Innocent Blood Traditions in Early Judaism and the Death of Jesus in Matthew

by

Catherine Marie Sider Hamilton

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Wycliffe College and the Biblical Department of the Toronto School of Theology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology awarded by the University of St. Michael's College

© Copyright by Catherine Marie Sider Hamilton 2013
Innocent Blood Traditions in Early Judaism

and the Death of Jesus in Matthew

Catherine Marie Sider Hamilton

Doctor of Philosophy

University of St. Michael’s College

2013

Abstract

How does Matthew’s use of the “innocent blood” motif illuminate the vexed question of the gospel’s attitude to Israel (the theological question) and its relation to contemporary Judaism (the socio-historical question)? Matt 27:25 plays a key role in the debate; it yields in current scholarship two opposite readings, one describing God’s final rejection of Israel and one describing God’s redemption of Israel, both in the blood of the son. This study agrees that 27:25 is central but argues that the opposing readings point to the lack of an appropriate control. That control may be found in two parts: first in the literary logic of the gospel in which 27:25 forms part of a central narrative sequence, the theme of innocent blood, and secondly in the relation of the innocent blood theme to two distinct traditions of interpretation, one found in Second Temple literature and the other in rabbinic literature. These traditions reflect on the problem of blood and its consequence for the land through the lens of two different scriptural stories: the story of Cain’s bloodshed and the flood in Genesis 3-6, and the story of the blood of Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24; they show significant concinnities with Matthew’s theme of innocent blood. To trace these traditions is to discover a vision reflecting, in the wake of exile, on the fate of the holy city and its people through a scriptural history of blood poured out upon the ground and its consequence both for devastation and for new life. In this context, Matt 27:25 and the theme of innocent blood
reveal a thoroughly Jewish way of reading scripture that finds in the stories of the faith the key to the logic of history, and in the fate of the people a divine purpose embracing both judgement and hope.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.......................................................................................................................... viii

Abbreviations..................................................................................................................................... viii

Chapter 1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1

I. Matt 27:25 and the *Intra Muros/Extra Muros* Debate................................................................. 2

II. The Theme of Innocent Blood: Questions of Method and Approach .......................... 13

III. Method......................................................................................................................................... 18

IV. Insistent Historicity...................................................................................................................... 25

V. Innocent Blood in Matthew and Second Temple and Rabbinic Literature ............... 29

VI. Conclusion .................................................................................................................................... 36

Chapter 2 The Theme of Innocent Blood in the Gospel of Matthew: A Narrative-Critical Study ........................................................................................................................................ 38

I. Innocent Blood in the Passion Narrative ...................................................................................... 40

II. Innocent Blood in the “Massacre of the Innocents”................................................................. 44

III. The Meaning of Innocent Blood through the Lens of the Blood of the Innocents: scholarly readings of 2:16 and 27:25 and an alternative proposition........................................... 52

IV. The Scope of Innocent Blood: the Question of Israel. .............................................................. 54


Chapter 3 Cain and Innocent Blood in Lamentations.................................................................. 64

I. Innocent Blood and Cain in Lamentations 4 ............................................................................ 70

II. Innocent Blood and Cain in Lamentations 1 and 2 ................................................................. 82
Chapter 4  *1 Enoch* and the Cosmic Sweep of Innocent Blood: From Cain and Blood to Flood and Judgement .......................................................... 88

I.  *1 Enoch* 6-11 and Genesis .......................................................... 89

II. From Bloodshed to Flood................................................................. 102

III. Flood as Eschatological Cataclysm .............................................. 106

IV. Cain/Blood-Flood/Judgement in *Animal Apocalypse* .................... 109

Chapter 5  Cain/Blood-Flood/Judgement Traditions................................. 117

I. Jubilees ......................................................................................... 117

II. The Damascus Document.............................................................. 139

III. Sibylline Oracles 3 ..................................................................... 159

IV. Susanna ...................................................................................... 170

V. Pseudo-Philo ................................................................................ 184

VI. Jude ............................................................................................ 198

VII. Summary ................................................................................... 213

Chapter 6  The Blood of Zechariah in Early Jewish Interpretive Tradition .......... 217

I. The Legend of Zechariah’s Blood.................................................... 219

II. Innocent Blood: The Problem of Pollution and the Fate of the Land........ 225

Chapter 7  Zechariah and Abel Traditions in Matthew............................... 239

I. The Blood of Zechariah.................................................................. 241

II. Innocent Blood and the Problem of Pollution .................................. 250
III. The Blood of Abel and the Cain/Blood-Flood/Judgement Traditions .......... 257

IV. The Influence of 1 Enoch? ................................................................. 276

V. Innocent Blood, Flood and Exile ....................................................... 284

Chapter 8 The Meaning of Innocent Blood in Matthew: Pollution and Purgation, Exile and Restoration ................................................................. 290

I. The Death of Jesus in Matthew as a Saga of Innocent Blood ................. 291

II. Innocent blood and the Fate of the People ......................................... 294

III. Exile and Innocent Blood in Matthew 2 ............................................ 303

IV. Exile and Innocent Blood in Matthew 1: The Genealogy .................... 308

V. Why, after all, Exile? The Logic of Innocent Blood ............................. 316

VI. What of Salvation? The crucifixion and resurrection narratives in relation to the problem of innocent blood and exile ........................................ 321

VII. “This is My Blood…”: Matt 23:35 and 26:28 .................................... 337

VIII. Salvation for “His People” .............................................................. 342

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................... 354
List of Appendices

Appendix A: Elements of Cain/Blood-Flood/Judgement Sequence in Individual Texts

Appendix B: Wisdom of Solomon and the Cain/Blood-Flood/Judgement Traditions
Acknowledgements

Some portions of chapters 1, 3, 7 and 8 have appeared in another form in my article ““His Blood Be upon Us”: Innocent Blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew,” Catholic Biblical Quarterly 70 (2008): 82-100.


Abbreviations

In matters of style, including abbreviations, I have followed The SBL Handbook of Style (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999). I list below several abbreviations not included in the SBL Handbook:

ÉJ Études juives
HTS Hervormde Teologiese Studies
LNTS Library of New Testament Studies
SWR Studies in Women and Religion
Chapter 1
Introduction

At the last moment of Jesus’ trial, the Matthean Passion Narrative adds a verse that has variously fueled anti-Judaism and disturbed commentators ever since: “and...all the people said: ‘His blood be upon us and upon our children’” (καὶ...πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἔι πεν’ τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ’ ἡμῶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν, Matt 27:25).¹ The verse has become something of an interpretive crux. There is, on the one hand, the older and standard reading of the text: by this cry the people incur judgement, worked out in Matthew’s scheme of things in the destruction of Jerusalem. Daniel Marguerat puts it starkly: “By this cry, Israel has wiped itself out of the history of salvation.”² The vast majority of commentators agree; Matt 27:25 is part of a declaration of judgement – whether final, as Marguerat avers, or limited – against Israel.³ On the other hand, there is the more recent “ironic” reading. Jesus, as the angel tells Joseph, is the one who saves his people

¹ Translations of the biblical texts are from the NRSV; where they differ from the NRSV they are my own. For the problem of anti-Judaism in relation to 27:25 see below, pp. 2-9.
from their sins (1:21); his blood is poured out, as he tells his disciples at supper, for the forgiveness of sins (26:28); when the people call down his blood upon their heads they therefore invoke, albeit unwittingly, their own salvation.\footnote{1} Judgement here yields to redemption through the blood that saves.

What are we to make of these opposing interpretations? The two trace in Matthew’s Passion Narrative opposite themes: blood and destruction, on the one hand; blood and forgiveness, on the other. Both are coherent; in different ways both make sense of the Matthean context. That the same passage has given rise to readings thus diametrically opposed is curious. It suggests either that Matthew’s vision is at best ambiguous and at worst incoherent, or that there is a problem with the readings themselves. Is there, perhaps, a reading of the people’s cry that does justice both to the fate of Jerusalem in Matthew’s Gospel and to the promise of salvation, precisely to “his people”?

I. \textit{Matt 27:25} and the \textit{Intra Muros/Extra Muros} Debate

The question is important not only for a coherent reading of the Gospel, but because the passage has a large footprint in Matthean scholarship; the question of its import is tied to assessments of the Gospel’s attitude toward contemporary Judaism and (in turn) its social location.\footnote{2} The debate about Matthew’s social location has been formulated in terms of an opposition between \textit{intra}


muros and extra muros positions: is Matthew still to some degree within the boundaries of contemporary Judaism or definitively outside it? If, as the consensus now holds, the Judaism of Matthew’s day is in a period of flux after the loss of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem so that various visions for the future of the Jewish people are emerging, where is Matthew’s vision located in relation to this “formative” Judaism? Is Matthew’s Gospel part of a Jewish conversation about the future of the people, or does the Gospel, and the Matthean community, define itself over against formative Judaism? The cry of the people in 27:25 plays a significant role in these assessments of Matthew. It is seen to be central to Matthew’s attitude to Israel, central to the question of Matthew’s social location – and rightly so, for it is climactic. It stands at the decisive moment of Jesus’ trial: with these words the fate of Jesus is settled. Thus it forms the high point in the narrative arc: the conflict between Jesus and his opponents is here resolved; from this moment on, the action turns toward the cross. Structurally, therefore, the verse demands attention, while the image of blood upon the heads of “the whole people” raises vividly the question precisely of the place of Israel in Matthew’s vision.

Those scholars who read in Matt 27:25 a declaration of judgement against Israel tout court read in it also, for the most part, evidence of separation between Matthew’s community and formative Judaism. Indeed, for some this verse constitutes the climactic statement of that separation. The scene is a kind of historical re-construction (a hostile fiction, in F.W. Beare’s

---

3 For a helpful introduction to the range of intra and extra muros positions see Donaldson, Jews and Anti-Judaism, 46-50. See also Anders Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Phasaisic Intragroup Conflict,” JBL 127 (2008): 95-132, esp. 96-97 n. 3; Graham Stanton, A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 113-145. Stanton offers a detailed summary (through 1992) of scholarly readings of Matthew on Israel. As Runesson notes (97 n. 3), it is sometimes difficult to place scholars along the intra-extra muros spectrum. This is in part because, Runesson goes on to argue, the categories themselves do not reflect accurately the shape of Judaism in the first century. Runesson (following E. Sanders) describes a “common Judaism” incorporating a variety of sub-groups, some of which may have been at odds with each other, but all of which considered themselves Jewish, belonging to Israel. The tension reflected in Matthew’s Gospel belongs to “intragroup” conflict; the intra/extra muros categories describe clear-cut divisions (a monolithic Judaism) which owe their formulation to our own situation and not to the first century.

4 On formative Judaism see especially J. Andrew Overman, Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).
words), reflecting Matthew’s own situation vis-à-vis the contemporary Jewish community: the words arise out of and reflect not only tension, but hostility and division between the Jewish community and Matthew’s emerging Christian community. Beare reads behind these words a clean distinction between the Christian community and the Jews: “The whole story—peculiar to Matthew—is surely to be regarded as a further step in the Christian programme of laying the whole guilt on the Jews.” The question is focused by the problem of anti-Judaism, seen in the perspective of the tragic history of Christian anti-Semitism. In Matthew’s declaration of judgement and rejection, these scholars hold, there is a condemnation of Judaism springing from painful separation, a condemnation that has given rise to a long and brutal history of anti-Semitism. As Gundry puts it, Matthew here “heaps blame on the Jews,” revealing an anti-Judaism that will come to facilitate later violence and hostility against the Jewish people.

---

5 Beare, *Gospel according to Matthew*, 531.
7 Citation from Gundry, *Matthew*, 565. Not all commentators read the passage as anti-Jewish in intent: see, e.g., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Anti-Semitism and the Cry of ‘All the People’ [Mt. 27:25].” *TS* 26 (1965): 667-71; cf. René Girard, “Is There Anti-Semitism in the Gospels?” *Biblical Interpretation* 1, 3 (1993): 339-352. Fitzmyer (ibid., 668) notes, however, that it has been used (against its intent) anti-Judaically: “Probably no other New Testament text has been so often quoted against the Jews since it was first written.” Cf. J. Andrew Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: the Gospel according to Matthew* (The New Testament in Context; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 381-82. R. E. Brown (*Death of the Messiah*, 1. 831 n. 22), citing R. Pfisterer (“‘Sein Blut komme über uns….,'” in *Christen und Juden: Ihr Gegenüber vom Apostelkonzil bis heute* [ed. Wolf-Dieter Marsch and Karl Thieme; Mainz: Grünewald, 1961]: 19-37), states that the verse has been the “locus classicus for establishing God’s rejection of Israel” since the fourth century. Tertullian and Origen demonstrate the tendency in the early church. Origen (*Comm. Matt. 14* [PG 13.1236]) sees in the verse the “unseemly” thing that causes Jesus to issue Israel a writ of divorce: “And how is this not also unseemly: ‘His blood be upon us, and upon our children?’ For this reason when he was avenged, Jerusalem was encircled by armies and her desolation was at hand, and their house was taken away from her” and daughter Zion was abandoned. (It is worth noting that the anti-Jewish reading was not universal in the early church. Chrysostom, for all his fulminations against Judaizing Christians, sees in this passage not the condemnation of Israel but an opportunity for the mercy of God [*Hom. Matt. 86.2* (PG 58.766)].) Daniel Marguerat (*Le Jugement*, 376, above p. 1) demonstrates the verse’s anti-Judaizing possibilities for our own day. Many commentators see the passage itself as anti-Jewish. Ulrich Luz (*The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* [trans. J. Bradford Robinson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 146; cf. Beare, *Gospel according to Matthew*, 531) describes it as part of “the anti-Jewish theology of the judgement of Israel” and warns Christian readers against adopting that theology. I hope to show, however, that it is not Matthew’s Gospel that engenders anti-Judaism but its mis-interpretation: the anti-Judaic reading of the verse founders on the text itself. If there is judgement in the story of Jesus’ blood, there is also hope, precisely for Israel.
Jewish people” and “the church”: “Matthew’s composition of v 25 implies the transferal of the kingdom from the Jewish people to the church.”

Though these scholars concur in placing Matthew over against the Judaism of his day, they differ as to the degree of separation between communities. K.W. Clark and Lloyd Gaston represent the extreme extra muros position. They argue that Matthew’s Gospel depicts the final rejection of Israel with such force it could only have been written by a Gentile. “This gentile bias is the primary theme in Matthew,” Clark writes. “The Jews as a people are no longer the object of God’s salvation. They have rejected and killed God's son (21:39); now God has rejected them and shut them out of the kingdom, transferring his favor to Christian believers as the true Israel.”

