believe that there

[1] F. E. Peters, "The Worship of God." In *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam* (Princeton University Press, 2004), 103-104.

[2] Carl Ehrlich, *Judaism* (New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2009), 8.

is one God. Jews follow the teachings of the Torah to follow God. The Torah is where God and Israel meet, and the Torah contains commandments, laws, and rituals that, if practiced, will usher in God's holiness.[3] God would give the Israelites the law; if they followed it, they would become His special people. The inference is that they will have a unique value to Him. However, they must keep God's commands (Exodus 19:4-6).[4] Neusner argues that the Torah starts with Adam and Eve's creation story and traces humanity's history to Israel, who attempted to follow God's laws. The Torah contains God's view and the story of how humanity prevails. Judaism uses the Torah to follow its rules and transform them into applicable examples that form a pattern.[5]

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are three of the world's major religions. Judaism entails more than a specific belief and idea. It includes a history that spans thousands of years and customs and writings in both the religious and secular worlds.[6] Judaism as it is practiced currently originated between 70 C.E. and 500 C.E.; however, it takes its roots from the national religion of a group known as the "Israelites," which originated when God changed Jacob's name to Israel (Genesis 32:28).[7] During the biblical period, the Jewish religion grew through the protocanonical books and the New Testament to the modern period of the nineteenth century. During this time, the Jewish religion included new teachings and practices. Even though Judaism

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 174.

[5] Jacob Neusner, *Judaism: The Basics* (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 13.

[6] Nel Yomtov, *Understanding Judaism* (Minneapolis: Essential Library, 2019), 8.

[7] Ibid., 8-14.

is taught and practiced differently now than it was at the beginning, it remains grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures.[8]

Even though all Jews followed the Torah, there were various religious groups in the Jewish community, but the primary three were the Sadducees, Pharisees, and the Essenes. The Sadducees were a small group of individuals that included hereditary priests, and they controlled the process of worship conducted in the Temple. In addition, they worked with the Romans to manage the country. Their oral "Torah" was conservative, denying the divine origins of the oral Torah that the Pharisees upheld. The Sadducees did not believe in angelic beings, bodily resurrections, or conversions. They considered death to be the final state of humankind. Their power came from controlling the Temple, and the High Priests were usually Sadducees.[9]

The Pharisees, whose name is parish in Hebrew, means "separated," some scholars attribute this concept to the Pharisees because they separated themselves from society to maintain holiness.[10] However, in the New Testament, the scriptures reveal a contentious relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees. For example, in the Gospel of Matthew 23, Jesus publicly denounces the scribes and Pharisees. According to Josephus, the Pharisees were scholars of the laws and traditions in Judaism, and as such, they were respected by some in the community some of the time. However, New Testament Scripture illustrates that at other times,

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[8] Marvin Wilson, "Judaism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 637.

[9] Stephen Wylen, *The Jews in the Times of Jesus: An Introduction* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2008), 119.

[10] Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Judaism: History, Belief and Practice* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 90.

they clashed with those in the community (Matthew 12:1-9, 10-14; Matthew 23).[11] The Pharisees lived in the community, working and attending synagogues. They were concerned with purifying rituals, tithing agricultural produce, eating kosher food, and keeping the Sabbath, and they married women who fit their idea of pure descent.[12]

The Essenes may have come from the Hasideans, whose name is from the Aramaic term *hasa*, which means "pious." The Essenes believed that the Hellenizers and Sadducees were consistent violators of God's law. The Essenes had a lifestyle that set them apart from the Pharisees and Sadducees; some lived celibate lives while others married. The Essenes practiced living without luxury items and avoided as much as possible any social and economic contact with those who did not practice their faith. They lived a strict life focused on prayer and work, frequently offering gifts to God to avoid His wrath and studying the Scriptures. Some lived communally, sharing property and dining together.[13] Other Essenes lived in cities and married for procreation. Their communities were hierarchical, and their social structure mirrored the Temple priesthood. Food was measured and provided to each member for equality, and all members worked hard and participated in worship and communal meals, which they considered sacred.[14] Some scholars have attributed the writing of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Essenes.[15]

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[11] Stephen Wylen, *The Jews in the Times of Jesus: An Introduction* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2008), 121.

[12] Ibid., 122.

[13] Stephen Taylor, "Essenes," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 390.

[14] Stephen Wylen, *The Jews in the Times of Jesus: An Introduction* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2008), 120.

[15] Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Judaism: History, Belief and Practice* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 91.

The "Shema" is the crucial statement of Judaism. The "Shema" is a statement of the Jewish religion and the critical belief in one God. The "Shema" comes from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy that Moses wrote. Jews recite the "Shema" during their times of prayer, on holidays, in the synagogue on the Sabbath when the Torah was removed from the Ark of the Covenant, and traditionally as the last words before death.[16] This is an essential truth for the practice of Judaism by the Jewish believers. The "Shema" is one of the most important messages in the Torah, and God specifically gave it to the Jewish people. Deuteronomy 4:35 in the King James Version reads, "Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him."[17]

In light of new events and contexts, Jews who believed in practical biblical application had to have the commandments clarified repeatedly and constantly. As a result, a continually changing body of law was formed. Even though the idea of a flawless and eternal Torah had served as a vital symbol of the relationship between God and Israel, the process started in ancient times.[18] After the destruction of the Second Temple, the system of sacrificial worship administered by the priest ceased, and the exegesis and exposition of the biblical text increased. This would lead to the "Tanakh" being canonized in 90 C.E. by the Council of Jamnia, and the "Oral Torah" and other peripheral material that correlated to the biblical text or "Written Torah" being codified. Neusner asserts that combining the Oral and Written Torah forms a perfect

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[16] Nel Yomtov, *Understanding Judaism* (Minneapolis: Essential Library, 2019), 8.

[17] Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Judaism, Religions of the World* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2003), 75.

[18] Melanie Wright, *Studying Judaism: The Critical Issues* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing plc, 2012), 52.

Torah. It is perfect because it contains a legal system and a theological structure, and it has a media expression and analysis that correlates to the *Halakhic* and *Aggadic*. The combination of both Torahs revealed what God wanted, conveyed by Moses at Mount Sinai in the method best suited for the Israelites' position.[19]

In its infant stage, around the fifth century C.E., rabbis were a small group of religious teachers whose followers had minimal influence on people. By the sixth century C.E., their authority was so recognized that the term "Rabbinic Judaism" came to represent the Jewish religious cultures in the early centuries up to the modern era. Several factors contributed to the rabbinic authority--an increase of rabbis in cities, religious schools, and synagogues, the protection of the rabbis by the Sassanian and Roman rulers, and the increase of rabbinic literature.[20]

Over the last centuries, Jewry has become a system divided into several groups, each with its religiosity. However, strictly Orthodox Jews continue to practice their faith by following tradition. They are set on preserving their identity and often isolate themselves from the mainstream of modern society. Following the strictly Orthodox Jews are the modern Orthodox Jews who continue to follow Jewish law but try to combine their faith walk with contemporary culture.[21] Then there are Jews who have converted to different faiths or become Jews who practice no religion at all. These Jews who practice no religion consider themselves as "atheist," "agnostic," or "nothing in particular." However, because they were raised as Jews, they still

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[19] Jacob Neusner, *The Perfect Torah* (Leiden: BRILL, 2003), XII.

[20]Melanie Wright, *Studying Judaism: The Critical Issues* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing plc, 2012), 52.