Gaston finds in Matthew a similar message: “Israel rejected her Messiah, therefore God has rejected Israel”; Israel’s rejection of the Messiah is seen above all in the cry of “all the people” in Matt 27:25. The contrast between the cry of the people and the Gentile centurion’s confession of faith reveals Matthew’s Gentile location and hostility to Judaism. “The Gentiles’ gain was Israel’s loss.”

---

8 Gundry, Matthew, 565. Gundry represents a mediating extra muros position: the church is a mixed Jewish and Gentile community, still reaching out in mission to Jews; it is however differentiated from Judaism: “…Matthew wants to keep the church from losing interest in the conversion of Jews and prevent a retreat into Judaism by Jewish Christians” (ibid., 605; italics added).
10 Clark, “Gentile Bias,” 166. Clark adds that the accusation that the Jews as a people have rejected and killed God’s son is repeated in 27:4-5 (ibid., 166 n. 2). In 27:4-5, however, Judas alone is at issue. Is 27:4-5 in Clark’s footnote a misprint for 27:24-25, where the whole people take Jesus’ blood on themselves? It would seem to be the more relevant passage, given Clark’s concern here with the whole people. In any case, 27:24-25 is deliberately linked to Judas’ declaration of responsibility for Jesus’ blood in 27:4-5: whether or not Clark intended to identify it as part of the Matthean ‘rejection of Israel’ theme, it is connected to the passages in which he sees that theme.
11 Gaston, “Messiah,” 31-32, citation 32. “Matthew’s passion story…seeks even more to emphasize the guilt of Israel….At the end it is “all the people” who say “His blood be on us and on our children” (27:25; cf. 27:22, 21:43).” By contrast, the Gentile centurion recognizes Jesus as God’s son (ibid., 32).
12 Gaston, ibid., 32.
Others see in the Gospel the rejection of Israel and its replacement by the church – evidence, that is, of definitive separation from Judaism – but Jewish authorship and some Jewish membership in the Matthean community, and to some degree continued concern for Israel. Kingsbury represents this mediating extra muros view. For Matthew, Kingsbury says, “contemporary Judaism was, as a saying of Jesus puts it, a “plant which my heavenly Father has not planted [and] will be rooted up” (15:13).” The real readers of Matthew’s Gospel were Jewish and Gentile Christians “no longer within Judaism but outside it,” yet they lived in close proximity to Jews and engaged in mission among them. Kingsbury’s reading of Matt 27:25 supports this analysis of Matthew’s social location: here, in his view, the Jewish leaders and crowds reject God’s Messiah and “call down God’s wrath on themselves and their nation.” Meier concurs: In “[t]he formal rejection of Jesus by the Jews” (i.e. Matt 27:25), “[t]he Kingdom of God is taken from this people and given to another people, the church.” The church is a Jewish-Christian community separated from the synagogue. Thus in one (broad) trajectory of interpretation the interchange between Pilate and the people in 27:24-25 reveals a theology in which judgement follows upon Israel’s rejection of God and constitutes God’s rejection of Israel, a theology that points to separation between the Matthean community and contemporary Judaism (whether the Matthean community is entirely Gentile or still in part Jewish) and that is in its effects (and, for some, in intent) anti-Judaic.

---


15 Kingsbury, ibid., 127.


At the opposite pole in the *intra/extra muros* debate is Anthony J. Saldarini: Matthew’s outlook and practice are thoroughly Jewish. Far from describing the rejection of Israel, Matthew sees Jesus as a reforming prophet and kingly leader “at the center of Judaism;” these are Jewish followers-of-Jesus for whom Israel and the Jewish people stand at the centre of the story.\(^{18}\) J. Andrew Overman says, similarly, “Matthew’s Gospel is also a Judaism….Matthew claims, like so many others in his time and place, to speak about and for Israel and its God.”\(^{19}\) For this view too, as for the *extra muros* view, there is a mediating position, one that finds in Matthew some evidence of self-differentiation from central aspects of formative Judaism but also identification with Israel.\(^{20}\) These readings also find Matt 27:25 to be important to the question of Matthew’s relation to formative Judaism. Interestingly, however, rather than appealing to the ironic reading, the *intra muros* views deal with Matt 27:25 by seeing in it only a limited “judgement and rejection” theme. The various *intra muros* positions agree that 27:25 has to do in some way with judgement and points to the destruction of Jerusalem; it does not, however, describe the wholesale judgement and rejection of Israel. In the most common version of the reading, only the

\(^{18}\) Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 54. For this view, see also J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism* – though note Stanton’s caution (*Gospel for a New People*, 123 n. 2): Overman in *Matthew’s Gospel* is not always consistent; some of his comments suggest a distinction between Matthew’s community and “formative Judaism.” See also Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations,” 95-132. Runesson argues that the gospel describes a situation of intra-Jewish conflict with Pharisaic groups in particular (see also Runesson, “Behind the Gospel of Matthew: Radical Pharisees in Post-War Galilee?” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 376 (2010): 460; cf. Davies and Allison, ibid., 3.692-704). Alan F. Segal (“Matthew’s Jewish Voice,” in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches* [ed. David Balch; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 3-37, citation p. 35) proposes that there were “Christian Pharisees” as well as “Jewish Pharisees” at Matthew’s time; Matthew’s hostility to Pharisees indicates that “Christians were still concerned with what was happening in Jewish communities and synagogues, [and] still found there.” It is not far from this argument to Runesson’s point that the terms “Christian” and “Jewish” (or, for that matter, *intra* and *extra muros*) do not describe the situation accurately.

\(^{19}\) Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis*, 9.

Jewish leaders are condemned, while the people as a whole are not. Donaldson is representative: the Jewish opponents of Jesus, chiefly the Jewish leaders, have in Matthean thought been rejected by God. Yet “it is overstepping the evidence to say that Matthew views Israel as a monolithic whole that has been rejected as a massa perditionis in favour of a Gentile Church.”

So, too, Saldarini: “all the people” in 27:24-25 “are not the people of Israel in a theological sense, but a subgroup who are led away from Jesus by the institutional leaders of Israel.” In this verse Matthew describes the destruction of Jerusalem as judgement upon “an actual political and social segment of Jerusalem, not the people of Israel as a symbolic whole” and explains “to his own Jewish subcommunity” the opposition they experience from the Jewish community leadership.

To the extent, that is, that this view sees judgement to be implied by 27:25, it limits that judgement to a subgroup within Israel and sees in this subgroup’s opposition to Jesus an explanation for the destruction of Jerusalem.

By this reading, Matthew cannot accurately be called anti-Jewish, in part because the gospel (and Matt 27:25) does not describe condemnation or rejection of Israel as a whole, but only of a particular subgroup within Israel (the religious leaders; the Pharisees), and in part because Matthew’s community itself was part of the contemporary face of Judaism, one of a variety of groups which together constituted “formative” or “common” Judaism. “The crises and questions that provoked the Gospel in the first place [are] the struggles and tensions within and

---


24 Saldarini, ibid., 33.

among competing Judaisms in Palestine in the late first century.”\footnote{26}{Overman, \textit{Church and Community}, 26.} The corollary of this view is that anti-Jewish readings of the gospel and of 27:25 in particular are indefensible. Warren Carter puts it forcefully: “Christian interpretations of 27:25 have propagated a virulent anti-Judaism by claiming that the saying attests Israel’s rejection of God’s anointed and God’s permanent rejection of Israel. Such attempts are textually unsustainable and morally and religiously repugnant….The gospel does not propose for a moment the permanent rejection of all Jewish people.”\footnote{27}{Carter, \textit{Matthew and the Margins}, 528-29. Cf. Overman, \textit{Church and Community in Crisis}, 381-84.}

Is Matt 27:25, then – and Matthew’s Gospel as a whole – anti-Jewish, describing the rejection of Israel (and locating Matthew’s community outside Judaism to some degree)? Or is such a reading of 27:25 “textually unsustainable”? Is Matthew in fact intimately involved with first century Judaism, revealing in his Gospel a passionate concern for the future of Israel? Timothy Cargal and John Paul Heil’s literary readings complement the \textit{intra muros} perspectives. They find neither hostility to Israel in Matt 27:25 nor the condemnation of the Jewish people, but rather a deep concern for Israel and its future as the people of God. Indeed, the ironic reading goes further in its treatment of 27:25 than even Saldarini or Overman, with their thorough-going \textit{intra muros} positions. For Cargal (and cf. Carroll and Green) Matt 27:25 is not to be read as describing only a limited judgement. Rather, it speaks to the hope of salvation for “the whole people” in the blood of Jesus now called down upon the people’s head. Hence the gospel is concerned finally not with judgement, either limited or universal, upon Israel, but with Israel’s salvation.

It is noteworthy, however, that while the ironic reading complements the \textit{intra muros} perspective, it has not been marshalled in its defense. Matthew is rescued from condemning all
Israel not by the argument that the people’s cry points to the promise of salvation, but by a limitation of the judgement that, these scholars agree, Matt 27:25 implies. The problem with the ironic reading, Davies and Allison judge, is that it does not adequately take account of the ominous overtones of the people’s cry. “Although the cry of the people offers irony,” they say in response to Cargal, “it seems excessively subtle to invoke 26.28 and urge that the crowd, despite itself, is calling for the blood of Jesus to cover its sins….This goes against the context….His text nurtures the feeling of tragedy.” Matt 27:25 explains the destruction of Jerusalem in the Jewish War. Davies and Allison adopt the “limited judgement” reading. It is not all Israel that is here at issue for condemnation or for destruction, they conclude (with the majority); the passage points only to the destruction of A.D. 70, and makes it clear that it is evil leaders and not the people as a whole who are responsible.

Davies and Allison are right to note that the passage points to tragedy: “his blood be upon us” speaks, in the context of the demand for the crucifixion of “this righteous man,” of doom and not of joy. Yet Davies’ and Allison’s “limited judgement” reading also goes against the context. Matthew brings the passage to a climax in the words not of the leaders but of “the whole people.” On a straightforward reading of the text, Matthew includes not just the leaders but the people, indeed “the whole people” (πᾶς ὁ λαός), emphatically, in the decision to shed Jesus’ blood and

---

28 Carter (Matthew and the Margins, 529) appends the ironic reading’s promise of forgiveness to his “limited judgement” reading. His main point, however, is that 27:25 refers only to a subgroup.
29 Davies and Allison, The Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 592.
30 Ibid.
31 For the ominous character of the words “his blood be upon us” see Fitzmyer, “Anti-Semitism,” 669 and n. 10 on the expression in the Hebrew Scriptures. Cf. Hans Kosmala, “‘His Blood on Us and on Our Children’ (The Background of Mat. 27, 24-25),” ASTI 7 (1968-69): 94-126. “His blood upon us” denotes bloodguilt, responsibility for wrongful shedding of blood, and implies disaster. Fitzmyer points to 2 Sam 1:16; 3:28-29; 1 Kings 2:33; Josh 2:19 (MT); Jer 28:35 (LXX); Ez 18:13; Lev 20:9 (MT); T. Levi 16:3. Cf. Deut 19:10. 2 Sam 3:28-29 is illustrative: after Joab kills Abner in cold blood, David says, “I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the Lord for the blood of Abner son of Ner. May the guilt fall on the head of Joab, and on all his father’s house, and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge, or who is leprous…or who falls by the sword.” For the ominous character of the people’s cry see further Chapter 2, pp. 40-42; on the problem of bloodguilt see esp. Chapter 3.
its consequences. The difficulty with the *intra muros* reading of 27:25 as it stands – the claim that 27:25 does not mean, in Matthew’s terms, judgement upon Israel because it is the evil leaders and not the people who are responsible – is that this reading, too, is textually problematic. Matthew speaks of judgement in this passage, as even proponents of the *intra muros* readings agree, and the passage itself does not suggest that that judgement is limited.

How, then, are we to find hope for Israel, the good news that the ironic readings (and indeed all the *intra muros* readings, in varying degrees) insist is to be found in Matthew’s Gospel and in the cry of the people that stands at the Gospel’s climax? The verse has rightly had a place at the centre of the debate about the meaning of Matthew’s Gospel with respect to Israel, for it is striking. In structural terms, it constitutes the turn of the action of the trial. From this moment, the outcome of the trial is decided: Jesus will be crucified. In human terms also it stands out, for the image of blood upon the heads of a people, or a person, is fearsome. And in moral terms it demands to be reckoned with because, as Montefiore notes, it has been responsible for “oceans of human blood.”

In theological terms, finally, it raises (with Paul in Romans 9-11) the question of God’s faithfulness. How shall the promises of God be fulfilled for the people of God, when there is blood upon their heads? Matt 27:25 raises questions not only of socio-historical but of theological and moral import. It is not only a question of where Matthew’s Gospel stands in relation to Judaism. It is also a question of how the Gospel understands the good news of Jesus “son of David, son of Abraham” for the people of David and of Abraham – and how, therefore, those who read the Gospel understand Jesus and Israel, judgement and salvation, the justice and the faithfulness of God.

32 For a discussion of the phrase πᾶς ὁ λαός and Matthew’s use of it here see below, Chapter 8, 299-302.
This thesis begins from the premise that Matt 27:25, the problem of the blood upon the heads of the people, is indeed central to the Gospel. It seeks to take seriously both the ominous character of the passage, the overtones of judgement and destruction heard in it by both *intra* and *extra muros* readings, and also the promise of salvation to “the people” (ὁ λαός, 1:21) with which the Gospel begins. It seeks, that is, to find the logic by which, in Matthew’s Gospel, both blood upon “the whole people” and salvation for “his people” may be true.

That both judgement and salvation may be true is in fact the conviction of the ironic reading. Though scholars have tended to notice only their focus on salvation “in his blood,” the ironic readings in fact attempt to hold together salvation and judgement. Cargal ends with the blood that saves, resting unexpectedly upon the heads of the people who intend destruction. But he does not dismiss judgement entirely: “They have ‘sinned [against] innocent blood’ (Matt 27. 4), but Matthew still prays that God will forgive ‘the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of thy people Israel’…by the application of Jesus’ blood upon them and their children (Matt 27. 25).”

The blood upon the people’s heads is a *double-entendre*; it has two levels of meaning, sin and forgiveness, judgement and redemption, at once. Carroll and Green make the same assessment: “If Matthew rivets our attention on the blood of Jesus, therefore, it is not simply to point the finger at the responsible parties” including, in their view, Judas, Pilate, the religious leaders and the people of Jerusalem; a responsibility that explains Jerusalem’s destruction. “No, the irony is thick here. The death of Jesus—precisely because it is the shedding of innocent, sacrificial

---

34 Cargal, “‘His Blood Be upon Us,’” 112 (italics added). See also 109-110: “One level of meaning that Matthew does intend to assert is that the Jewish nation must accept at least partial responsibility for the execution of Jesus. But at a second level of meaning, he also relates the words of the cry of ‘all the people’ to the possibility of forgiveness opened to the Jewish people and others by Jesus’ shed blood.”

35 Cargal, ibid., 110-11.
blood—creates the possibility of forgiveness even for the persons who bear responsibility for putting him to death.”

My thesis seeks to build on the ironic reading’s fundamental insight: that in Matthew’s Gospel both judgement and salvation play a part, centrally for “his people,” Israel the ancient λαός of God. It argues, however, that the logic of the Gospel is not exactly ironic. Davies and Allison’s objection stands: Matt 27:25 conveys a sense of doom. Though Matt 27:25 is important, even climactic, it is not precisely there that salvation for the people is found; the people do not, in the act of calling down the blood of Jesus upon their heads, work out unwittingly their own salvation. The blood that they shed, Jesus’ innocent blood, they do shed for judgement; “his blood upon us” brings disaster to city and people. How then might both judgement and salvation be true? An answer to that question, this thesis suggests, may be found in the theme of innocent blood.

II. The Theme of Innocent Blood: Questions of Method and Approach

In order to read Matt 27:25 accurately, it is necessary to see it in context. The cry of the people, I propose, does not stand alone. In its emphasis on blood it points to and forms part of a theme of “innocent blood,” a theme that is central to the Gospel. The theme of innocent blood runs through the Passion Narrative and is adumbrated already in the birth narrative; it finds its climax not only in the cry of the people at 27:25 but in the death and proleptic resurrection that follow (27:50-56; cf. 28:1-8). We begin by tracing in Matthew’s Gospel this theme of innocent blood.

As is the case with the ironic reading, our method is therefore first of all literary and compositional, seeking to recognize and work with the narrative character of the gospel, its coherence as a literary whole. It is, I suggest, in the connections the Gospel draws for the reader

---

36 Carroll and Green, The Death of Jesus, 47-48. Note that Carroll and Green also adopt the “limited judgement” reading.
between the blood upon the heads of the people in 27:25 and the problem of innocent blood elsewhere in the Gospel that the meaning of the cry of the people begins to become clear.

Yet the literary study of the Gospel, attention to its narrative character, is not sufficient in itself to yield Matthew’s meaning with respect to innocent blood, and this for two reasons. In the first place, a narrative reading of the theme of innocent blood points us beyond the narrative itself to an interpretive context with which the narrative interacts. Secondly, that context sets Matthew’s treatment of Jesus’ blood against the background of the early Jewish idea of innocent blood and the paradigm of purity and pollution within which it has its meaning.

i. First, the interpretive context

Although historical critics find the key to Matt 27:25 in the Gospel’s historical situation, so that the scene is taken to be an historical reconstruction reflecting Matthew’s own situation vis-à-vis the contemporary Jewish community, the most obvious context for these words is not simply historical but scriptural. Pilate’s words echo almost verbatim the words of Daniel at the climax of Susanna, as the innocent and righteous woman is condemned to death: καθαρός ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματός ταύτης (Sus 3:46). The scriptural resonance of Matthew’s Gospel is a given in Matthean scholarship. What has not been noticed, however, is that Matthew appeals to scripture, here and in other passages that deal with innocent blood, in a certain way – not directly, but through the lens of traditions of interpretation of scripture. Matthew echoes Susanna precisely at the point where Susanna’s story becomes explicitly a story of innocent blood: “I am innocent of this woman’s blood.” Nor is it only with the biblical story of Susanna that Matthew’s treatment of the death of Jesus as a matter of innocent blood has affinities. The problem of innocent blood

---

37 So, in fact, do a number of narrative critics, who find in the narrative of the Gospel a pointer to the real readers of Matthew’s text (Carter) or to Matthew’s social location (Kingsbury).

as Matthew presents it has deep scriptural roots, beginning not only from Susanna, but from
Genesis and the story of Cain and Abel, from Chronicles and the story of Zechariah (cf. Matt
23:35), from Jeremiah and the blood that profanes the temple (Matt 27:9), from David and the
blood of Uriah (Matt 1:6).

A careful reading of Matthew’s “innocent blood” passages immediately reveals,
moreover, that they show the influence not only of the scriptural texts, but of a rich history of
reflection upon those texts in the literature of early Judaism. In early Jewish literature on the one
hand and in rabbinic literature on the other, several texts dealing with the biblical figures of Cain
and Abel (early Jewish literature) and Zechariah (rabbinic literature) reflect on the problem of
blood – innocent blood – in much the same way, using the same terms, evidencing the same
concerns, beginning from the same scriptural stories, as does Matthew. These texts include, with
respect to Abel, *1 Enoch’s Book of the Watchers* and *Animal Apocalypse* as well as a long list of
texts from Lamentations to *Jubilees* to Susanna and Jude. In these texts a related set of traditions
emerges linking bloodshed to flood and the devastation of the land, but also, finally, to the hope
of cleansing and new creation. Rabbinic reflection on the death of Zechariah (cf. *Lives of the
Prophets* 23) likewise links innocent blood to destruction, in this case of temple and Jerusalem in
particular. Matthew’s description of the death of Jesus, that is, stands within a shared tradition of
reflection on key scriptural texts: it is these scriptural traditions, traceable quite broadly in the
literature of early Judaism, handed down in that literature and in the communities of faith from
which the literature emerges, that form in Matthew’s Gospel the background of the people’s cry
in 27:25. To understand the meaning of that cry it is therefore necessary to trace the traditions,
the narratives of blood and flood (or Jerusalem’s destruction) and restoration, and their echoes, in
scripture and beyond (what we call) scripture in early Jewish literature more broadly.
Thus the influence of early Jewish interpretive traditions in Matthew’s Gospel suggests that Matthew’s narrative is not (as narrative readings often argue) a “closed world”; that narrative readings of the Gospel demand, if they are to do justice to the narrative itself, interaction with the world from which the narrative emerges.\(^{39}\) This study proposes, therefore, a different interpretive template, one that pays attention not only to the narrative shape but also to the essentially scriptural character of the text, not least in Matt 27:24-25, and the interpretive tradition within which the text’s use of scripture stands. These two things, scripture and tradition, the world-shaping power of the biblical text and that text’s vibrant and varied life in the communities that read scripture, shape the Gospel text. They constitute the warp and woof of its world; to understand the world of the Gospel it is necessary to read with ears attuned to the echoes of scripture – but also, and crucially, to the interpretive life of biblical texts in the literature of early Judaism. To do this, to seek the meaning of Matt 27:24-25 in a scriptural and early Jewish literary context, is to discover a vision that is theological as well as narrative, and determinedly concrete. The effects of innocent blood are not abstract: they are seen, by these early readers of scripture, to unfold “on the ground.” The literary complex of blood and pollution, flood and new creation, arising from a reading of scripture finds its real outworking (these texts suggest) in time and place: in the history of the people and above all in the fate of Jerusalem, a fate that encompasses both devastation and hope.

---

\(^{39}\) For the narrative as a world complete in itself see e.g. David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark As Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), esp. 4-5: “As a coherent narrative, Marks’ Gospel presents us with a “story world,” a world that engages and grips us, a world such as we experience when we get “lost” in reading a novel or watching a film” (4). “It is this story world that readers enter” (5). Cf. R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia, Fortress: 1983), esp. 4 (cf. 231): “The narrative world of the gospel is therefore neither a window on the ministry of Jesus nor a window on the history of the Johannine community. Primarily at least, it is the literary creation of the author.” For the gospel narrative’s stubborn refusal to be only a literary world created by the author, cf. Anders Runesson, “Behind the Gospel of Matthew,” 460: “we always read from a certain place and…nothing floats freely in time and space; we are anchored rather firmly in our own time. But, we may add, so were the Gospel writers”; “The original setting(s) in which the text was produced thus have explanatory force….We understand, and the ancients understood, from a certain place, within a certain mindset, that was--and still is--intertwined with lived realities.”
ii. Second, the problem of pollution

The narrative complex that connects bloodshed to flood, or the logic that moves from Zechariah’s blood to the destruction of Jerusalem, situates the problem of innocent blood and the death of Jesus as a matter of innocent blood within a paradigm strange to the contemporary reader but deeply rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures and still current in the Judaism of Matthew’s own time and after: the paradigm of bloodguilt and purgation, purity and pollution. In this paradigm, innocent blood raises the question of the life of the holy people in the presence of the holy God. It raises the problem of defilement. By describing Jesus’ death in terms of innocent blood, Matthew sets his Passion Narrative squarely within Jewish patterns of reflection on the destruction of Jerusalem. To read Matthew’s Gospel against the background of the problem of innocent blood and the interpretive traditions in which that problem is explored is to find the cry of the people and the question of Israel in Matthew’s Gospel illuminated. This thesis is, therefore, a reading of Matthew from the perspective of the idea of innocent blood (and the accompanying paradigm of purity and pollution) and against the background of innocent blood traditions in early Judaism.

---

40 For innocent blood in Matthew’s Gospel in relation to the problem of purity and pollution see below, esp. Chapters 7 and 8. For a discussion of innocent blood and the purity paradigm in the Hebrew Scriptures see esp. Chapter 3. See also my article, ““His Blood Be upon Us”: Innocent Blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew,” CBQ 70 (2008): 82-100.
III. Method

i. Narrative Criticism

Several studies have established the narrative character of Matthew’s Gospel and its centrality to the Gospel’s meaning. J. D. Kingsbury finds the thought of Matthew expressed “in the very story of Jesus being narrated”; in a narrative divisible (following Seymour Chatman) into story (events or plot, characters, settings) and discourse, he discovers a plot driven by the conflict between Jesus and Israel.41 Warren Carter traces in Matthew as storyteller not only a narrative about Jesus but the lineaments of Matthew’s historical community by joining the “authorial audience,” the audience addressed by the implied author and discovered in a narrative reading of the work.42 The work of these scholars builds on the ground-breaking work of Norman Peterson and David Rhoads on Mark, and Alan Culpepper on John, who set out to define various aspects of narrative criticism and apply it to the Gospels.43 These studies demonstrate the way in which meaning emerges from narrative shape. As in the case of any story-shaped narrative, the Gospel’s various scenes are woven together by all the tools of the narrative art. On the macro-level, the events of the plot and the characters as enactors of the plot carry the text forward and give it dramatic coherence. On the micro-level, Matthew employs the whole arsenal of literary devices to draw connections of word and theme between one passage and another, connections that help define and amplify the plot and so, again, create a coherent narrative. Like any other verse, Matt 27:25 stands within this complex literary logic; unlike any other verse, it stands also at a climactic moment of the plot, the moment of decision for or

against the death of the main character. It is likely, therefore, to have significant interconnections with other moments of the narrative. This study proposes, as a primary control, to seek those interconnections first at the level of literary devices (the way words are used to echo, to foreshadow, to bind disparate scenes together) in the hope that these interconnections will illuminate the overall theme and thrust of the Gospel.

On the micro-level, Matt 27:25 does not stand alone. It is part of a sequence of passages tied together by a focus on blood; not, however, blood pure and simple, without any further definition, but a particular kind of blood. The interchange with Pilate (27:24-25), as well as the quasi-legal formula of the people’s words in 27:25 name this blood “innocent blood,” and set it thereby within a framework governed by the Hebrew Scriptures and other early Jewish literature within which this term has its meaning. Verbal echoes connect 27:24-25 to 27:4 and 23:35: Pilate’s interchange with the people inverts that of Judas and the priests; the people’s cry echoes and realizes the words of Jesus in 23:35-36. These three passages, all dealing with innocent blood shed and its consequences, have in their turn broader resonances connecting the theme of innocent blood in 27:25 to the gospel’s beginning and end. We will trace these resonances, focusing in particular on the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem in 2:16-18 and the extensive parallelism between chapters 2 and 27 (with the blood of the children at the heart of both) to demonstrate that in the literary logic of the gospel, the theme of innocent blood and the pattern it weaves through the narrative is central. To understand its meaning is to grasp something of the meaning of the Gospel as a whole and therefore the Gospel’s attitude toward and relation to Israel; it is to address the question, in fact, of who “the whole people” is for Matthew and who is involved in the problem of innocent blood.
ii. Traditions of interpretation

The first step, then, is to consider 27:25 in its narrative sequence as part of an unfolding saga of innocent blood. The echoes and interconnections related to innocent blood, however, lie not only within the text but also beyond and behind it, in the world of the scriptures and of early Jewish literature more broadly. Matthew speaks within a tradition of reflection whose common elements are evident in shared groupings of terms and concepts and themes. Narrative criticism, therefore, while it is a necessary tool in the reading of the gospel, is not a sufficient one. In comparison to the works of (mostly relatively contemporary) fiction on which the methodology of narrative criticism is based, Matthew’s Gospel (like the Gospels in general) has both broader and more fluid boundaries and a different reference point.

Michael Fishbane has shown that the text of the Hebrew Scriptures as we have it is to a very large extent a process of reflection on itself. Job 7 incorporates, and in the process makes ironic, Psalm 8’s confident praise of the providence of God; Deut 22:25-27 applies the rules of homicide in Deut 19:4-6 to the case of a woman raped in a field; Hosea 12 makes the Jacob of Genesis 25-35 a type of Israel in its covenantal transgressions.44 Fishbane’s keen observation has two implications. In the first place, the writings of the scriptures are the foundation and reference point for the people’s ongoing utterance in the various circumstances of its life.45 These writings provide the words with which the people speak, the stories within which they narrate their history; these writings, for the people that claim them, both form the world and give it voice. At

45 James L. Kugel (Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era [Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1998], 14-18) lists four assumptions informing early Jewish interpretation of scripture that likewise point to the foundational character of scripture in the people’s life. First, the Bible is fundamentally cryptic. Its meaning is not exhausted by the apparent or surface meaning of the text; it refers indirectly also, to events and figures outside the passage itself, in any number of symbolic or esoteric or figural ways, and so it requires interpretation. Secondly, scripture is a book of instruction, and therefore fundamentally relevant. “Everything was held to apply to present-day readers and to contain within it an imperative for adoption and application to the readers’ own lives” (16). Third, scripture is “perfect and perfectly harmonious” (17). It speaks, in all its parts, with one voice and it tells one consistent story. Interpretation is, in part, the task of discovering scripture’s coherence. And finally, “all of Scripture is somehow divinely sanctioned, of divine provenance, or divinely inspired” (18).
the same time, the community re-writes the writings: as James Kugel puts it, these readers of scripture are exegetes, but exegetes with “an axe to grind.” In tracing the way in which the community of faith speaks in each present circumstance through and in response to its scriptures – formed by scripture, even as it forms new scripture or reforms scripture in the process – Fishbane describes a way of reading scripture that is also a “being-read-by” scripture. Scripture shapes the world, so that present experience is articulated through and in interpretation of and in protest against scripture.