[21] Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Judaism Today: An Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing plc, 2010), 77.

consider themselves Jews without the religious aspect of Judaism. A Pew research survey revealed that 78% of Jews are Jews who still practice some form of Judaism or another faith, and the last 22% fall into the category of being Jews with no religious affiliation.[22]

Christianity

The core belief of Christians is that their faith is based on God becoming a man in Jesus Christ through a Virgin birth, death, and resurrection to redeem humanity from inherited sin. Christians also believe that Jesus' blood, which was shed on the Cross for the payment of humanity's sin, was an act of divine love.[23] Christians stand by faith in the belief that Jesus was resurrected to life, ascended to the Father, and sent the Holy Spirit to His church and its believers. Christians believe that Jesus will return to gather his followers before administering a final judgment. They assert that no man or woman can live up to God's standard because of sin, and Jesus Christ serves as the Mediator between God and humanity.[24]

Christians have the same belief in one God as Judaism. However, the one God is Triune, consisting of God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit, which is the power of God that guides the believer's experiences in their lives. God as a trinity illustrates how God and human beings achieve a relationship and interact.[25] Christianity consists of salvation, which was acquired by Jesus's sacrifice. Because of Jesus's sacrifice, believers now have the power to

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[22] Yehuda Kurtzer, and Clair Sufrin, *The New Jewish Canon* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2020), 364.

[23] George Habash, *I am a Christian* (London: Austin Macauley Publishers, 2021), 8.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Aaron Bowen, *Christianity* (Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers, 2017), 14.

be delivered from the effects of sin in their lives. Scripture teaches that mankind has disobeyed the commands from God that were given to the Jewish people first, then to all believers. The price for continually disobeying God's commands is separation from God. The belief in Jesus and what He achieved allows believers to re-establish that broken relationship with God. Those who believe in Jesus and His sacrifice enter into a new relationship and have access to God the Father. Their sins are forgiven, and they will be united with God in heaven after death.[26]

Christians consider history critical. Their teachings commonly include beliefs about the inner workings of the sacred realm and solid historical claims about specific events and people in Galilee, Judea, and others in the first century C.E. One claim, in particular, is that Jesus and the believers after his death and resurrection were essential to a transformative movement in human culture. By the second century, the movement of Jesus and His apostles represented something more than human culture, especially in the persuasion of natural humanity.[27]

Christianity and the Church are terms often utilized as if they mean the same thing. However, Christianity encompasses a broader meaning than just the Church. Christianity is a global movement that centers on Jesus Christ and his teachings. The church is a society that teaches about God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as well as biblical application.[28] The church is also a society that deals with unification and diversification. Everything that involves the church, including the ministry of Jesus, his teachings, and his disciples, does not

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[26] Ibid., 15.

[27] Matt Jackson-McCabe, *Jewish Christianity: The Making of the Christianity-Judaism Divide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 4.

[28] Maurice Goguel, *The Birth of Christianity* (Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 3.

belong to the church's history but to its prehistory. The elements of unification, diversification, and the church's prehistory make it challenging to establish a clear, concise time frame for the origins of Christianity.[29]

The term “church” in Greek means “assembly,” and in the initial stages of church development from the New Testament, it refers to individual communities. In the first century, Christians would gather in each other’s houses, and some houses were converted into meeting places. The concept of the “church” as a building equivalent to the Synagogue had not existed yet.[30] Christians are a part of the community spiritually; as such, a Christian should be a church member. The church is more than a voluntary group of people with similar beliefs. God creates a community to bring reconciliation to the world, including various races and ethnicities. The church is designed to reflect the reconciliation of Jesus Christ in every age. It reproduces Jesus's actions in His early ministry of obeying God and caring for people.[31] The church and its members should renounce selfishness and bring the victory of life through the spirit. Christians assert that the Church is where God’s reconciling presence and activities are illustrated for the world to see, and these actions should be extended to every part of the world. However, there are several views of what the church should be and what it should be doing. As a result, various churches present different ways for their communities to live the Christian life.[32]

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Jonathan Hill, *The History of Christianity: The Early Church to the Reformation* (Chicago: Lion Hudson, 2020), 39.

[31] Keith Ward, *Christianity: A Beginner’s Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 96.

[32] Ibid., 97.

Analysis of Judaism and Christianity

After the rabbinic period, which may have started around the fifth century B.C.E., came the Pharisees, and due to the success of both religious orders, Judaism survived without a homeland and a Temple. The rabbis before Jesus' earthly ministry were unlike any previous Jewish order. They could respond well to any catastrophe, and because of their perseverance, they were able to become a significant influence in the lives of the Jews. The rabbis replaced sacrifice and pilgrimage to the Temple with the study of scripture, focusing on prayer and good deeds. These movements by the rabbis eventually eliminated the desire for a sanctuary in Jerusalem and provided a method to practice Judaism anywhere. Consequently, all Judaism finds its connection to the Rabbinic movements that started in the first century.[33] Even though Judaism can be practiced anywhere, Judaism's most important pilgrimage site remains the Wailing Wall. This remnant of the Second Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans, and it has become the holiest site for the Jews in the world. The Wailing Wall has become a shrine because it provides a remembrance and a symbol of Israel's promise. Visitors to this holy site place their written petitions to God in the cracks of the Wall.[34]

For the Christians, the church fathers were the early Christian teachers who were intrinsic to church history and the teaching of Christian texts from the first century to the present. Their writings on both Jews and Judaism revealed a tension that is still present in Jewish-Christian discussions today. However, despite this tension, there was a general agreement that Jesus was born, lived, and died as a Jew, even though the general thought amongst the Jewish leaders of the

[33] Edward Kessler, "The Writings of the Rabbis," in *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 65.

[34] Jeff Hay, and Linda Holler, *World Religions* (New York: Greenhaven Publishing LLC, 2006), 331.

time was that Jesus was not the Messiah.[35] This unacceptance of Jesus as the Messiah was a problem for Christians, and it provided multiple challenges to Christianity as an identifiable religion and its relationship with both Judaism and paganism. Pagans were more inclined to accept Judaism because it was an older religion. The view of Judaism from paganism was one where "antiquity was equal to respect." Even though Judaism faced criticism from ancient writers because it was considered a "separate religion" and "unfriendly," its history gave it an admirability that Christianity had not achieved at the time.[36]

The literary genres of both faiths have to be considered. While attempting to learn the genre of Passion Narratives, scholars had to analyze the narratives that pertain to persecution and retribution. These stories found in the Old Testament and Second Temple literature tell a story about a wise man, and because of some conspirators, he was persecuted, and ultimately, the leadership sentenced him to death. Still, before he was put to death, he was saved, cleared, and exalted. These are common story elements despite settings, characters, and issues.[37] However, in the gospels, the main character is a natural person given the title of the "Messiah," the Son of God. This allows the genre in the gospels to describe the suffering of a righteous person who is ultimately killed, even as a divine being. In the gospels, the story is relayed from a historical

[35] Edward Kessler, "The Writings of the Church Fathers," in *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 45.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Isaac Kalimi, and Peter Haas, *Biblical Interpretation in Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2006), 118.

view, so the Passion Narratives are similar to the Greco-Roman stories that tell of the adventures of great men.[38]

Jewish Views on Messianism

For the strict Orthodox Jew, there is probably no other religious concept more essential or critical to their faith and practice than the messiah, Israel's eschatological redeemer. It is commonly known that Judaism is a religion that believes in a messiah and that the messiah's appearance is critical. This concept guides the beliefs and behaviors of Judaism.[39] There are two crucial issues regarding the messiah: first-century Palestine's heightened expectation of the messiah created the stage for Christianity, and the opinions regarding the messiah's appearance, identity, activity, and involvement all led to a great division between Judaism and Christianity. The concept of the messiah is crucial because it speaks to the structure and character of Judaism and Christianity.[40]

The idea of messianism continues to be highly disputed amongst both Judaism and Christianity, especially for Judaism, because of the various false messiahs that have made an appearance throughout their history. The Torah utilizes the word "Mashiach" for "Messiah." It comes from the meaning "to anoint with oil," to apply to a High Priest or a leader who is anointed and ready for battle (Leviticus 4:3-5, 16; 6:22). The first time a king was anointed was when Samuel appointed Saul, which led to the term being used in a monarchy.[41] Following that

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Jacob Neusner, and Alan Avery-Peck, *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 247.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Jeremy Rosen, *Understanding Judaism* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2003), 106.

narrative, anointing was only utilized when there was a switch in a dynasty or a challenge to a leader's succession. David and Solomon are examples of a dynasty change and a leadership succession. In this context, the messiah would be an anointed king. Elijah was commanded to anoint King Hazael of Aram (1 Kings 19:15). Daniel would once refer to Cyrus, the Persian king, as God's Messiah because he permitted the Jews to return to their homelands (Daniel 9:25). This also illustrates that the word messiah was not limited to Jewish kings.[42]