Hans Frei has articulated from the perspective of early Christian interpretation the world-shaping character of scripture. For the western Christian reader of the Bible before the rise of historical criticism in the eighteenth century, scripture rendered the world: the Bible was taken to describe real events and, in fact, to compass the whole history of the world. In its several histories, it told the one true story of the world. Further, because “the world truly rendered by combining biblical narratives into one was indeed the one and only real world, it must in principle embrace the experience of any present age and reader.” For the pre-critical – early Jewish and Christian – reader, history is not, as we tend to see it, something that shapes scripture; rather it is shaped by scripture, or, perhaps better, scripture reveals its shape.

Frei’s insight, this vision of a scripture-rendered world, is crucial for understanding the NT and the Jewish and Christian literature that surrounds it. For the writers of the gospels, as also for Susanna and Lamentations and 1 Enoch, scripture shapes the world. What happens and

---

47 Hans W. Frei, The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974). It is perhaps important to note that Frei and Kugel are engaged in fundamentally different projects. Frei’s “narrative shape” is conducive to a canonical reading of Scripture; Kugel is interested in discrete traditions and the ways in which texts, legal and narrative alike, are independently transformed. Nevertheless, for both ways of reading, it is the biblical text that provides the material which shapes the world.
49 Hans W. Frei, Eclipse, 3.
what will happen is told in terms of what has already come to pass: it is in scripture that these books find the words and the logic, the laws and prayers and narratives, to describe their world. So Matthew quotes Susanna, and Susanna in its turn echoes and, indeed, inverts Genesis. Every event, every story finds its shape and its meaning, or the precedent against which it pulls, in the biblical events and stories. Therefore the biblical figures and events become foundational; through these, the present history of the world is told.

Frei, of course, proposes an overall narrative shape that becomes for the reading community the shape of the world, and a figural method of reading. Fishbane and Kugel, by contrast, are interested in the traditions of interpretation to which the foundational character of scripture gives rise. The method is exegetical. Kugel in particular emphasizes the exegetical nature of early Jewish reading of scripture. Every reading is a careful and minute study of the details of the scriptural text; every interpretation is prompted by gaps or story-openings in the text, in the assurance that every story that needs to be told is present in nuce in the words of scripture. The Joseph story (for instance) is taken up and examined virtually verse by verse;
one exegetical move is adopted and another added to it, and an interpretive tradition is born.⁵² In the process scripture leaves the limits of the text: the story of Joseph grows beyond the bounds of its biblical telling to incorporate, in the traditions passed down by various communities of faith, various non-biblical details: citrons and knives, for example, and a court full of women who are so struck by Joseph’s beauty that they cut their hands, all of these events serving to explicate Genesis’ oddly-placed phrase “after these things.”⁵³

Hence the verses and stories of scripture, read through the lens of scripture, become the source material and the foundation for ongoing reflection, within the canon and outside it. Fishbane describes the process in ancient Israel as the dynamic between traditum and traditio, “between (increasingly) authoritative teachings or traditions whose religious-cultural significance is vital (and increasingly fundamental), and the concern to preserve, render contemporary, or otherwise reinterpret these teachings or traditions in explicit ways for new times and circumstances.”⁵⁴ Yet the traditio is not simply a way to make an old text contemporary. It was seen, Fishbane argues in a discussion of legal exegesis, as “part of the full potential of the original legal revelation,” “as having some divine status from its very onset.”⁵⁵ Thus the notion developed that “the continuous inspiration of the traditum upon its faithful exegetes is nothing other than the continuous revelation of God through that traditum,” and the

⁵² Kugel, In Potiphar’s House. See also Kugel, Traditions of the Bible, a vast compendium of various interpretive traditions arising from biblical texts.

⁵³ Kugel, In Potiphar’s House, 28-44. Or, again (ibid., 160-62) the unnamed “man” whom Lamech kills in Gen 4:23 comes to be identified with Cain, for Lamech says he has killed “a man” (יִבְשָׂם) and יבשׂם is not only a significant word (because it seemed to exegetes to refer especially to quasidivine or angelic men) but is used prior to Lamech’s speech only once in Genesis: to describe Cain (Gen 4:1).

⁵⁴ Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel, 8. Jer 17:21-22, for instance, expands and makes explicit the general prohibition of work on the Sabbath found in Exod 20:8 and Deut 5:12. Jeremiah deliberately echoes Deuteronomy (both texts use the verb “to heed”) and repeats Deuteronomy’s reference to God’s command, but what God commands in Jeremiah includes not only “do not do any work,” but also and specifically, “do not bear a burden,” “do not bring it into the gates of Jerusalem,” “do not take any burden from your homes.” These innovations thus gain the status of Sinaitic commandments (ibid., 132-33).

⁵⁵ Ibid., 277.
exegetical tradition “partakes of the power and authority of the divine traditum itself.” The foundational character of scripture creates traditions of interpretation that are in their turn foundational.

Those who read scripture set themselves in these traditions, traditions fluid but authoritative as a community’s received reading. A communal process, these developing traditions of interpretation, underlies each new reading of scripture. To understand a particular text, it is necessary to see it as part of an ongoing tradition. The reference point, then, of the literature of ancient Israel and early Judaism, and, as we will see, of Matthew’s Gospel, is the foundational stories of scripture and the world narrated in them. The boundaries of this literature are the traditions of reflection on these stories, traditions already passed down in the scriptures themselves and still being formulated in contemporary communities of faith. Matthew, like various Second Temple and rabbinic works, operates, that is, not only with “echoes of scripture” but in an echo chamber. Richard Hays is quite right that the scriptures provide the reference point and context within which Paul (and other NT writers) live and move and think. Behind their words lie all the words of scripture and the worlds these words create. But behind their words also stand traditions and communities of reflection, traditions in which their words in turn may play a part, traditions that have in some cases found their way into the canon and in other cases have not, but spring from the canon and affect it nonetheless. Matthew’s use of the

56 Ibid.
57 The interweaving of scripture and its life in the community by which the text and the interpreting community together describe and inhabit a scriptural world is characteristic, in fact, not only of the early Jewish and Christian communities, but still today. We know not only that magi came from the East to find the infant King of the Jews, but that there were 3 of them, that they were also kings, and that their names were Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. None of these details is in Matthew’s story of the magi, but the received tradition knows them all, and many a Christmas pageant enacts them. Note, too, that the idea that they are kings arises from a close reading of Matthew’s text. His picture of the magi alludes to Psalm 72, where kings of the east bring gifts, including gold, to Jerusalem. The tradition that the magi are kings recognizes the textual allusion to the psalm and attributes to Matthew’s eastern gift-bearers the kingly attributes of the gift-bearers in the psalm. It is, that is, an exegetical insight handed on by the interpreting community.
58 My thanks to Prof. Terry Donaldson for this felicitous phrase.
innocent blood motif points to two particular instances of such traditions of reflection. To tease out these traditions is to find Matthew’s innocent blood motif, and the Gospel as a whole, illuminated.

IV. Insistent Historicity

The interpretive process as Fishbane and Kugel describe it for early Judaism, as well as the world-rendering capacity of the scriptural text as Frei describes it, raises the question of history. As Frei notes for early interpretation of scripture, events have meaning in the perspective of the scriptural history, and the scriptural narrative is about events, the real history of the world.\(^{59}\)

Kugel points out that the interpretive expansions of individual biblical texts, while determinedly exegetical, had an eye also for the historical shape of the whole. The story of Lamech was in the exegete’s reading of scripture naturally connected to the story of Cain, not only because Lamech mentions Cain (Gen 4:24), but because “this text was part of a great and harmonious sacred history, one which, therefore, could hardly be read in isolation or analyzed atomistically.”\(^{60}\)

Lamech’s references to his killing of a man and a boy were, if cryptic, nevertheless “facts to be fitted into an overall understanding of this primeval period and its various inhabitants.”\(^{61}\)

This historical shaping is evident within the biblical canon itself. A psalm, for instance, may be titled “Psalm of David,” so that as song of thanksgiving or cry for aid it has a place in the life of David narrated in the books of Samuel and 1 Kings. Jonah goes with amusing reluctance to Nineveh specifically, so that in the fable’s background the Assyrian defeat of the northern kingdom sounds. Isaiah’s vision of the thrice-holy God occurs “in the year that King Uzziah died”; Obadiah utters imprecations against Israel’s neighbour and battle-foe Edom; Jeremiah

---

61 Ibid., italics original.
speaks his prophecies in the reigns of Zedekiah and Jehoiakin. “In the twenty-fifth year of our exile” (Ezek 40:1), Ezekiel has a vision of the eschatological temple and the river of life.

Brevard Childs has found in some of this labeling a canonical purpose: the ascription to David, and in several cases a reference to a specific event in the life of David, links Psalms 51-66, for example, to the books of Samuel and gives these otherwise disparate texts a literary and theological unity that serves to guide interpretation. Yet surely, too, the obvious function of the ascription is to give these separate texts a particular historical coherence, a coherence that has a canon-forming function. The unity (or perhaps better, the relationship) achieved by means of the ascription, that is, is not only literary and theological, but deliberately and specifically historical: this is a psalm of David.

The Psalms here serve to illustrate the insistent historicity of the biblical texts, and its unifying function. The biblical texts resist the separation of literary and theological meaning from historical context. Biblical meaning is not general, in the eyes of its earliest interpreters. It is anchored in the particular history of a particular people (and in the case of the “Psalms of David,” of a particular man), as the books of Genesis and Samuel and Chronicles record that history. The early Christian interpreters of the Bible, as Frei notes, appear also to have read the texts in this way, as texts telling an interconnected history. Rabbinic interpreters not only saw a historical coherence in the biblical texts, but developed it. Kugel notes the “integrative” interest of the rabbis: “one of the most characteristic traits of rabbinic exegesis as a whole is its endless establishing of connections between Pentateuchal verses and other, quite “distant” biblical

---

62 Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 508-525. See also Child’s study, “Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis,” *JS* 16 (1971): 137-150 (citation 137), examining “the movement toward historicization involved in those instances in which events in the life of David are offered as the setting for the composition of a Psalm.”
texts…” with the effect of making those texts part of the Pentateuchal history. So a verse from Proverbs is read “not as a general truth but as a specific allusion to Joseph, part of a speech pronounced by his father’s “image” that day in Potiphar’s house.” The writings in general (Job, Ecclesiastes, the Psalms) were taken to refer to biblical history; the Song of Songs was read in its entirety as alluding to the various events of Israel’s history from the patriarchs to the construction of the tabernacle and beyond. Thus, Kugel says, “all of these non-historical texts were… turned into history via interpretation.”

This historical claim of the biblical texts, an emphasis on telling history already present in the texts themselves and further developed by their early Jewish and Christian readers, is then a crucial part of the scripture-rendered (and scripture-rendering) world of early Judaism and Christianity. The biblical narrative is, in the view of its early interpreters, concrete. It has to do with facts, as Kugel says, with events first (in the primordial history) in the life of the world, and then in the life of Israel. It is not just “history-like,” in Frei’s words; rather it refers to a particular history, signally (as the psalm titles attest) the history of David and of Israel. The traditions of interpretation that arise from the text thus reflect upon this particular history. If the story of Joseph in Potiphar’s house becomes positively baroque in the retelling, it is nonetheless the history of Joseph. Zechariah’s blood grows in the interpretive tradition into a bloodbath of epic proportions, but it is still the blood of Zechariah shed in the temple in the reign of Joash that is at

63 Kugel, In Potiphar’s House, 262.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 263 (italics original). Kugel sees in this historicizing impulse a canonizing interest: to relate Job and Proverbs to the history of Israel is to connect these books to the Pentateuch and its authority. But it is significant that it is not just to the Pentateuch but to the history recorded in the Pentateuch that the later texts are related. It is quite possible, after all, to relate wisdom to Pentateuchal law without tying it to the events surrounding the giving of the law. Yet the interpretive instinct of these rabbis, and the perception of the biblical texts revealed in it, is historical.
66 Cf. Frei, Eclipse, 10: “To state the thesis: a realistic or history-like (though not necessarily historical) element is a feature, as obvious as it is important, of many of the biblical narratives that went into the making of Christian belief.” This history-likeness is a function of their narrative shape: “a realistic narrative is like a historical account” (14). The early interpreters, however, reverse Frei: it is not that the accounts are history-like because they are realistic narratives; rather, they have a narrative shape because they purport to tell a history.
issue, and it is significant precisely for Israel. It finds its outworking in the event of Jerusalem’s
destruction. The figures of Joseph or of Zechariah, even when lifted out of their original biblical
context into a legend-like interpretive tradition, are not simply figures or types who stand alone,
but figures in a history, the history of Israel, and they have meaning as part of this history and for
Israel. Indeed, if the world constructed by the interpretive traditions arising from the story of
Zechariah or of Cain and Abel is imaginative, it is also concrete. The psalmist in Psalm 51
speaks (according to the psalm title) not of sin and cleansing generally or in the abstract, but of
David’s sin with Bathsheba; a real sin written even in blood (51:14) and requiring real purging.67
In the legends of Zechariah it is blood that seethes in the streets of Jerusalem and requires
recompense. The legends envision a real outworking of the consequences of Zechariah’s blood in
the history of the people of Jerusalem.68

To read Matthew, then, in the perspective of interpretive traditions is to set the Gospel
within a larger history, the history told in the scriptures of Israel, the history of Israel. What Matt
27:25 has to say about Israel, and about Matthew’s attitude to Israel, it has to say in the
perspective of this long scriptural history and the communities’ interpretation of it. There is,
Matthew’s use of interpretive traditions suggests, no direct line from Matt 27:25 to the

67 For David and Bathsheba and the problem of bloodshed, especially in relation to Matthew’s Gospel, see below,
Chapter 8, pp. 314-318.
68 The relation between past and future, biblical history and current event in early Jewish and Christian interpretation
is often described in terms of typology; so, for instance, Frei (Eclipse, 2-3). Fishbane (Biblical Interpretation, 362-
379) similarly traces in the biblical text, under the heading of aggadic exegesis, the typological reuse of events and
stories. In this kind of exegesis, “a covert thread within history is made manifest. The new is like the old” (Fishbane,
ibid., 379). “A thread within history”; here is the important point. The biblical stories and the traditions that emerge
from them, even when used typologically, have to do with history, the history of Israel. The Exodus serves as an
effective image for restoration in Isaiah’s eyes because it has in fact happened; the historical reality of the Exodus is
a sign and guarantee of the present promise of return (see Isaiah 43 and Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation, 362-63).
The blood of Zechariah and of Abel lives on in the interpretive tradition because it has been poured out upon the
ground. Abel’s blood cries out in the later tradition not as an image but as a real problem, tainting the land. The
interpretive traditions that emerge from the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis and Zechariah in 2 Chronicles take this
concreteness seriously. They see in these biblical episodes events that are both typical – in the case of Cain and
Abel, they describe a pattern into which future events may fall – and real, events whose outworking is seen in the
history of the people and the land.
contemporary historical situation. Matthew’s Gospel speaks in a richer fashion, through the scriptural text and years of reflection upon it, of an Israel that is not only present-day but also ancient and biblical. In this way, through the prism of scripture and history and tradition, Matthew’s Gospel speaks to the contemporary situation.

This study proposes, therefore, to consider the death of Jesus in Matthew not only with attention to its narrative shape, but to the interpretive traditions that inform it. Matthew’s use of the innocent blood motif points to two particular instances of such traditions of reflection. The bulk of these traditions of reflection on innocent blood is in each case (now) extra-biblical, ranging from 1 Enoch (in the blood-flood tradition) to the Babylonian Talmud in the Zechariah tradition. Its core, however, is a biblical story and its influence is seen within the biblical canon in Lamentations, for instance, and in Susanna. To a brief consideration of these traditions and their connection with Matthew we now turn.

V. Innocent Blood in Matthew and Second Temple and Rabbinic Literature

Matt 27:24-25 and the passages related to it reflect a rich underlying heritage of reading. In his articulation of the theme of innocent blood, Matthew, as noted above, shows commonalities with other uses of that theme in early Jewish literature. The theme as Matthew describes it has at its centre the problem of blood: blood poured out on the ground, blood that comes upon the heads of those who shed it, blood that causes the devastation of the land. Matthew sums up the problem in 23:35, in which he also points toward the narrative’s climax in the blood of Jesus: “upon you may come all the innocent blood that has been poured out upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zechariah….”69 This verse contains several key terms:

__________________________

69 On the identity of Matthew’s Zechariah, see Chapter 2, p. 57 n. 34.

In the first case, the key texts are 1 Enoch 6-11 (1-5, 16-22) and 83-90. 1 Enoch is generally recognized to be a re-telling of Genesis 6 through the myths of Shemihazah and Asael (in 1 Enoch, the story of the Watchers and the women). A close reading, however, indicates that 1 Enoch 6-11 in fact reflects on the whole of Genesis 3-6; its use of the myth of the Watchers (growing out of and pinned to Gen 6:1-2) and the evil they generate on the earth is shaped by the story of the origin of evil in Genesis 3-4. In particular, there is, as I will demonstrate, a focus on blood poured out on the ground (ἀίμα πολύ ἐκχυσάμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,

---

70 ἀίμα δίκαιου and ἀίμα άθωου are parallel terms in Matthew’s usage; in this he follows the Hebrew Scriptures and LXX. See below, Chapter 2, p. 38 n. 1.

71 See, for an early example, Devorah Dimant, “1 Enoch 6-11: A Methodological Perspective,” in SBL 1978 Seminar Papers (ed. Paul J. Achtemeier; 2 vols.; SBLSP 18; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1978), 1:323-39; more recently, George W. E. Nickelsburg’s 2001 commentary: 1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108 (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Fortress, 2001). Paul Hanson, in an early article on 1 Enoch (“Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6-11,” JBL 96 [1977]: 195-233), suggests that 1 En. 6-11 echoes themes from Genesis 4-11, though without examining those echoes; he is interested in commonalities with ancient Near Eastern mythologies. His suggestion is not taken up; that 1 Enoch 6-11 retells Genesis 6-9 (only) is now simply assumed in work on 1 Enoch.

72 Philip Davies (“And Enoch Was Not, for Genesis Took Him,” in Biblical Tradition in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb [ed. Charlotte Hempel and Judith Lieu; Leiden: Brill, 2006], 96-107) argues (following J.T. Milik, The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1976], 30-32) that the J narrative in Genesis 4-6 is a retelling of 1 En. 6-11 to emphasize human (rather than angelic) responsibility for sin and evil, and holds that the sins of the Watchers in 1 Enoch have been applied in Genesis 4 to Cain. He thus notices the links between the story of the Watchers in 1 Enoch and the story of Cain in Genesis, but reverses the process of interpretation: Genesis re-reads 1 Enoch. I propose something more complex (and in reverse order): that 1 Enoch, in reading and re-telling Genesis 6, hears and incorporates the rest of the Genesis story into its expansion. Scripture interprets scripture: if Genesis 9 talks about bloodshed at the culmination of the story of the flood that destroys and cleanses the corrupted earth, this is not unconnected to the story of bloodshed and the earth that cries out in Genesis 4. That is, 1 Enoch represents a serious and nuanced process of biblical interpretation that reads the story as a whole.
This blood is that of the innocently murdered whose voice cries out from the ground to the gates of heaven (1 En. 9:2, cf. Gen 4:10). In the development of the story in 1 Enoch 12-22 and 85, the blood is named that of Abel. In 1 Enoch 6-11, therefore, the story of Noah’s flood is told through the myth of the Watchers and the women with a focus on the problem of bloodshed described in terms that recall Cain’s murder of Abel and the blood poured out upon the ground, which is accordingly accursed. In this early text we find already the same grouping of ideas and terms that we find in Matt 23:35: blood poured out upon the earth, blood of Abel, blood of the righteous; these terms serve to describe the problem of evil on the earth and its imminent destruction and cleansing. In the development of 1 Enoch 6-11 in 1 Enoch 85-90 the same story recurs as the prelude to a history of Israel that stresses the pollution of the temple and its destruction and eschatological renewal. Likewise, rabbinic literature reflecting on the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple links that destruction to the blood of Zechariah poured out on the ground, polluting the temple, crying out for recompense and cleansing.

There are connections too not only of word but of theme. Jesus’ solemn warning, “ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἥξει ταύτα πάντα ἐπὶ τὴν γενεὰν ταύτην” (23:36) leads directly into his lament over Jerusalem (23:37-39) and a second solemn warning: the temple will be destroyed (24:2: ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐ μὴ ἀφεθῇ ὡδὲ λίθος ἐπὶ λίθον ὃς οὐ καταλυθησεται). The repeated formula ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν has the effect of linking for the reader these two prophecies. In addition, the shedding of innocent blood, this official violence, has a cosmic and eschatological dimension. It spans the history of the world. It begins at the beginning, with the blood of Abel.

---

73 Nickelsburg notes the allusion: 1 Enoch 1, 186; 208; see also J. H. le Roux, “The Use of Scripture in 1 Enoch 6-11,” Neot 17 (1983): 28-38, here 35.
74 The majority of scholars see in 23:37-39 a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, connected in the context to Jesus’ woes upon the Pharisees. See for example Robert Gundry, Matthew, 473; David Garland, The Intention of Matthew 23 (NovTSup 52; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 204; Michael Knowles, Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel: the Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction (JSNTSup 68; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 146. It is (I hope to show) the motif of innocent blood, largely ignored by commentators even here, that underlies and illuminates this connection between corrupt leaders and the vision of Jerusalem’s devastation.
The devastation to which it leads merges, in the sequence of Matthew’s Gospel, into the cosmic tribulations of the end of the age (συντέλεια τοῦ αἰώνος, 24:3). And in the denouement, when “innocent blood” has been poured out in the moment of Jesus’ death, there is, intertwined with devastation (καὶ ἴδοῦ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχήθη, Matt 27:51) the proleptic beginning of new life, even in the holy city (27:52-53). This aspect of Matthew’s innocent blood motif – the motif’s cosmic and eschatological dimension promising a purging that is both destruction and recreation – if it finds an eschatological parallel in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, seems to find a historical counterpart in early Jewish traditions regarding Zechariah. In 1 Enoch the flood that follows upon the devastation of the land merges into the cosmic catastrophe of the last days and the eschatological renewal of the land; in the resolutely un-apocalyptic rabbinic literature, the blood of Zechariah issues nevertheless in a blood-bath of cosmic proportions (80,000 dead, 940,000 dead), and the end of the time of the temple…which becomes the beginning of the time of Torah and the rabbis.

i. The Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions

The concinnities with Matthew’s Gospel implied here are intricate, both detailed and sweeping. This study seeks therefore to tease them out in order to illuminate Matthew’s meaning, both with regard to innocent blood and with regard to the larger implications of the theme. The first step is to trace the traditions where they occur apart from Matthew. The Cain/blood-flood/judgement logic evident in 1 Enoch, in particular in its emphasis on the blood poured out on the land (typified as the blood of Abel) and the consequent devastation and renewal of the land, both flood-like and eschatological, reappears in similar traditions evident in a number of other early
Jewish texts. It can be traced first of all in the development of that story in 1 Enoch 12-22 and 85-90. Various versions of the tradition emerge also in Jubilees, the Damascus Document, The Sibylline Oracles 3, Susanna, and Pseudo-Philo; the tradition seems to inform also the brief mention of Cain in Jude. Further, the problem of bloodshed and the fate of the land associated with the story of Cain in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions is associated with Cain also in the biblical text. Even before 1 Enoch connects the blood of Abel to the flood, Lamentations (I will argue) connects Cain and Abel and the shedding of innocent blood to the devastation of Jerusalem. To trace the commonalities between these texts and their differences is to trace the contours of related traditions of interpretation that appear to have a broad base in early Jewish literature and much in common with Matthew.

There is, thus, in the literature of early Judaism an intricate web of reflection upon the problem of blood: innocent blood, righteous blood, blood poured out on the ground, blood that causes the devastation of the land; blood that is, in the providence of God, connected also to the land’s restoration. This reflection is seen already in Lamentations in association with Cain; it is in later literature mediated (we will argue) by 1 Enoch’s interpretation of Genesis 3-6, especially in its emphasis on the blood of Abel and the flood (or cataclysmic judgement) that follows. Matthew’s Gospel, this thesis argues, reflects in its focus on innocent blood these traditions of interpretation, with their rich theological implications. This study thus proceeds to read Matthew


76 Cf. Wisdom of Solomon, Appendix 2.
in relation to the problem of innocent blood as it is articulated in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions. It asks, in the process, whether the relation is direct: does Matthew know *1 Enoch* itself? Several scholars have argued for Enochic influence on Matthew in regard to Matt 22:1-14; I will demonstrate several other possible points of influence.\textsuperscript{77} Or does Matthew rather stand in relation to traditions of interpretation broadly shaped by *1 Enoch* and evident in a wide range of early Jewish literature? Whether or not there is direct influence from *1 Enoch* of the kind that is evident in Jude, Matthew’s use of the innocent blood motif shows that Matthew operates within a sphere of thought seen in *1 Enoch* and prevalent in early Jewish literature, a thought-world in which innocent blood, typified by the blood of Abel, is central to the question of Jerusalem’s fate and its future.

ii. The Zechariah traditions

Matthew’s reference to Zechariah in connection with innocent blood offers a second perspective for the reading of the innocent blood theme, a perspective whose vision of blood and the fate of Jerusalem has moreover something in common with that of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions. The blood of Zechariah becomes, in rabbinic literature, a recurring motif in reflection upon the destruction of Jerusalem. It emerges in all its gruesome detail, as a legend told by “an old man from Jerusalem” at the turn of the first century, in discussion of “Nebuzaradan’s” entry into Jerusalem and the bloodbath that followed; it is pinned to texts from Jeremiah and Ezekiel 24 (*Lam. Rab.*, Proem V.2.2); and to Lam 2:2, 4:13-14 (*Lam. Rab.* 2.2.4, 4.13.16), Lam 2:3 (*b. Git.* 57b), and Eccles 3:16 and 10:4 (*Eccles. Rab.* 3.16.1; 10.4.1). The blood of Zechariah also stands behind several texts that do not relate the legend in full: *Lam. Rab.* (1.16.51, 2.19-22.23) and *b. Yoma* 38b, reflecting on Lam 2:20, connect the horror of a mother eating her infant during

the siege of Jerusalem to the slaying of Zechariah. In every instance, Zechariah serves to link these biblical texts to the fate of Jerusalem and to explain the city’s devastation as the consequence of the blood of a priest and prophet unjustly shed – that is, συμο ὀθωμον, innocent blood. In the case of the rabbis’ reading of Lamentations, Zechariah becomes “the righteous one,” priest and prophet, whose blood was shed in the midst of the holy city by her prophets and priests, thus bringing devastation upon Jerusalem and exile upon the people.

The resonances with Matthew’s theme of innocent blood, both in the details of word-use and in the larger arena of plot and theme are immediately obvious and intriguing. In both, the blood of the righteous is unjustly shed; the blood of the righteous brings dire consequences upon the people and leads into the temple’s destruction. The Zechariah and Abel traditions also show broad commonalities with each other. In both we have a meditation on the problem of Jerusalem’s destruction (or the land’s devastation) based on one biblical story about the murder of an innocent or righteous person (Genesis 4; 2 Chron 24:20-22), interpreting other biblical texts (Lamentations; Genesis 6) having to do with devastation of the land. The Zechariah story, like the Abel sequence, draws the original passage into a rich exposition of the problem of sin and its consequences for God’s people, a problem centred in innocent blood. It is a problem that has to do with violence, with the blood of the innocent and righteous, bloodshed that offends against both Noachic commandment and halakha and corrupts the land. Blood further connects, for the rabbis, the story of Zechariah to the prophecies of Ezekiel against a polluted land: “Woe to the bloody city,” they say, recalling Ezek 24:6-9, “Her blood is in the midst of her, she set it upon the bare rock” (Lam. Rab. Proem V; cf. 2.2.4; 4.13.16). Hence, they suggest, the deaths of so many Israelites over the boiling blood of Zechariah. The concern with corruption, the pollution of the land, recalls the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions and the land choked with blood that cries out to heaven and must be cleansed. Finally, in the rabbis as in the Enoch
traditions it is in fact cleansing that is at issue: the rust is burnt off, albeit at the cost of bones burnt with it (Ezek 24:10), and the bloody conqueror becomes a convert, conquered in his turn by Torah.