There were various ideal messianic figures from the Jews in the first century; the Davidic king proved to be the one that lasted the longest. As a key figure in Jewish history, David may have been considered a messiah to some degree, but not in terms of prophetic eschatological projections. Israel's first king was Saul, and from then forward, the kings of Israel were believed to have become kings by a divine anointing. For example, (1 Samuel 10:1) Samuel anoints Saul, and God confirms the anointing (1 Samuel 10:10). This process is repeated with King David, Nathan, David's court prophet, showing that God's choice of David as king will remain in his lineage (2 Samuel 7:11-17). The expansion of an anointed ruler for an individual becoming a king passed down through the lineage, and it became the beginning of the messianic idea (2 Samuel 7: 11, 16).[43]

In the Old Testament, Moses talks about a prophet who, unlike himself, would give the words of God to the people (Deuteronomy 18:15). In addition, David received a promise from God about an ancestral son sitting on his throne for eternity. With the concept of the "Promised" one, it is evident that this individual will be royal, priestly, and prophetic, and he will

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Michael Kogan, *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 39.

demonstrate these attributes.[44] God promised David that the Spirit would uniquely anoint the son sitting on the throne. The Spirit and its properties will be upon and through the anointed one sevenfold; he will only demonstrate acts of righteousness, and his arrival will mark the end of all evil, and he will permeate the world with the knowledge of God.[45] The nations will seek this anointed one, and he will restore the kingship in Israel because God Himself guarantees it. This anointed one will perform more acts of salvation than any of his predecessors, and his acts will be unmatched. He will revive Israel and the land, and as a shepherd, he will gather his sheep in exile. He will build the temple and proclaim peace to all people. He is God's power on earth. He experiences humanity and its flaws, and his place is at the right hand of God. He will raise his scepter staff like Moses as he is a priest like no other; God appoints him.[46]

However, Jewish literature is supplied with arguments that the Messiah has not come or that Jesus could not have been the Messiah. The argument against Jesus being the Messiah is because the prophecies that speak to the end of days have not been fulfilled. Some of the biblical characteristics of the Messiah are that he will be visible, global, and a redeemer, which has not happened, and from the description of the Messiah, death in an unredeemed world excludes Jesus from being the Messiah. God sends the messianic king to do His will, not to follow a script

[44] Edjan Westerman, *Learning Messiah: Israel and the Nations: Learning to Read God's Way Anew* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 119.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., 120.

where the hero dies and leaves uncertainty about what is to come. The Jewish denial of this type of messiah has been expressed through multiple means throughout the ages.[47]

All Jews do not share this view of a Messiah. Currently, only the strict Orthodox Jews hold on to the belief of a coming Messiah. In Jerusalem, many still gather in synagogues and pray for the Redeemer to return. The belief of most Jews now is that the Messiah will not be an individual, but the Messiah will be mankind as a whole, who, by their actions, will be able to pave the way for the Kingdom of Heaven. This ushering in the Kingdom of Heaven will not happen until mankind reaches true enlightenment, kindliness, and justice.[48]

The concept of the Kingdom of Heaven does not follow the Hebrew Scriptures. The focus of the Hebrew Scriptures is the here and now. From the book of Deuteronomy, God promises to reward the Israelites for being obedient with material well-being, crops, food, descendants, victory over their enemies, security, health, and long life (Deuteronomy 11:13-15; 28:1-14). The opposite will happen if the Israelites fail to follow God's commands. The Hebrew Scriptures do not contain the idea of God rewarding or punishing someone in the afterlife.[49]

In an attempt to explore Jewish identity, the Jewish population in America claims that remembering the holocaust and leading an ethical life are vital components of describing what a Jew is. Half of the American Jewish population believes working for justice and equality is

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[47] David Berger, *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference: with a New Introduction* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008), 151.

[48] Morris Kertzer, *What Is A Jew?* (San Francisco: Normanby Press, 2011), 31.

[49] Zachary Starr, *Toward a History of Jewish Thought: The Soul, Resurrection, and the Afterlife*. (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020), 2.

essential.[50] However, observing religious law is no longer as important to most American Jews. A small fraction of Jewish adults still believe that following Jewish law is essential, and some Jews believe that even if a person works on the Sabbath or does not believe in God, they can still be considered a Jew. However, over half of the Jewish population in America still believes that a person cannot believe in Jesus as the Messiah and maintain their Jewish status.[51]

Christian Views on Messianism

The life of Jesus ushered in the Gospel tradition. It is not disputed that Jesus lived in Palestine when the Romans dominated it and that He was crucified by order of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate around A.D. 30-33. It is also not disputed that after His death, burial, and resurrection, His disciples proclaimed He was the Messiah who had brought salvation.[52]

The New Testament authors testify that Jesus of Nazareth is the singular Davidic Messiah and that His life fulfilled and restored the Davidic Kingdom. The conviction of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel, who was resurrected and now sits at the right hand of God, is powerful, and the scriptures illustrate the particular identity and vocation of the Messiah Jesus as the initiator of God the Father's kingdom.[53]

Christianity started when Jesus' followers began to proclaim that the Messiah had come, and they utilized Scripture to prove it because Scripture carried conviction. Using the Scriptures,

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[50] Yehuda Kurtzer, and Clair Sufrin, *The New Jewish Canon* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2020), 364.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Mark Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2007), 44.

[53] Joshua Jipp, *The Messianic Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Eerdmans, 2020), 263.

these followers showed that Jesus had come as predicted and predicted what would happen regarding Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Acts 2:14-41; 3:18). It is believed that the first written document regarding the gospel was a compilation of biblical Testimonies, which contributed to the gospels becoming part of the canon, according to Schonfield.[54] These texts also influenced other written texts in the New Testament and the patristic literature. There is evidence that some of Jesus' activities had been supported by elaborated prophecy, but they were found to be in collaboration with the texts. The narrative from the New Testament paints a picture of an immediate and spontaneous correlation of prophecies with the experience of Jesus, which reveals that the disciples did not initiate the proclamation of spreading the good news but instead continued on the path that Jesus had started.[55]

Those who believe in Jesus have solid evidence for their belief that He fulfilled the Messianic prophecies, especially when Jesus is compared to some of the infamous messiahs that the Rabbinic leaders accepted.[56] The Rabbis expected that when the Messiah came, he would judge those who acted wickedly and deliver those who lived righteously. John, the Baptist's reference to "fire" (Matthew 3:11) can be interpreted as God negatively judging those who choose not to believe. In the gospels of Matthew and Luke, this reference to judgment with fire both precedes and follows this verse.[57] Jews who did not believe in Jesus believed that the

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[54] Hugh Schonfield, *The Passover Plot: Special 40th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Disinformation Company Limited, The, 2004), 42.

[55] Ibid., 43.

[56] Michael Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Volume 3: Messianic Prophecy Objections* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 131.

[57] Robert Stein, *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 111.

coming Messiah's judgment would involve destroying their enemies and also restoring Israel to its formal glory. The Messiah's coming would include retribution, redemption, damnation, deliverance, judgment, and justice. For those who repented, the Messiah's baptism would consist of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and for the unbelievers, the baptism would be by fire. When this occurs, all pathways will lead to Jerusalem instead of Rome.[58]

The phrase "the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah" is demonstrated by Jesus's sacrifice on the cross so that everyone, believers and non-believers alike, can be set free from sin by believing in Him. In his epistle to the churches of Galatia, Paul would summarize this idea in Galatians 3:25-29 which in the King James Version reads, "But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."[59]

A fundamental question for Christian theologians to consider is why the early believers of Christ concluded that Jesus was the Messiah despite His flogging, carrying His cross through the streets, being executed publicly, and allowing the Jews to believe that they were victorious in executing Him.[60] The answer would be because of the resurrection and what it meant. In the eyes of these early believers, it was a divine retribution; it was the fulfillment of the messianic hope of

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Walter Zorn, *The Faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah: A Gospel Emphasis* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020), 271.

[60] Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World,* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 83.

Israel, which drastically changed instead of being incomplete. The concept of Jesus as the Messiah reembraced messianism from the Old Testament perspective, including the universal lordship, and Jesus was identified as Messiah and Lord.[61]

Analysis on Messianism

One of the best-known statements regarding the view of "Messianism" from Judaism and Christianity comes from an essay written by Gershom Scholem in 1959 titled "Zum Verständnis der messianischen Idee im Judentum." In this essay, Scholem states that the discussion of Messianism should be handled carefully because it is a critical concept that both faiths have strong and different opinions on. Scholem explains the two different views in this way:

> Judaism … has always maintained a concept of redemption as an event which takes place publicly, on the stage of history and within the community…. In contrast, Christianity conceives of redemption as an event in the spiritual and unseen realm, an event which is reflected in the soul, in the private world of each individual, and which effects an inner transformation which need not correspond to anything outside.[62]

An observation could be made that Scholem's essay's fundamental concept is still one of the major critical issues separating Judaism from Christianity. The location and meaning of the Messiah as it relates to Jesus and the relationship with the covenants and Israel are ambiguous. This ambiguity forces one to choose between Israel and specific salvific promises to particular people groups or universal salvation for mankind without distinction through Jesus.[63]

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Matthew Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2017), 189.

[63] Edjan Westerman, *Learning Messiah: Israel and the Nations: Learning to Read God's Way Anew* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2018), 151.

The different views of Messianism are standard in the New Testament, but these different opinions may have been based on an illusion for a long time. The important thing for the Jews was and is the law. The Mishnah compiled in Galilee toward the end of the second century detailed very little regarding the messiah. In the synagogues of the dispersed Jews, all key concepts were focused on the law.[64] The Christians and the anti-Jewish writings disagreed about the law, but the Jews did not heed these disagreements because these groups were a minority. Also, because these groups were a minority, the Jews considered the Christian view of the messiah as distorted.[65]

However, recent views regarding who and what the messiah represents have changed; surveys like the Pew research survey and other studies have revealed that Jewish beliefs regarding the Messiah have altered considerably. Currently, only the strict Orthodox Jews continue to believe that the Messiah is not Jesus and that the Messiah, once he comes, will restore Israel to its biblical glory.

"The Vine" Imagery for Judaism

Several scriptures identify Israel as "the vine," Psalm 80:8; Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 10:1; Ezekiel 15:2– 6, 17:1– 10, 19:10; and Isaiah 5:1– 7. Two passages, one from Isaiah 5:7 ("The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel") and Hosea 10:1 ("Israel is a luxuriant vine"), are the two passages that correlate more to the "True Vine" title for Jesus in John 15, than Ezekiel as a picture of the people of God. Another passage close to John 15 is Jeremiah 2:21, where God asks why Israel, planted and considered noble, had turned into a degenerate and

[64] William Horbury, *Messianism among Jews and Christians: Biblical and Historical Studies* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2003), 311.

[65] Ibid., 312.

strange vine.[66] The metaphor of Israel as "the vine" was used by the rabbinic exegetes. One example of this commonality is in Jeremiah 2:21, where Israel is described as the "choice vine." The pericope in Psalm 80:8-16 illustrates God's connection to Israel as the "choice vine."[67] The rabbinic exegetes understood that the terms "vine" and "choice vine" were meant to illustrate the relationship between God and Israel. Israel as "the vine" was a symbol recognized by the patristic tradition. The patristics also interpreted the symbolism to reference Israel, Jews, and possibly the synagogue. As such, the connection from the "the vine" metaphor referencing Jewish people was made in rabbinic exegesis and the early Church Fathers.[68]

The "the vine" metaphor in John 15:1-7 correlates to Jeremiah 2:21 and Ezekiel 17 and 19. Jesus' claim to be the "true vine" and the fruit-bearing branches is a concept in Jeremiah's periscope. Jesus as the "true vine" also contains similar word usage and phrases that have the same meanings as Ezekiel's vine imagery (Ezekiel 17:19). The correlation between John 15 and Ezekiel's passages become even more entwined when the concepts are compared.[69] For example, in John 15, Jesus is the "true vine," and in Ezekiel, "the vine" is the tribe of Judah. In some other Old Testament passages regarding "the vine," the reference to branches reveals no connection to "the vine." In contrast, the branches represent people in John's gospel and Ezekiel's prophecies.

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[66] William Fowler, and Strickland, Michael, *The Influence of Ezekiel in the Fourth Gospel: Intertextuality and Interpretation* (Boston: Brill, 2018), 117.

[67] Emmanouela Grypeou, and Spurling Helen, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis* (Boston: Brill, 2013), 432.

[68] Ibid., 483.

[69] Andrew Mein, and Paul Joyce, *After Ezekiel: Essays on the Reception of a Difficult Prophet* (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 36.

In John's gospel, the branches are Jesus' disciples; in Ezekiel, the branches are identified as "chief men" and "envoys" that support the king. Some of the branches found in Ezekiel reference princes, and the "strong branch is Zedekiah. John's usage of "the vine" and the connection with branches may have been influenced by Ezekiel.[70]

"The Vine" Imagery for Christianity

In John's gospel (John 15:1-7), the main point of Jesus' statement that he is the "true vine" is to illustrate the importance of believers being dependent on Him so they can be fruitful and consistently have a relationship with God. God the Father takes care of "the vine," and the branches, and subsequently, the fruit will come naturally as long as the branch remains connected to "the vine." "The vine" imagery illustrates God the Father and Jesus as the source of life for the believer.[71] As a source, Jesus provides spiritual strength by sending the Holy Spirit and provides comfort and peace for the believer. This imagery calls for divine blessing for all people of God. Jesus claims to be "the vine" and not the stalk, which allows the branches to become part of God's vine plant and faithful vineyard.[72]

For Christians, Jesus identifying Himself as the "true vine" also prompts His branches to respond. The repetitive command to "abide" or "remain" in Him surpasses the meaning of the metaphor because the branch alone cannot abide in "the vine." The connection between Jesus as "the vine" and His disciples as "branches" is emphasized in this imagery. The branches are to

[70] Ibid.

[71] William Fowler, and Michael Strickland, *The Influence of Ezekiel in the Fourth Gospel: Intertextuality and Interpretation* (Boston: Brill, 2018), 49.

[72] Leland Ryken, James Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 1340.

remain in Him; His word has cleaned them, and the branches are now capable of keeping His commandments and abiding in His love.[73] There are positive benefits for those who stay connected to "the vine," and in contrast, there are negative results for those who do not. The illustration of Jesus' disciples as branches entirely dependent on Him is a logical course for His description of Himself as "the vine." This last "I am" saying paints a picture of the disciples' and Jesus' roles in this pericope. In addition, the intertwined roles of the branches and "the vine" result in the natural course of fruit-bearing. The concept of pruning to bear more fruit is depicted in "the vine" imagery, and the phrase "every branch in me" also refers to a deeper meaning of the relationship between the Christian believer and Jesus.[74]

For Christians, abiding is repeated throughout John 15; once believers have- accepted Jesus as Lord, they must remain in Him. This concept is critical to bearing fruit that glorifies God. Abiding in Jesus is practiced by following His commands according to scripture and following His love as He commanded. One of the significant fruits of abiding is love, not just for Jesus but for others as well. Everything regarding a believer's faith is found in abiding in Christ.[75] This imagery of "the vine" illustrates divine love. This love comes from God the Father, who loves Jesus, and that love is given to His disciples. Therefore, the disciples that are branches and are connected to "the vine" have this love and draw their strength from the connection.

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[73] David Ball, *I Am in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1996), 132.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Marcus Nodder, *I am: The Answers to Life's Biggest Questions* (London: IVP, 2021), 54.