VI. Conclusion

To trace the Zechariah traditions in their commonalities with the Enoch traditions and Matthew’s Gospel is to find Matthew’s Gospel illuminated. It is to discover a critical key for unlocking the meaning of innocent blood in Matthew, a reading that throws light on Matthew’s treatment of the fate of Jerusalem and therefore his attitude toward and relation to Israel. It sets Matthew broadly within a thoroughly Jewish context of reflection on the fate of the holy city and the holy people. In particular it shows him to be in conversation with and deeply influenced by two distinct (and yet interrelated) trajectories of interpretation that address this problem, one beginning from Genesis 3-6, the other from 2 Chronicles 24, and encompassing before they are finished texts from Lamentations to Ezekiel. This study will trace these two trajectories, seeking their commonalities and differences and over-arching themes. It will then ask how they illumine Matthew, especially with regard to the problem of blood and violence and a polluted land. We will suggest, in conclusion, that these traditions offer a way into a reading of Matthew’s Gospel in which the fate of Jerusalem in the aftermath of innocent blood – for Matthew finally the blood of Jesus – is part of a larger paradigm of sin and pollution, destruction and purgation, a story centrally realized in exile, a story marked both by judgement and hope, devastation and new creation. It is above all, in the traditions about Abel and Zechariah as well as in Matthew, a story

---

78 Ezek 24:9-11: “Woe to the bloody city, [the pot whose rust is in it]:…let the bones be burned. Stand it empty upon the coals so that it may become hot, its copper glow, its filth melt in it, its rust be consumed.”

about Israel, a history of the people of God that holds within it the fate and the future of the world.

The study moves therefore from a literary reading of the innocent blood theme in Matthew, to a study of interpretive traditions in relation to Matthew, to ask finally a theological question with concrete implications. What does Matthew’s use of innocent blood, against the background of the Abel and Zechariah traditions, reveal about the meaning of “Israel,” who Israel is, its role and purpose in Matt’s gospel? How is the promise made in Abraham and confirmed in David to come to fruition, in the face of exile and destruction? This is the quite concrete question the gospel poses in its opening verse and genealogy: the narrative shape of the story and the interpretive world that illuminates it has from the beginning concrete historical implications. In the innocent blood motif, culminating in the cry of the people and the death of Jesus and the proleptic resurrection of the buried ones (27:25, 27:50-53), Matthew offers his answer. It is an answer that takes seriously the problem of blood poured out upon the land and also the scriptural witness to the faithfulness of God. As the blood of Zechariah reaches out beyond the story to leave its mark on the temple, so the blood of Jesus is a matter, finally, of the fate and future of the land. In this answer, Matthew’s treatment of the death of Jesus places him squarely within Jewish traditions of reflection on the problem of the destruction of Jerusalem and the fate of Israel articulated through the motif of innocent blood in both Second Temple texts and rabbinic literature. In this answer, too, Matthew moves beyond the problematic critical dichotomy between judgement and salvation to offer a vision of history that has Israel at its heart, now as in the time of Zechariah, a history that does not deny the grim reality of Jerusalem’s destruction but finds that even destruction may finally be compassed about by the promises of God, precisely to Israel.
Chapter 2
The Theme of Innocent Blood in the Gospel of Matthew:
A Narrative-Critical Study

Innocent blood haunts the Passion Narrative in the Gospel of Matthew. Pilate declares himself innocent of Jesus’ blood (ἀθεοῦς εἰμί ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τούτου, Matt 27:24), saying to the people, ὑμεῖς ὀψεθε, “See to it yourselves” (27:24). The people accordingly call down that blood upon their heads (τὸ αἷμα αὕτου ἔφ’ ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν, 27:25). Pilate’s words reverse Judas’ confession at the beginning of the chapter: “I have sinned,” Judas says to the priests, “in betraying innocent blood” (ὁμορτον παραδόσει ἄιμα αθικῶν). “What is that to us?” the priests reply: σὺ ὀφν, “See to it yourself’ (27:4). The people’s words, with which the trial culminates, echo Jesus’ final woe to the Pharisees: “so that upon you might come all the innocent blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zechariah” (ἐλθη ἔφ’ ἡμᾶς πάν ἄιμα δίκαιον ἐκχυσάμενου ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς [23:35]). This woe sets up the Passion Narrative: it is Jesus’ last word to the Jewish authorities before they plot to arrest him. For Judas, for Pilate and for the people, Jesus’ death is a matter of innocent blood, part of a history of innocent blood that goes back to Genesis.

---

1 Δίκαιον and ἀθικῶν (like ἴδιον and ιλή in the MT) are parallel terms in the LXX in the context of bloodshed. See, e.g., Exod 23:7, where ἀθικῶν καὶ δίκαιον (ἵδιόν ἠλθέ) are parallel: “you shall not kill the innocent and righteous”; and Ps 94:21 (LXX 93:21): ὥσπερ λέγεις ἡμῖν ἐπὶ ψυχῇ δίκαιον καὶ άιμα ἀθικῶν καταδικάζονται, “they band together against the life of the righteous and innocent blood they will condemn.” To talk about “righteous blood” (άιμα δίκαιον) is to talk about innocent blood (άιμα ἀθικῶν), to draw the blood of the righteous within the paradigm of purity and pollution to which the more technical term innocent blood (άιμα ἀθικῶν) attests. See further below, n. 7.
2 ὃτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάντας τοὺς λόγος τούτους, “When Jesus had finished all these words,” the narrative relates, “Jesus said to his disciples, ‘In two days it is the Feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man will be
Further, bloodshed appears at the Gospel’s beginning in a passage linked by theme and verbal echo to the death of Jesus. At 27:25, at the moment of the decision for the death of Jesus, Matthew raises an echo (as commentators note) of the deaths of the children of Bethlehem at Jesus’ birth (Matt 2:16-18) in the repeated word τέκνα. It is an echo reinforced by other points of contact between the narrative of Jesus’ birth in chapter 2 and that of his death in chapter 27. Already at his birth, that is, the spectre of Jesus’ death is raised and linked, apparently deliberately, to the slaughter of the innocent and so to the problem of innocent blood.

To understand the death of Jesus in Matthew it is therefore crucial to follow in the Gospel’s pages the trail of innocent blood and to ask about its meaning. It is an investigation that begins in the literary characteristics of the text, tracing verbal, structural and thematic connections between the several episodes connected through the problem of the slaughter of the innocent: innocent blood. In this way we will seek to ascertain the extent and shape of the motif of innocent blood in Matthew’s Gospel.

handed over to be crucified.’ Then the chief priests and elders…gathered…and plotted to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him” (26:1-3).


4 See below, pp. 48-51.
I. Innocent Blood in the Passion Narrative

i. Matt 27:24-25 and Matt 27:4-10

Innocent blood stands at the beginning of Jesus’ trial before Pilate (27:4-10) and at its climax (27:24-25). The two passages echo each other, as we have seen. The extent of the parallels is striking. Not only do Pilate’s words repeat and reverse Judas’ interchange with the priests, but the two scenes begin with the same temporal clause: “when Judas/Pilate saw that”: ἴδων Ἰουδαίος…ότι (27:3); ἴδων δὲ ὁ Πιλάτος οὐτί (27:24). The priests and Pilate use the same phrase, “See to it yourself” (σοῦ ὑψηλάς κατακρίθην, 27:3). Judas and Pilate use the same words: ἀθεόσας and αἰμα. Indeed, the word ἀθεόσας and the combination αἰμα ἀθεόσων is unique to these passages: the word ἀθεόσας occurs only in these two places in Matthew, and only in Matthew in the NT. In the chiastic echo αἰμα ἀθεόσων (27:4) // ἀθεόσας…τοῦ αἰματος (27:24) Matthew names Jesus’ death a matter of innocent blood.

In addition to these precise verbal echoes, Matthew establishes a series of parallel phrases and actions:

27:23 = 26:66/27:3: Sentence of death. In both cases, the language of innocent blood follows directly upon the sentence of death. At 27:23-24, the crowd before Pilate has just demanded crucifixion: σταυρωθήτω (27:23). Judas goes to the chief priests in 27:4 after the Sanhedrin declares that Jesus deserves to die (26:66), “seeing,” the text says, “that he was condemned [to death]” (τότε ἴδων Ἰουδαίος…ότι κατεκρίθη, 27:3).


6 Judas uses the phrase; Pilate reverses it: he is innocent of the blood of this man. Pilate’s words, though they declare his own innocence, are by implication a declaration of the innocence of Jesus. Pilate fears an unjust execution, the blood of an innocent man on his hands.
27:24 = 27:3-4: **Getting rid of innocent blood** (or **passing the buck**). Both Pilate and Judas immediately attempt to clear themselves of responsibility for the blood that is about to be shed. “When he sees that” Jesus is condemned by the priests and elders Judas tries to get the blood money off his hands and confesses his own guilt. “When he sees that” he can do nothing in face of the mob stirred into bloodlust by the priests, Pilate washes his hands of the blood of Jesus and declares his innocence.

27:24 = 27:6-8: **Uncleanness.** Innocent blood carries with it a taint. Pilate washes his hands; the chief priests cannot let the blood money stay in the temple, the holy place. Instead they buy with it a burial ground for foreigners. Tombs are unclean; tombs for foreigners are even more so (if the Qumran War Scroll with its strictures against priests touching the enemy dead “so as not to be defiled with their impure blood” [9.7], is any indication). Innocent blood, these passages suggest, taints all that it touches.


Matthew thus links the two moments of Jesus’ condemnation to death under the rubric “innocent blood.” In the parallels between the passages he raises the issue of responsibility for innocent
blood and the taint that lies upon those who shed it. Innocent blood is, in both passages, shadowed by death.

ii. Matt 27:24-25 and Matt 23:35

The interchange between Pilate and the people in 27:24-25 is linked by verbal echo also to Matt 23:35. When the people say to Pilate “His blood be upon us” (τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς) they call up Jesus’ concluding woe to the Pharisees: “…so that all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth may come upon you” (ὁπῶς ἔλθη ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς πᾶν σῶμα δίκαιον ἐκχυννόμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, 23:35). When the people say “and upon our children” (27:25) they call up also 23:36: “all this will come upon this generation” (23:36). It is not only the fathers (23:30) who will know the consequences of the blood they have shed; it is the children too.

There are other links, too, between the passages. The word “crucify” occurs in both. In his denunciation of the Pharisees, Matthew expands upon the ways in which they persecute God’s messengers: “Therefore see, I send to you prophets and sages and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify (σταυρώσετε), and some of them you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town”(23:34). The saying about innocent blood follows immediately (23:35). “Crucify” is Matthew’s addition: Luke has only “kill and persecute.” Σταυρώθητω, the people shout during Jesus’ trial (Matt 27:23): “Let him be crucified!” and

---

7 Though the word in 23:35 is δίκαιος, (thus σῶμα δίκαιον), whereas in 27:24 (cf. 27:4) it is ἁθῆ, implying the term σῶμα ἁθῶ, the gospel text (like the OT; cf. Exod 23:7) draws together the two terms. Pilate calls Jesus’s death “innocent blood” (27:24). Pilate’s wife calls Jesus righteous, δέ δίκαιος ἐκέινος (27:19). This is the same word that Jesus uses for the shedding of blood at 23:35: σῶμα δίκαιον (23:35). Jesus who is righteous is necessarily innocent. To kill the righteous is to shed innocent blood. Cf. Donald Senior, The Passion Narrative according to Matthew: A Redactional Study (BETL 39; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1975), 257: ‘just’ is “practically synonymous with ‘innocent’ for Matthew.” So too Garland, The Intention of Matthew 23 (NovTSup 52; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 184 n. 71. The terms stand in parallel in the Hebrew Scriptures (and LXX) to describe the person who is unjustly killed. In the LXX, both δίκαιος and ἁθῆ translate the Hebrew term יְקָנָה, “innocent”; both occur with σῶμα to render the term יְקָנָה שָׁם innocent blood (compare e.g. Deut 27:25; 2 Kgs 21:16, 24:4; Jer 7:6 et passim: יְקָנָה שָׁם = σῶμα ἁθῶ, with Joel 4:19; Jon 1:14; Prov 1:11, 6: יְקָנָה שָׁם = σῶμα δίκαιον / ἀνήρ δίκαιος). See also above, p. 38 n. 1.
Pilate immediately washes his hands of this (innocent) man’s blood. Jesus in 27:23-25 becomes the living example of “those you will crucify” (23:34), and his innocent blood is drawn into “all the innocent blood shed upon the earth.”

Further, it is the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders, whom Jesus accuses in 23:35 of persecuting the prophets with the result that they bring innocent blood upon the whole generation. At Jesus’ trial, it is the religious leaders, this time the chief priests and elders, who persuade the people to kill Jesus: οἱ δὲ ἅρχειρεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἐπείσαν τοὺς ὀχλοὺς ἵνα...τὸν...Ἰησοῦν ἀπολέσωσιν (27:20). As a result, the people take innocent blood upon themselves and upon their children. In Matt 23:35, then, as in Matt 27:24-25 and 27:4, Matthew invokes the problem of innocent blood and makes it clear by means of verbal and narrative parallels that the innocent blood that will come upon this generation culminates in the blood of Jesus.

iii. Matt 23:35 and Matt 27:4-10

Matt 23:35, and the passage within which it is embedded, finds a parallel also in the interchange between Judas and the priests in 27:3-10. The central problem – innocent blood – is the same in each: as Jesus pronounces woe upon the scribes and Pharisees for shedding innocent blood (ἀἷμα δίκαιον), Judas confesses to the chief priests that he has sinned in betraying innocent blood (ἀἷμα ἀθέων). What Jesus names in Matt 23:35 unfolds on the narrative plane in 27:4-10. In both, it is the leaders who are responsible for bringing innocent blood upon the people. The Pharisees and scribes kill and crucify in 23:35 (cf. priests, 27:23) so that all the innocent blood comes upon this generation; in 27:3-10 the chief priests pursue Jesus’ death and refuse Judas’ repentance without regard for the consequences for Judas; Judas’ death follows. Matthew draws attention to the leaders’ role: immediately before Judas’ confession, the chief priests and elders of the people plot to have Jesus killed (27:1). The phrase “elders of the people”
(πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ, 27:1) points up the irony: those who are responsible for the people lead the people into the ominous arena of innocent blood, all the while refusing responsibility (“you see to it”). In this, they are like the Pharisees and scribes of chapter 23 (“we would have had no part in the blood of the prophets,” 23:30), and Pilate too, protesting their innocence with blood on their hands. In both passages the shedding of Jesus’ innocent blood, though it comes upon the heads of Judas and of the whole people, is driven by the people in power.