Believers learn that Jesus, as "the vine," produces fruit through the love given by the Father, and this is also an expression of love through His disciples as they receive love from "the vine."[76]

When Jesus identifies Himself as "the vine" and His disciples as the "branches," He informs us that the Christian life is a gift from God. Believers can endure trials and tribulations with patience and hope as they abide in Christ and learn to love one another.[77] Jesus is to the church's life as living fungi are to the soil, which breaks down the rocks and stones of suffering in the believer's life and transforms them into a metaphorical mineral that can provide nourishment. As the believer allows Christ to build up their root systems, the believer learns that they can rely on Jesus in all seasons and situations in life. The believer can learn to draw strength and substance from Jesus in life's ebbs and flows. Scripture teaches that believers should turn away from worldly things that suffocate the spiritual life and turn to God and pray in Jesus' name.[78]

Analysis of "the vine" Imagery in Judaism and Christianity

The imagery of "the vine" began with the Jews and Judaism. However, within Judaism, "the vine" imagery depicts Israel as moving from divine nurturing to divine punishment. This movement is seen in Jeremiah 2:21, which reads, "Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?" Jeremiah 8:13 would further reveal what God had planned to do with Israel. Jeremiah 8:13 reads,

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[76] Craig Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: 1517 Media, 2003), 272.

[77] Gisela Kreglinger, *The Spirituality of Wine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 183.

[78] Ibid.

"I will surely consume them, saith the Lord: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree, and the leaf shall fade, and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them." This verse from Jeremiah reveals that Israel, as "the vine," has died because they left God, who had previously provided for them and gave them everything they needed to flourish.

From Ezekiel's prophecy, Israel was a vine withered and insufficient. Israel's lack of faith must result in a punishment that only a fire could accomplish. Ezekiel 15:6 reads, "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Ezekiel and John use the same terms of withering, gathering, and burning, which refer to "the vine."[79] The covenant between God and Abraham and his descendants is eternal (Genesis 17:7). How can these descendants be removed from the established covenant? Isaiah provides the answer with an explanation (Isaiah 5:1-9). The New Testament verse that captures the dispossessing of the Jews is in John 15:6, which reads, "If a man abides not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." This verse clearly expresses that those who do not abide are cast aside by the vine grower and cut off from "the vine."[80] This casting off of the branches is about non-believers, mainly the Jews. The pericope of John 15:1-7 is contextually related to the vine metaphor for Israel, which will now contain dead branches and believing branches. John 14:6 speaks of a singular faith in Jesus; without that faith, mankind is in spiritual trouble if they live as unbelievers.[81]

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[79] Adele Reinhartz, *Cast Out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John* (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2018), 102.

[80] Ibid., 101-102.

[81] Tom Wilson, *Jesus and the Ioudaioi: Reading John's Gospel with Jewish People in Mind* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 131.

A pivotal point to John's Vine motif is that Jesus has changed places with Israel. The Old Testament prophets previously identified God's vine in His vineyard as Israel, and it is now the one vine, Jesus. The people of Israel can no longer claim to be planted as the vine, nor can they claim to be rooted in the vineyard unless they accept and submit to Jesus as Lord and become grafted into Jesus as branches. Branches that do not accept Jesus will be cast out.[82] God, as the husbandman, now has one vine in His vineyard. This Christological interpretation is a replacement motif at work. As I am the "true vine" is the last of the I am sayings, this reveals that Jesus also replaces what is at the center of the Jewish faith. John's gospel reveals that earthbound gifts that come from God are channeled through Jesus Christ. God is now centering His attention on one life-giving vine, Jesus Christ. Attachment to Jesus as the vine alone provides a way to receive benefits once promised through the land. As Isaiah and other Old Testament prophets illustrated Israel's lack of producing good fruit, now Jesus promises that if you abide in Him, fruit-bearing will become natural.[83]

John identifies Jesus as the Messiah, and each "I am" saying in his gospel correlates with an image related to Israel. For example, the vineyard of Israel is now Jesus as the "true vine;" as the light on the hill of Zion, Jesus is the light of the world; as there are shepherds of Israel, Jesus is the true shepherd, and as the true shepherd Jesus laid down his life for all. Moses provided bread in the wilderness; Jesus is now God's heavenly bread for all to believe.[84]

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[82] Gary Burge, *Jesus and the Land: The New Testament Challenge to Holy Land Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 53.

[83] Ibid., 54.

[84] Alan Culpepper, and Anderson, Paul, *John and Judaism: A Contested Relationship in Context* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017), 296.

Connection of "the vine" Motif between Judaism and Christianity

An observation can be made that "the vine" motif is connected theologically, conceptionally, and by imagery. Theologically, the major prophets in the Old Testament revealed that Israel, God's chosen people, were identified as "the vine." Jesus, also God, revealed that He was now "the true vine." Still, the connection becomes more apparent because God the Father initiated the imagery in the Old Testament (Judaism), and Jesus Christ as God's son initiated it in the New Testament (Christianity). However, God the Father and Jesus are one.

Chapter 6:4 of Deuteronomy identifies God as one. Jesus would claim He and the Father are one (John 10:30). Understanding the concept of one God is critical. The Hebrew word *eḥāḏ*, or *"*God is one*,"* is ambiguous, which has caused much consternation between Judaism and Christianity. The term can also mean "one" or "alone." Another definition of the Hebrew word *eḥāḏ* is "probably united" or "first." And the Hebrew root word is *'āḥaḏ*, which means "to unify, collect," or "go one way or another."[85] I would assert that perhaps the term "first" is the more appropriate term when considering God as one; it follows God's commands in the Decalogue. When reviewing the New Testament, it is still an applicable term. Perhaps, suppose the strict Orthodox Jew considered the term "first" instead of "one," their belief may have included Jesus as their promised Messiah and the writing from the New Testament. Some scholars believe that "one" reveals God's undivided nature, while others assert that it defines monotheism. Whichever description is chosen, God calls for a specific allegiance to Himself. In Chapter 5 of Deuteronomy, God describes Himself as the God who led Israel out of Egyptian slavery. The

[85] Spiros Zodhiates, and Warren Baker, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: Key Insights into God's Word: King James Version, Authorized Version*. Second Revised Edition (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2008), 1762.

next commandment for Israel is that they "will have no other gods before me" (Deuteronomy 5:7). Moses's description of God in Deuteronomy 6:4 reasserts this same commandment. Israel was supposed to love with all their might (Deuteronomy 6:5).[86]

Early Judaism believed that the Hebrew Scriptures taught that God was one, He was the creator of everything, He ruled everything He created, and He was the only one who should be worshipped. This faith and devotion to the one God the Jews exhibited was a direction for how early Christians saw and worshipped Jesus as one. Christians included Jesus in the identity of this one God. Jesus was present when God created everything, and later in the New Testament, He would take on the flesh of man, living and dying as a human.[87] However, He was raised from the dead, and God allowed Him to partake in His role and rule of all things, which will eventually be perfect in its final stages. Jesus' relationship with God the Father was an internal relationship that matched God's unique makeup. When the Holy Spirit was acknowledged, Christians identified God as a triune Godhead. Christians now saw three distinct ways to speak of God: He was God the Father, Jesus Christ His Son, and The Holy Spirit. The concept of a triune Godhead allowed God to share His life with humanity and to have a relationship with His own Son.[88]

Another theological aspect to consider is the multiple prophecies that Jesus fulfills. In the Gospel of Matthew alone, Jesus fulfills around seventeen prophecies. Many of those fulfilled are

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[86] Deanna Thompson, *Deuteronomy: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2014), 60.

[87] Lucinda Mosher, and David Marshall, eds. *Monotheism and Its Complexities: Christian and Muslim Perspectives* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 17.

[88] Ibid.

revealed early in the Gospel before Jesus becomes known throughout the community. Five of those seventeen occur while Jesus is a baby. Matthew's Gospel contains many fulfillment passages, building on the idea that Israel's history has alluded to Jesus's coming. Ten of the fulfillment passages are fulfilled directly by Jesus.[89] In verse order, the fulfillment passages filled by Jesus are His Virgin birth and His name "Immanuel," which means" God with us" (Matthew 1:20-23), fulfilling Isaiah's utterance in Isaiah 7:14. Four of the fulfillment passages revolved around where Jesus lived: Bethlehem (Matthew 2:4-6), fulling Micha's prophecy in Micha 5:2, Egypt (Matthew 2:14-15), fulling Hoseas' prophetic utterance in Hosea 11:1, Nazareth (Matthew 2:23), which fulfilled the prophecy in Judges 13:5, and Capernaum (Matthew 4:13-16), which was fulfilled from Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 9:1-2. Four other passages that fulfill prophecies are faith healings and exorcisms (Matthew 8:16-17), fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 53:4, Jesus commanding several that he healed not to speak about Him (Matthew 12:15–21), fulfilling another of Isaish's prophecies in Isaiah 42:1-4, Jesus teaching in parables (Matthew 13:34–35), fulfilling the psalmist prophecy in Psalm 78:2, Jesus riding on a donkey and a colt (Matthew 21:5), fulfilling the prophecy from Isaiah 62:11and Zechariah 9:9. Jesus being rejected by the leaders and vindicated by God (Matthew 21:42), which was fulfilled from the Psalmist in Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 28:16.[90]

I assert that various biblical evidence illustrates the unity of the Godhead and Jesus's fulfillment of many prophetic Hebrew Scriptures. As such, the triune Godhead is an example of a vine with God the Father as the viticulturist overseeing its development, Jesus Christ as the part

[89] Robert Miller, "The Fulfillment of Prophecy in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Helping Jesus Fulfill Prophecy*, 1st ed., (The Lutterworth Press, 2016), 115.

[90] Ibid., 116.

of the triune God connecting the branches with God the Father, and the Holy Spirit helping the branches bear the proper fruit. Israel failed to produce the appropriate fruit. As the scriptures infer, the only time in the Hebrew Scriptures that Israel may have properly produced the proper fruit was when they entered the promised land under the leadership of Joshua. Their failure to properly produce fruit began once they decided they wanted a king to judge over them (1 Samuel 8:5) instead of God. First Samuel 8:7 reads, "And the LORD said unto Samuel, 'Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.'" It was at this point that Israel was doomed to fail.

Conceptually, the motif connects Judaism and Christianity. Both faiths contain a similar concept and revelation of the importance of continual attachment to God the Father (Judaism) or Jesus Christ (Christianity). Attachment to both faiths is vital to living the life that a believer was created to do. God calls for believers to bear good fruit, like a properly cared-for vine. The production of bad fruit was displayed in several biblical narratives in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Bible teaches that God's intent for Israel was not just to bear good fruit but also to have a relationship with Him and be the guide for other nations to see and follow. Jesus Christ took the concept of "the vine," and He alone illustrated the true meaning of the imagery as God had intended. Jesus obeyed God's commands for His death, burial, and resurrection. He obeyed all of God's commands, bearing the proper fruit. This fruit was obedience, love for God the Father, and caring for humanity. Jesus demonstrated what Israel would have been and the types of miracles they would have done if they had followed God's commands.

The imagery of "the vine" connects to both faith groups; it is prevalent in Jewish History, and in Christianity, the imagery adds the "branch" and the importance of staying connected to

"the vine." The imagery is a biblical pattern that biblical authors used in their narratives. These authors used this imagery to reinforce or explain the prominent stories in the Bible. Some authors may see this repetitive vine imagery as symbolism or part of a symbolic universe. In the Bible's symbolic universe, this imagery reveals the minds of the biblical authors, allowing the readers to see the world the way they saw it and think how they thought. The vine imagery from both faith groups relies on each other, allowing it to be interpreted and understood by a reader.

Understanding the vine imagery in this manner adds consistency and enforces it, providing clarity.[91]

Analogies from the plant world are some of the most widely used illustrations in the Bible. This imagery is used because it taught the Israelites about the progression of the seeds they planted, and it was a common occurrence in ancient Israel. This imagery with metaphors illuminated and conveyed deeper theological insights within their communities. Since God is often portrayed metaphorically, scholars like Walter Brueggeman assert that "God through agriculture is linked to the daily activities of the Israelites." Metaphors from daily activities of agricultural living connect God and human relationships in the biblical narratives.[92]

In addition, the motif teaches that when Israel was identified as "the vine" in the Old Testament, this identity was not casually given. This identity revealed that God had chosen Israel and compared them to the vine, which was expected for Israel and their surrounding populations. As such, Israel's identity and God's protection would be an example for all people to get to know

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[91] James Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?: A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013), 47.

[92] Jennifer Pantoja, *The Metaphor of the Divine As Planter of the People: Stinking Grapes or Pleasant Planting?* (Boston: Brill, 2017), 7.

God. Unfortunately, biblical history revealed that Israel failed. Because of their failure, God moved from Israel being "the vine" to Jesus being "the true vine," and all future believers became identified as branches.

Summary

Christianity came from Judaism, and one of the reasons why they separated was because of the belief in who Jesus is as all God and all Man, and the Messiah. Judaism believes in God's oneness; Christians believe in a triune God that acts as one. Judaism focuses on the written and ceremonial laws found in the Hebrew Bible, and Christians follow the Old and New Testament scriptures. Both Bibles contain similar concepts concerning faith in God and respect for mankind. In addition, each book of faith includes several other common concepts, such as the concept of the Messiah.

In the Hebrew scriptures, the title "Messiah" means "anointed one," and it refers to a ruling king. This anointed one will restore Israel's kingship because God guaranteed it. This anointed one will point others to salvation by his acts like no other. He will revive Israel and rebuild the temple. This Messiah will represent God on earth to show mankind how to return to God. The anointed one will sit at the right hand of God. However, not all Jews believe in the messianic concept. Recent studies have shown that the belief in a Messiah has declined, as well, and there is an increase in non-believers who claim to be Jews.

The vine motif originated in the Hebrew Bible. It became a symbol of wealth and identity for the Israelites. However, the Jews failed as God's vine, and instead of a chosen people identified as "the vine" of God's vineyard, Jesus became God's only vine. To establish a relationship with God, the believer must become a metaphorical branch attached by faith to Jesus as "the true vine."

In addition, “the vine” motif connects each faith theologically, conceptually, and through imagery. Theologically, God the Father was the key figure in Judaism, and Jesus was the key in Christianity. However, God and Jesus are one; they are not separate. Jesus is God the Son, and He alone has fulfilled many of the Old Testament Prophecies. He has also provided an example of what “the vine” imagery connotes. He did not fail to follow God’s commands. He was obedient to death. Israel failed to maintain a connection to God, and they could not bear the proper fruit. Conceptually, as “the vine,” both faiths require a connection to God, like a vine that needs a vinedresser to care for it. Proper care of “the vine” produces adequate fruit for obedience and love. The imagery of the vine illustrated a deep theological meaning while using a common way of living. The prophets identified Israel as a vine, revealing that it was meant to be more than an illustration. It was meant to show a relationship between God and people. It was also intended to show other nations how God’s chosen people could have a relationship with Him and do the same. The vine motif transcends the Old Testament to the New Testament believer. The imagery teaches that it is vital for the believer to stay attached to “the vine,” Jesus Christ, in the New Testament.

Conclusion

Introduction

In John 15:1-7, Jesus makes a profound claim, declaring Himself the “true vine.” This bold statement catalyzes the research in this dissertation, which delves into the Old and New Testaments and Pseudepigrapha to unravel the depth of Jesus’ claim. In the Old Testament, Israel is “the vine.” This stark contrast raises intriguing questions: How does Jesus assert His identity as the true vine, and what implications does this have for Israel, particularly in the context of Judaism's non-acceptance of Jesus' divinity? And how does the "vine” motif influence Judaism and Christianity? This concluding chapter aims to present the research findings from the Torah, Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 15:1-8, 17:1-10, 19:1-14; Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 2:12, 15; and Amos 5:17, the Pseudepigrapha books of 1 Enoch 10:19, 4 Ezra 5:23-27, and 2 Baruch 36:3-10; Matthew 21; 33-43; John 15:1-7; Revelation 14:18-20, Judaism and Christianity, the messianic view from each faith, and demonstrate how the "vine” motif is integral to each faith.