Further, in 23:29 the Pharisees build the tombs (τάφος) of the prophets whose innocent blood was shed by their fathers, as in 27:7 the chief priests buy with the blood money a burial ground (τάφη). In both passages, as in 27:24-25, the innocent blood in which they are implicated associates the religious leaders with uncleanness and with the shadow of death. In the rich web of echoes connecting these passages the image of innocent blood, and so the death of Jesus, takes on tragic force.

II. Innocent Blood in the “Massacre of the Innocents”

Innocent blood overtly links Matt 27:3-10 and Matt 27:24-25 as well as Matt 23:33-39. In all three passages some form of the term “innocent blood” (αἷμα ἁθων / δίκαιον) occurs. There is another passage whose content suggests the problem of innocent blood: the tale of Herod’s massacre of the children of Bethlehem, Matt 2:16-18. In this passage, however, the term “innocent blood” does not appear. Might we see in “The Slaughtering of the Innocents” another instance of innocent blood, or is the parallel only apparent, an accident of the story’s traditional English title?

In fact the text invites us more than once, by repeated words and phrases, to hold together Matt 2:16-18 with Matt 27:3-10, 24-25 and 23:35, all three passages in which innocent blood is key. The story of the massacre at Bethlehem begins with the words Τότε Ἡρῴδης ἵδων ὅτι (ἐνεπαίχθη)…“Then Herod, seeing that he was (mocked)...”(2:16). These words occur on only
two other occasions in the gospel: at 27:3 and at 27:24. Τότε ἴδον Ἰούδας … ὅτι (κατεκρίθη)…” (27:3); ἴδον δὲ ὁ Πιλάτος ὅτι (σοῦδέν ωφελεί)…” We have seen already that this use of the temporal clause connects 27:4 and 27:24 (above p. 40). In both cases the clause introduces an account of Jesus’ death as a matter of innocent blood. The story of the death of the children of Bethlehem begins with the same temporal clause.

Further, in both 27:4 and 27:24 the sentence continues with an identical construction, an aorist adverbial participle and aorist indicative:

27:3: “Judas…seeing that ([Jesus] was betrayed), repented and returned (the silver)…."
‘ἵδων Ἰούδας ὅτι…μεταμελήθης ἔστρεψεν;

27:24: “Pilate seeing that …(a riot was beginning), took water and washed (his hands)…..”
‘ἵδων δὲ ὁ Πιλάτος ὅτι…λαβὼν ὕδωρ ἀπενύσατο, 27:24).

In 2:16 we find the same construction:

“Herod seeing that (he was duped)…sent and destroyed (the children)....”
‘Ἡρώδης ἴδων ὅτι…ἀποστείλας ἀνείλεν….

In his use of τέκνα, Matthew further associates the deaths of the children in 2:18 with Jesus’ death decided in 27:24-25. Davies and Allison (among others) note that the children for whom Rachel weeps are, at 2:18, τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς. Just two verses before, it is τοὺς παῖδας (2:16) whom Herod seeks to destroy, in a phrase that is probably traditional. Further, in both the MT and the LXX of the Jeremiah passage which Matt 2:18 quotes, the word is sons: υἱοί; ἃνη. Matthew uses τέκνα deliberately. In 27:25, the children upon whom “the blood of this man” comes are τὰ τέκνα Ἰμών. Thus Matthew’s text allows the reader to align the

---

8 ἀποστείλας ἀνείλεν πάντας τοὺς παῖδας (2:16): ἀναπτέρω is not Matthew’s preferred vocabulary. See Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew 1.264, n. 11. They note that ἀναπτέρω occurs nowhere else in Matthew. His usual word is, as in 2:13, ἀπόλλυμι.
9 ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς αὐτῆς, LXX Jer 38:15 ; ἀναπτέρω, MT Jer 31:15.
children of 2:18 with the children of 27:25. This is, of course, also to align the slaughter of Bethlehem’s children with the problem of innocent blood.  

The meaning of the alignment is as yet unclear, for there is this difference between the two passages: the children of Bethlehem are the innocent victims of Herod’s fury against the “King of the Jews”; the children of Israel in 27:25, however, while also themselves innocent, are drawn into “the people’s” responsibility for the blood of Jesus. Scholars tend to see the children in the two passages as exactly parallel: the blood of the children of Bethlehem anticipates, even proleptically realizes, the consequences of the innocent blood upon the parents’ heads in 27:25. The disjunction between innocence and guilt in the two passages, however, suggests that the link the Gospel makes is not quite so straightforward (see further below, pp. 52-54 and Chapter 8). Yet it is clear that the story of the children in 2:16-18 is connected to the story of Jesus in 27:24-25, precisely at the moment when his death is named a matter of innocent blood. Their deaths too belong to the problem of innocent blood.

Τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν, the children of Israel whose innocent blood is shed in 2:18 and who in 27:25 have innocent blood brought upon their heads, reappear (as Knowles notes) in Matt 23:37, again in the context of innocent blood.  

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often have I desired to gather your children (τὰ τέκνα σου)…and you were not willing. See, your house is left to you, desolate” (23:37-38). The consequence, that is, of the killing of the prophets – of innocent blood – is the city’s desolation. And those who

---

10 See Gundry, Matthew, 36 and Use of the Old Testament 94-97; Knowles, Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel: the Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction (JSNTSup 68; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 36-37. I want to insist on the alignment while questioning its standard interpretation. Knowles (ibid., 37) is representative: “So Rachel’s lament for her τέκνα seems to anticipate the fate of those descendants both in 23.37 and, more pointedly, in 27.25, where the crowd at Jesus’ trial call down blood upon themselves and τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν.”

11 Knowles, Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel, 37.
bear the cost of the innocent blood shed are called, again, τέκνα. Again a link is established between the children of Bethlehem murdered by Herod and the problem of innocent blood.

If the use of τέκνα in the Jeremiah quotation connects 2:18 to 27:25 and 23:37 and the question of innocent blood, the formula with which the quotation is introduced and the mention of Jeremiah connects 2:18 also to 27:3-10 and, again, innocent blood. “Jeremiah” is cited only in these two places in Matthew’s Gospel, and mentioned by name in the NT only by Matthew. Further, the same formula introduces both citations. This form of the fulfillment formula occurs nowhere else in the Gospel. “Then was fulfilled the word spoken through Jeremiah the prophet…”; τότε ἐπηρώθη τὸ ῥήτεν διὰ Ἰερεμίου τοῦ προφήτου…” (2:17; 27:9). Jeremiah (according to the Gospel text) is the prophet who speaks both to the deaths of the innocent children and to the innocent blood of Jesus.

When, then, Matthew links the slaughter of the children of Bethlehem to the death of Jesus in precisely the passages from ch. 23 and ch. 27 where Jesus’ death is treated as a matter of innocent blood, he draws the children’s deaths into that sphere. The death of the children at Herod’s hands is, like the death of Jesus at the hand of Pilate, at the hands of Judas and the chief priests and the Pharisees, a matter of innocent blood, and it is as a matter of innocent blood that the massacre at Bethlehem has its meaning.

The close association between the slaughter of the innocents in ch. 2 and the death of Jesus as a matter of innocent blood in 27:24-25 and in 23:34-35 is reinforced by a larger correspondence between ch. 2 and ch. 27. The whole of chapter 2 points forward repeatedly to

---

12 See esp. Martin J. J. Menken, “The References to Jeremiah in the Gospel According to Matthew (Matt 2,17; 16,14; 27,9),” ETI 60 (1984): 5-24, esp. 5. That the citation in Matt 27:9 is not in fact from Jeremiah merely underlines the fact that the text invites a connection between the two episodes. The same prophet, it would appear, speaks to the same sort of circumstance.
chapter 27. In chapter two, as Brown puts it, Matthew “is echoing the history of his own times….But he is also thinking of the passion of Jesus.” The parallels are listed in the standard commentaries; I summarize briefly.

κατ’ ὄναρ: Dreams guide the actions of the characters only in the birth narrative and at Jesus’ trial. The magi are warned κατ’ ὄναρ not to return to Herod (2:12). Three times Joseph is guided κατ’ ὄναρ (2:13, 2:19, 2:22). In the Passion Narrative Pilate’s wife warns him κατ’ ὄναρ that Jesus is innocent/righteous (27:19).

βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων: At Jesus’ birth, the magi from the East seek the one born “King of the Jews” (βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, 2:2). At his death the charge over Jesus’ head reads “King of the Jews” (βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, 27:37). The title is at the centre of Jesus’ trial (27:11; 27:29).

συνάγω: When Herod hears of “the one born king of the Jews” he is disturbed and gathers together (συνάγω) the chief priests and scribes of the people with, we soon learn, lethal intent: καὶ συνάγων πάντας τῶν ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ he inquired of them where the Christ would be born (2:4), so that he might kill him. In the same way, the Jewish leaders in ch. 26 gather together (συνάγω, in an echo of Psalm 2) as they plot to kill Jesus: τότε συνήχθησαν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ (26:3, cf. 26:57 and 28:12).

γραμματεῖς / πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ: Though the scribes appear frequently in the course of the narrative, the phrase γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ (2:4) occurs only here in Matthew’s Gospel. Elsewhere Matthew uses simply γραμματεῖς. Three times in the Passion Narrative the chief priests and elders of the people (πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ) gather together against Jesus

---

13 See the standard commentaries for the parallels. Brown (Birth of the Messiah, esp. 174-75 and 183 [on Matt 2:1-12]) and Gundry (Matthew, 26-37) are especially good.
14 Brown, Birth of the Messiah, 183.
(26:3, 47; 27:1). As Gundry puts it, “the phrase “of the people,” which Matthew alone will attach to the elders in 21:23, 26:3, 47; 27:1, goes over to the scribes” in 2:4, thus drawing together the hostility to Jesus on the part of Israel’s leaders at his birth and at his death.15

\[\text{ἀπολλυμί:}\] as Herod in 2:13 seeks the child to kill him (\(\text{ἀπολλυμί}\)), so in 27:20 the chief priests and elders persuade the people to have Jesus killed (\(\text{ἀπολλυμί}\)).16 In both chapter 2 and chapter 27, the secular leader and the religious leaders work together (albeit unwillingly, in Pilate’s case) to bring about Jesus’ death. The chief priests and elders of the people bring Jesus to Pilate in ch. 27. Herod calls on the chief priests and scribes to help him find the “King of the Jews” in ch. 2.

There are, in addition, two ironic echoes that further link the birth narrative and Passion Narrative.

\[\text{ηγεμόν:}\] Matt inserts \(\text{ηγεμόν}\) seven times in ch. 27 and once in ch. 28 to describe Pilate (it does not appear in Mark’s Passion Narrative).17 This root occurs once in 10:18; otherwise it occurs only in chapter 2.18 There, in a kind of ironic contrast, the word describes Jesus: he is the (true) \(\text{ηγούμενος}\), the one who comes out of Bethlehem as governor of the people. Indeed, Matt goes to some lengths to use the word \(\text{ηγεμόν}\) of Jesus in 2:6. He reads Mic 5:1 as referring not to tribes or thousands (\(\text{ἐπιλογίαν}\) as it is read in the MT) but to princes (\(\text{ἐπιλογίας}\) or \(\text{ἐπιλογίων}\)) or, in

\[\text{------------------------------------------}\]

15 Gundry, Matthew, 28. Gundry suggests that the priests (Sadducees), scribes (often Pharisees) and elders together constitute the Sanhedrin. In 2:2 Matt needs scribes for their knowledge of scripture; in 26-27 in context of a trial he needs elders who judge for the people.

16 Gundry, Matthew, 33: \(\text{ἀπολέσαι}\) (2:13) “relates to 27:20, where we read of the chief priests’ and elders’ persuading the crowd to have Jesus destroyed (\(\text{ἀπολέσαις}\)).” Cf. Donald A. Hagner, Matthew 1-13 (Word Biblical Commentary 33A; 2 vols; Dallas: Word, 1993), 35: “The verb \(\text{ἀπολέσαι}\)…anticipates its recurrence in the passion narrative (27:20).” Gundry (35) notes that \(\text{ἀπολλυμί}\) is Matthean; three verses later Matthew uses the LXX’s \(\text{ἀναψεύω}\) (Exod 2:15), displaced at 2:13.

17 See Gundry (Matthew, 29) on Matt 2:6: “Later, in his account of Jesus’ passion and resurrection, Matthew will interject the designation of Pilate as \(\text{ἡγεμόν}\) eight times.” Gundry finds in the parallel an ironic contrast between Pilate and Jesus, true ruler of Judah.

18 In 10:18 Matthew, following Mark 13:9, and in an anticipation of the Passion Narrative, describes the authorities before whom Christ’s messengers will be led.
The choice of ἡγεμόν here is Matthew’s own; the LXX (correctly) reads χιλιάσιν. Bethlehem is, by Matthew’s reading, the city of princes and Jesus is Israel’s prince par excellence. If there is in the word ἡγεμόν an ironic nod to Jesus’ true authority, there is also a foreshadowing of the confrontation between this governor and the Roman governor. At the birth of Israel’s prophesied prince, there is already an anticipation of Pilate, and Jesus’ death.