The Torah

The literal use of the vine motif was in the Torah. Beginning in the book of Genesis, Noah becomes a viticulturist (Genesis 9:20). Joseph utilizes “the vine” motif in interpreting a dream while imprisoned (Genesis 9:4-10). And the motif was in a poem (Genesis 49:11). From the book of Exodus, “the vine” motif illustrates the importance of property liability and the results if there was a violation of this ordnance (Exodus 22:5). The book of Exodus also utilizes “the vine” motif to describe how the Israelites were to take care of their land (Exodus 23:11). In addition, the vine motif reflected how the Israelites were supposed to allow the land to rest every seven years so the poor would have food (Exodus 32:11). Like the book of Exodus, the book of Leviticus also uses “the vine” motif to illustrate the importance of providing vineyards not

wholly gleaned, so there may be food for the poor and resident aliens (Leviticus 19:10). In the book of Numbers, the meaning of "the vine" motif expands to include the "Nazarite vow," (Numbers 6:4) as well as it utilized as a source of contention between Moses, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numbers 16:14). The book of Numbers also depicts "the vine" motif as a source of contention between Moses and Kings Edom and Sihon, as the Israelites requested to pass through their lands and both kings denied them access (Numbers 20:17; Numbers 21:22). The final usage of "the vine" motif in the book of Numbers is in the story of Baalam, where he is attempting to ride his donkey through a vineyard (Numbers 22:24). In the book of Deuteronomy, "the vine" motif reiterates what Moses had informed the Israelites after Exodus. The book of Deuteronomy also reveals a shift of "the vine" motif to show how God will bless the children of Israel if they continue to follow Him (Deuteronomy 6:11) or should they choose to follow false gods, how God will curse them (Deuteronomy 28:30). The motif describes the pagan gods. It compares them to Sodom and Gomorrah and how their wine production is bitter and poisonous.

Through the vine motif, the Torah guides the Israelites, instructing them to follow God's laws, care for the land, and care for both people and animals. This motif's importance is underscored, setting the foundation for its further use by the Old Testament writers.

Psalms and the Old Testament Prophets

The concept of the vine motif undergoes a significant shift from the Torah to its use in Psalm 80:8-16 and the Old Testament prophets. In the psalm, the motif now symbolizes Israel, a vine brought out of slavery in Egypt, planted and cared for by God, but failing to produce the proper fruit. The psalmist illustrates how God will allow the destruction of the vine due to this failure. The Psalmist also pleads for God's return and restoration of the people to fellowship.

Major Prophets

In the book of Isaiah (5:1-7), “the vine” motif points to Israel, identified as a vine. Still, from Isaiah’s view, the narrative illustrates God speaking through the prophet to reiterate how He placed Israel in the best location, protected them in the form of a metaphorical fence, and provided everything needed for Israel to be fruitful. Israel produced fruit that was poisonous and wild. Isaiah’s prophecy connotes God’s disappointment with Israel to the point that God decides to remove His protection of Israel. Because God removes His protection, the vineyard will die of natural death and become a wasteland. Consequently, through Isaiah, the prophet, God asked the people what more he could have done.

The concept from Jeremiah’s prophecy (2:21) correlates to Isaiah’s. Jeremiah asks the question, how is it that Israel has turned into a degenerate plant of a strange vine? One difference between Isaiah's and Jeremiah’s prophecies is that Jeremiah provides the reasons for the Israelites' downfall, which were idolatry, social injustice, and religious ritualism. In the book of Isaiah, Isaiah moves to the background, and God becomes the speaker, asking Israel what else He could have done for them to be successful.

In Ezekiel’s prophecy, “the vine” motif is in three passages, Ezekiel 15:1-8, 17:1-10, and Ezekiel 19:1-14. Ezekiel 15:1-8 describes Jerusalem as a useless vine that is only worth burning as fuel in its current state. The passage further suggests that the people of Israel entirely fall into this category of useless wood from the vine. This word from God to Ezekiel comes as a parable. Jerusalem had the privileges of being God’s chosen people, which came with benefits that no other nation had at that time. The captivity of Judah in 597 B.C. should have altered their course; however, they became even more useless. As a result of their continued uselessness, God will allow Jerusalem to become a wasteland so that they can recognize that it is God who is still in

control. The reason for Jerusalem's fate is that they trespassed against God on multiple occasions.

In Ezekiel 17:1-10, "the vine" motif, depicted as a riddle and an allegory, illustrates the main point using eagles. In its context, the prophet describes how King Nebuchadnezzar cared for Israel, and he was the first eagle. Even though they were in captivity, they were in an environment that allowed them to live prosperously. Still, once another eagle arrived on the scene, the people of Judah began to follow the second eagle (the Pharaoh of Egypt), which was less illustrious. The people of God had changed from following King Nebuchadnezzar, whom God was using to administer judgment, to believing their neighbors, the Egyptians, could provide better for them. This action by Israel displeased God because it illustrated the breaking of a covenant. King Zedekiah's actions prompted God to respond unfavorably, and God informed Ezekiel that Israel would wither away and not prosper. The term "withered" is repetitive in verses 9-10. The Hebrew term *yāḇēš* revealed the state that the Israelites would be in because of their violations against God and King Nebuchadnezzar. The importance of King Zedekiah breaking the covenant with God is repetitive and reflective. In the Old Testament, Israel repeatedly broke the covenants between God and themselves. The constant breaking of the covenants became reflective of their relationship with God, thus leading up to their captivities and living in a state of diaspora.

In Ezekiel 19:1-14, the "the vine" motif is Israel described as a lioness and a vine, its kings described as whelps who were very powerful and destructive to the point that they were taken into captivity by surrounding nations. Ezekiel writes this passage as a lament demonstrating the Judean king's failures. The kings were Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, or Zedekiah. Although God planted Israel by waters, made them fruitful, and produced many branches,

allowing them to create several worthy kings, they sinned against God by being prideful. The result of their sin was God allowing them to be plucked, cast down, broken, withered, and consumed by fire. The fire would start with King Zedekiah, and it would cause the loss of fruit, the destruction of future leaders, and Israel planted in a desert. Because of King Zedekiah, the Davidic dynasty temporarily ceased. The Hebrew verb *hāyâ* is in several verses in Ezekiel 19. The term conveys multiple meanings within the passage, illustrating the movement of Israel as Ezekiel writes this lament.

The Old Testament prophets observed that the children of Israel identified as "the vine" was a recurring idea. In addition, Israel's failure as God's vine that produces spiritual fruit repeated. The illustrations were riddles and allegories depicting how God had His hand on the Israelites even in the diaspora, yet they chose to follow other gods continually. The prophets spoke to the people to get them to return to God, but the people did not listen to the words of the prophets.

Minor Prophets

In Hosea's prophecy (2:12,15), the prophet conveys to the people what will befall them and provides hope. In Hosea 2:12, God declares through the prophet that He will destroy Israel by withholding the production of items they need to be prosperous, and God also informs them that there is no one able to rescue them from their fate. However, in Hosea 2:15, the pericope illustrates a change in God's heart toward Israel, and He now states that He will request Israel to come back into the wilderness to re-establish a covenant with Him. Hosea considered the law of Moses fundamental to the people (Hosea 4:6). This covenant with God re-established previous covenants, like when Moses read from the Book of the Covenant to the people. However, God will speak directly to the hearts of the people. The vines in this pericope will return, showing that

they agree with God. Hosea 2:23 affirms the commitment of the re-established covenant between God and His people. The re-established covenant is not just for Israel but also for those who believe in Jesus as Lord. Paul reiterates this in Romans 9:25-26 as the covenant becomes available for everyone.

Amos' prophecy (5:17) illustrates the utter destruction that God himself will render to the Israelites. "The vine" motif in this pericope identifies God as the destroyer, and this destruction is so severe that there will be those who wail in the vineyards. The destruction will be similar to when God passed over and struck down the firstborn of the Egyptians in the book of Exodus. Amos' prophecy was to prepare the people to meet God.

The minor prophets used "the vine" imagery like the major prophets, continuing the theme of Israel being "the vine." Hosea 2:12 and Amos 5:17 discuss the destruction of "the vine." Amos's prophecy goes further in-depth because it illustrates how God Himself will cause the destruction. A glimmer of hope is in Hosea 2:15 as God grants a reprieve from the destruction and draws Israel back to Himself to rekindle their previous relationship.

Pseudepigrapha

The Pseudepigrapha books utilized were 1 Enoch 10:19; 4 Ezra 5:23-27, and 2 Baruch 36:3-10. The Pseudepigrapha books provided supportive information for the thesis even though they are not in the Hebrew or Christian Bible canons. However, the books connect not just with "the vine" motif but also with some of the characters in the Hebrew bible. In First Enoch 10:19, "the vine" motif describes a blessing that only happens after the angels have cleansed the earth from wickedness. After the cleansing, "the vines" are so plentiful that they will provide numerous barrels of wine. This illustrates the fruitfulness and longevity of life when believers follow God as He restores creation. First Enoch contains a similar theme of blessings and

restoration to the minor prophet Hosea (2:15). In the book of Fourth Ezra, Ezra's utilization of "the vine" motif illustrates the selection of Israel as the chosen people. It identifies Israel as "the vine," similar to the Psalms and Old Testament major prophets. Fourth Ezra's prophecy focuses on the "oneness" of God's choices and the fate of Israel because they are the chosen people who did not follow God. Even though 4 Ezra contains this distinct prophecy, in the Hebrew Bible, the book of Ezra does not contain any references to "the vine" motif. In the book of Second Baruch, "the vine" motif points toward Jesus as "the vine," like John's gospel. The "fountain" in Baruch's prophecy represents God's kingdom. The book of Second Baruch also provides a very illustrative depiction of Jesus as a messiah. As "the vine," Jesus destroys the metaphorical forest or the Roman Empire with divine judgment. Second Baruch is the only Pseudepigrapha book that contains "the vine" motif and uses it along with the messianic concept.

New Testament

In the Gospel of Matthew 21:33-43, "the vine" imagery is a parable. In this parable, Jesus talks about the history of salvation using "the vine" imagery because it was familiar, and the parable depicts God the Father as the Householder, the chosen people of Israel as the vineyard, and Israel's past and present leadership as tenants. The fruit is those who are obedient and love God. The parable teaches how Israel killed God's prophets on several occasions and eventually killed Jesus Christ. This parable also reveals that the Kingdom of God would be taken away from Israel because of what they have done and offered to another nation that will accept God and bear fruit**.** Matthew's version of events contains a lot of similarities to Isaiah's prophecy, but the illustrations of "the vine" are different. In Isaiah, Judah is the unfruitful vine; in Matthew, "the vine" produces good fruit, but Israel's leaders failed.

In the Gospel of John 15:1-5, “the vine” imagery climaxes in the form of the last “I am” sayings. Jesus clarifies that He is not only “the vine” but also “the true vine.” As “the true vine,” He followed the commands of God the Father entirely, and He remained sinless while enduring His earthly ministry. In John’s pericope, God is the Husbandman, Jesus is “the vine,” and “the branches” are the believers. Branches that abide in “the vine” are repeated in this pericope, reiterating its importance. This imagery was familiar amongst the people in Jesus’ time, and they would have understood its meaning easily. Jesus, as “the vine,” becomes the new Israel. He does what Israel failed to do. He pleases God, whereas Israel disobeyed Him. Jesus leads the way for better and more glorious days. Jesus, as “the true vine,” provided a way for believers to reconnect with God the Father by “abiding” in “the vine.” “The vine” motif is also complete because it informs the reader of what will happen should someone decide not to “abide.” The person who does not “abide” will be cast forth, gathered, thrown into a fire, and burned, representing destruction, judgment, and hell.

In the book of Revelation (14:18-20), “the vine” motif illustrates the destruction of those who do not follow God’s ways, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. The destruction is from a heavenly perspective, as John sees the message as a vision. John witnesses these angelic beings execute God’s commands. In this pericope, “the vine” represented those who did not believe and were facing God’s wrath. The imagery changed from representing God’s chosen people to representing God’s enemies. Producing the wrong kind of fruit from “the vine” goes against God, and those who do this will see God’s wrath, and they are delivered to the great winepress.

“The vine” imagery in the New Testament displays a few different perspectives. Matthew’s narrative “the vine” depicts the failure of Israel’s leadership and the fact that this failure was so devastating that Jesus informed the Israelites that the Kingdom of God would be

taken from them and given to another nation, illustrating that the Kingdom of God would consist of both Jews and Gentiles. In John's gospel, the focus is on Jesus as "the true vine," believers are "branches" that must "abide" to survive. Those who do not "abide" do not believe. In the book of Revelation, the imagery illustrates those who do not believe; the vine imagery shows what will transpire with those who choose not to accept Jesus as "the true vine." In John's gospel, God the Father's role and Jesus' role are identified. In the book of Revelation, "the vine" imagery depicts non-believers thrown into God's wrath by angelic beings.

Judaism and Christianity

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are the three most prominent religious groups. Christianity stems from Judaism. However, one of the critical distinctions between Judaism and Christianity is the view of Jesus. Strict Orthodox Jews believe that Jesus was not the Messiah and that the Messiah is yet to come. Other Jewish beliefs consider humanity to be the messiah or that there is no messiah. For Christians, Jesus fulfills the prophecies from the Old Testament, and He currently serves as an advocate for believers as he sits at the right hand of God. For Christians, Jesus as "the true vine" makes perfect sense. Judaism introduces the concept of "the vine" through the Old Testament scriptures, portraying the idea literally and metaphorically. In the New Testament, Jesus is "the true vine" in one of the last "I am" sayings. To completely understand this concept, "the vine" imagery must be examined through the lens of Judaism first, then Christianity. After that, Jesus as "the true vine" becomes clearer as He fulfills the messianic prophecies and replaces Israel, initially identified as "the vine." Christians concede that Jesus is "the true vine," and the strict Orthodox Jews continue to disagree.

Summary

This dissertation began with the argument that interpretation should come from both the Hebrew and the Christian bible to obtain a more enriched understanding of "the vine" imagery. Then, the connection between the testaments should follow second. This dissertation also examined "the vine" imagery through the lens of Judaism and Christianity. In addition, this dissertation sought to solve two problems. The first problem was Jesus' claim to being "the true vine" when Israel identified as such in the Old Testament. The second problem was that certain religious sects of Jews did not believe in Jesus or His messianic designation.

The research started in the Torah, which provided the basis for understanding "the vine" motif. In the Torah, "the vine" imagery is literal, beginning after the flood. The Torah establishes the foundational use of the imagery. The Psalms and the prophets illustrated how Israel had become identified as "the vine" and how they would ultimately fail at producing the fruit that God had wanted them to. Even though they failed, they never lost the title of '" the vine," but their fruit production remained unacceptable to God. The Psalms and the prophets illustrated the depth of Israel's failures by revealing various ways God would punish Israel. However, there is still hope for Israel, as the narratives of the minor prophets reveal.

The Pseudepigrapha books mostly supported "the vine" motif by paralleling the Old Testament prophetic narratives regarding Israel's identification as "the vine." However, a distinction between these books and the Old Testament sources is that they unveiled and added the messianic concept. These books served as good sources for strengthening the thesis. But again, a reader of these books must remember that they are pseudonymous, and there is also the concern that they teach a separate doctrine.

The New Testament provided three different scenarios regarding “the vine” motif. In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus uses a parable to illustrate how Israel killed the previous prophets that God had given Israel as leaders and how they were going to kill God’s son. In this pericope, Jesus informs the hearers that the kingdom of God will be taken away from Israel and given to those who will bear proper fruit. Jesus identified himself as “the true vine” in John’s gospel and conveyed the importance of the branch staying connected to Him as “the true vine.” In Revelation, those who chose not to abide were cast out, withered, and burned. Jesus is “the true vine” because He fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies; He followed God’s commands, leading up to His death, burial, and resurrection. He now advocates for those who choose Him and become a symbolic branch that abides. The vine motif represented prosperity and well-being for the Jews in Jesus’ time, and it now represents not just a chosen group of people but Jesus and anyone who accepts Him, both Jew and Gentile.

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