ἐμπαιζω: Another ironic verbal echo ties together the innocent blood of the King of the Jews with the innocent blood shed by King Herod. As Pilate, the state-appointed ἡγουμένος of the PN, condemns the birth narrative’s divinely-appointed ἡγουμένος to death, so the mockery suffered by Jesus, King of the Jews, at his death finds an inverse image in the magi’s mockery of King Herod at Jesus’ birth. Jesus, mocked by the soldiers, is led out to be crucified. King Herod, mocked by the magi (who find another way home), orders the massacre at Bethlehem. Innocent blood in both cases is the result. The word ἐμπαιζω occurs three times in the Passion Narrative, at 27:29 and 31 (of the soldiers’ mockery) and 27:41, where the chief priests mock Jesus on the cross. Otherwise it occurs in the gospel only at 2:16. The effect is to associate 2:16-18 with the Passion Narrative and the innocent death of Jesus.

There are, too, broader parallels between ch. 2 and ch. 27. In both cases, the setting is Jerusalem. In both cases, the King of the Jews confronts the ruler of the day. In both cases, the leaders greet the Christ with hostility and violence: the powers of the earth seek the prince of

---

19 See, e.g., Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 1.243; Gundry, Matthew, 29.
20 Commentators and theologians alike note the irony that marks, in particular, John’s Passion Narrative: the judge of the world, who came not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved, stands before the worldly judge and is condemned. (Cf. for instance Rudolf Bultmann, The Gospel of John: A Commentary [trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 655). In his insistence on the word ἡγεμόν, Matthew creates a similar ironic juxtaposition.
21 Cf. esp Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 1.264. “Save for Luke 14.29 and the present verse [Matt 2:16], ἐμπαιζω…is used in the NT only in connexion with the passion of Jesus.” The echo here does not, of course, align the mockery of Herod directly with the mockery of Jesus: the two are opposite insofar as the first thwarts a cruel king and the second mocks the true king. The echo rather points up a rich resonance between the two episodes of innocent blood: an anticipation of Jesus’ death, and the irony that anticipation necessarily involves, already in his birth.
heaven’s death. Meier sums up: “the series of infancy stories in chapter 2 ... really form a proleptic passion narrative.”

In Matthew 2, resistance to the King of the Jews comes to a head in King Herod’s decree of death and the massacre at Bethlehem. In Matthew 27, it comes to a head in Pilate’s handwashing and the decision for death; in, that is, Jesus’ innocent blood. We have seen that the deaths of the children are aligned specifically with the three passages that treat Jesus’ death as a matter of innocent blood. At his birth and in his passion, the narrative comes to a point in the shedding of innocent blood. Already in the birth narrative, that is, Matthew prepares for the Passion Narrative’s focus on innocent blood.

---


What is the significance of the parallel Matthew thus establishes? Scholars most often align the children of Bethlehem slaughtered by Herod with the children of Israel upon whose heads Jesus’ innocent blood rests in 27:25. That is, they see in the repeated term τὰ τέκνα (2:16-18; 23:35; 27:25) a simple equivalence. Thus they make sense of the literary links between Matt 2:16-18 and Matt 27:3-10, 24-25; 23:34-39 in terms of judgement. This is, in terms of the history of Christian anti-Judaism, a dangerous reading. Gundry sums up the dominant reading: he titles 2:16-18 “A Preview of Jewish Calamities Resulting from the Rejection of Jesus.”

Noting several verbal echoes connecting this episode to ch. 27 (ἐμπαίζω, τότε ἐπληρώθη κτλ., τέκνα, the reference to Jeremiah), he sees in the deaths of the children the “dreadful consequences of rejecting Jesus.”

Similarly, Davies and Allison: The word τέκνα in 2:18 may anticipate 27:25. The passages have in common a theme of Jewish hostility to Jesus and its tragic consequences, a theme that the invocation of Jeremiah in 2:18 serves to highlight. Insofar as the people support Herod (all Jerusalem is disturbed with Herod at the news of the one born King, 2:3), they share his guilt for the slaughter of the innocent and so bring judgement upon themselves, a judgement already enacted in the deaths of the children.

Here they agree with Menken, who sees the massacre of the innocents and the story of Judas in the PN as being connected by the rejection of the Messiah, after the pattern of Israel’s rejection of Jeremiah. “For Mt,” Menken says, “Jeremiah is the prophet of the rejection of the

---

23 Gundry, Matthew, 34.
24 Ibid., 36.
25 Ibid., 1.270. The slippage in this reading between judgement and the act provoking judgement (the murder of the children serving as both) suggests that it does not get the text quite right. See further below.
Messiah,” a rejection that is “directly connected with the destruction of the city and the temple.”

So, too, Michael Knowles. The children for whom Rachel weeps in Matt 2:18 prefigure the children of Israel who carry, by the will of “the whole people,” blood upon their heads. “And it is for the innocent blood thus shed that Matthew’s Rachel weeps.”

Kingsbury likewise, though reading from a literary rather than historical-critical perspective, finds in the murdered children of Matt 2:16-18 a foreshadowing of the blood that will come upon the heads of Israel’s children in 27:25: the slaughter of the innocents is a “sign of the judgment that will befall Israel for having rejected its Messiah.”

In all of these readings the parallel Matthew draws is between the murdered children of Bethlehem and the children of Israel complicit in their “fathers’” murder of the Messiah. The innocent blood upon the head of the children of Israel is anticipated and enacted in the blood of the innocents.

This reading, however, is – quite apart from its simple unpalatability – logically problematic. R. T. France objects: “the slaughter of innocent children makes a poor symbol for the punishment of an unbelieving nation.” Here France puts his finger on the most obvious problem with the “rejection and retribution” reading. To say nothing of the acute question this reading raises about the nature of the justice of God – a question Matthew already addresses, as virtually all scholars note, in the wording of the fulfillment formula in 2:17 and 27:9 (τότε

---

26 Menken, “The References to Jeremiah,” 10; 23.
27 Michael Knowles, Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel, 37; also 52, 77-81. The fulfillment quotations in 2:18 and 27:9 “both envisage mortal opposition to the messiah” (77) and “depict the consequences of that opposition falling on the nation of Israel: in the first instance, the children of Bethlehem; in the second, Judas and, ultimately, all those who accept responsibility by calling down on their own heads the innocent blood he has helped to shed” (77-78). See also George M. Soares Prabhu, The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narratives of Matthew: An Enquiry into the Tradition History of Mt. 1-2 (AnBib 63; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1976), 300; A. Vögtle, “Die matthäische Kindheitsgeschichte,” in L’Évangile selon Matthieu: Réduction et théologie (ed. M. Didier, BETL 29; Gembloux: Duculot, 1972), 153-83, esp. 173.
then was fulfilled: the purpose clause is omitted, with the effect of rejecting a straight line between innocent human suffering and the hand of God) – reading 2:18 as the fulfillment of 27:25 does not capture the literary logic of the parallel. The children who die at Bethlehem are innocent. It is their blood that is (unjustly) shed at the behest of the Jewish leader. It is murder, judicial or by royal decree, that the two passages have in common, murder named, in 27:4 and 27:24-25, innocent blood. If Jesus is the climactic instance of innocent blood poured out, the children of Bethlehem are the Gospel’s first instance. They stand parallel precisely to Jesus. Granted that the two passages are drawn together by the theme of the blood of the innocent poured out in Israel by the leaders of Israel in their opposition to the Messiah, it is nevertheless not as proleptic retribution for or consequence of Jesus’ death that the children of Bethlehem die, but as a foreshadowing of that death. Their innocent blood points forward to his; his innocent blood reaches backward to encompass theirs. Innocent blood frames the story, at Jesus’ birth and at his death.

IV. The Scope of Innocent Blood: the Question of Israel.

That the innocent blood of Jesus in the Passion Narrative is intertwined with the innocent blood of the children of Bethlehem points to the scope of the problem of innocent blood. Indeed, the Passion Narrative suggests that it is not just the children of Bethlehem whose fate is in some way intertwined with that of Jesus, but τὰ τέκνα more broadly. The children whose fate Jesus laments in 23:37, after he declares that innocent blood will come upon this generation, are the children of Jerusalem. The children upon whose heads the blood of Jesus is invoked at the climax of the Passion Narrative are, arguably, the children of all Israel. At the climactic moment

30 Cf. for instance Garland, Reading Matthew, 30; Gundry, Matthew, 35; Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 37.
31 See further chapter 8. Cf. Hagner, Matthew 1-13, 38: “To see in this passage [2:18] the consequences of the rejection of Jesus by Jewish leaders, as Gundry does, is to bring in something quite extraneous to Matthew’s text.”
it is πᾶς ὁ λαός, the whole people, who not only make the decision for death – in the language of innocent blood – but take responsibility for it on themselves: “His blood be upon us and upon our children.” It is not only that the invocation of “our children” implies the scope of the decision. It is also that the phrase πᾶς ὁ λαός serves, at crucial moments in the Hebrew Scriptures, to represent the people as a people, the covenant people of God. Scholars often note Matthew’s use of λαός in 27:25 as opposed to δοχλος five verses earlier (27:20). Senior records the consensus: “The use of πᾶς in conjunction with λαός, as well as the phrase ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἠμῶν reinforces Matthew’s conception of the declaration of vs. 25 as a statement of the Jewish nation. Almost all commentators agree that ὁ λαός here has the idea of the ‘Jewish nation’ and not just the ‘crowd’.” In using the word that designates the people as Israel, in the phrase that in scripture repeatedly marks Israel’s actions as a covenant people, Matthew makes the point clear. Here as at the entry to the promised land the people speak as Israel. Indeed, the text here, in its reference to innocent blood, calls up that earlier moment in Deuteronomy 27 when the people speak twelve times as πᾶς ὁ λαός, the newly-constituted people of God. The penultimate curse in the list of blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 27 is that against the shedding of innocent blood: “Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood” (ἐπικατάρατος ὁς ἂν λάβῃ δῶρα πατάξει ψυχῆν αἴματος ἀθώου· καὶ ἐροῦσιν πᾶς ὁ λαός Γένοιτο, 27:25).

The scope of innocent blood, that it involves the whole people Israel, is evident also in 23:35. The words of the people in 27:25 point back to 23:35 and its warning. There all the

32 Cf. Eduard Schweizer, The Good News according to Matthew (trans. David E. Green; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), 414: λαός is “the word, hallowed by Biblical tradition, that designates Israel as the people of God.” See e.g. Deut 27:15-26: at the brink of entry into the promised land “the whole people” says amen (12x) to the proclamation of blessing and curse that marks them as the newly constituted people of God: καὶ ἐροῦσιν πᾶς ὁ λαός, Γένοιτο; MT: Λαός πᾶς ἐλεημόρεις ὑμᾶς ἀλαττήσετε γὰρ ἀλλήλοις καὶ ἐπεκτάσετε πᾶσα τὴν γῆν ὑμᾶς Δαβίδι τῷ υἱῷ Ἰσαὰκ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ Αβraham καὶ ἐκτίσατε τῷ Ἰσραήλ υἱοῖν σου; See also Josh 1:2, where the Hebrew makes the scope of “the whole people” clear: Λαός πᾶς ἐλεημόρεις ὑμᾶς ἀλαττήσετε γὰρ ἀλλήλοις καὶ ἐπεκτάσετε πᾶσα τὴν γῆν ὑμᾶς Δαβίδι τῷ υἱῷ Ἰσαὰκ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ Αβraham καὶ ἐκτίσατε τῷ Ἰσραήλ υἱοῖν σου; “this people” is Israel. Cf. Deut 13:9; 17:13; Josh 7:24; Judg 20:8; Ruth 4:9; 1 Sam 11:15; 12:18; 1 Kgs 1:39; 8:38; 18:2, 24, 30, 39, etc…See further the discussion of the term “the whole people” in Chapter 8.

33 Senior, Passion Narrative, 258 and n. 5.
innocent blood that has been shed will come upon “you.” The word “you” indicates, in the first place, the Pharisees and scribes to whom Jesus speaks. But it becomes, in the next verse, “this generation.” The lament over Jerusalem follows. Again, the innocent blood shed here affects not only this generation but even Jerusalem, place of the presence of God with God’s people. Even in the confrontation between Judas and the chief priests in 27:3-10, though it is a private incident, the long reach of innocent blood is evident. The blood money lands in the temple, and thence buys a field on which the taint of blood lingers “to this day.” The effects of innocent blood are felt in the temple and on the land. The scope of innocent blood in the Passion Narrative as in the birth narrative is large. In some way, innocent blood and the fate of Israel, holy city, people and land, belong together.

Why is this so? Why the long reach of innocent blood? Why, for that matter, is innocent blood the paradigm under which, in crucial ways, the history of Jesus and of Israel in the Gospel of Matthew unfolds?


In Matt 23:34-35, Jesus sums up the problem of innocent blood and the scope of its consequences: upon you, Matthew says to the Pharisees and to the whole generation, comes “all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachia…” These words, I propose, provide a way in to the problem of innocent blood and its significance for Israel. They set the problem of innocent blood and the fate of Israel in the context of a particular history, the history that runs from Genesis to Chronicles, from Abel to Zechariah. It is in these two figures, and in the vision of history here described, that we may find a key to the meaning of innocent blood in the gospel.
Scholars generally read the reference to innocent blood in Matt 23:35-38 as deriving from 2 Chronicles 24:20-22 and the story of the death of Zechariah, stoned to death by the people in the court of the house of the Lord. They note parallels between the two passages; further, they argue, the larger logic of Matt 23:35-38 recapitulates the logic of 2 Chron 24:20-24.

Immediately after Zechariah’s death in Chronicles the army of Aram comes up against Jerusalem and destroys it. In the same way, Matthew moves directly from the blood of Abel and Zechariah to the lament over Jerusalem (23:37-38) and the destruction of the temple (24:2). Matthew deliberately creates this sequence: whereas Luke separates the (Q) saying about the blood of Zechariah from the (Q) lament over Jerusalem, Matthew holds the two sayings together.

Together, scholars note, the two sayings imitate the logic of 2 Chronicles 24, what Odil Steck

34 Though Matthew calls Zechariah “son of Barachiah,” the identification with the Zechariah of 2 Chronicles is clear: as Davies and Allison (Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.318-19) note, the details of the verse identify this Zechariah as the prophesying priest martyred in 2 Chronicles. Matthew conflates him with Zechariah the prophet, as does Jewish tradition elsewhere (cf. for instance the Targum to Lam 2:20 and Blank, “Death of Zechariah,” 327). The Targum clearly refers to the Zechariah of 2 Chronicles, giving details of his death specified in the rabbinic legend about the blood of “Zechariah ben Jehoiada” (so called in Lam. Rab. 1.16.51; 2.20.21), but calls him “Zechariah bar Iddo” (that is, grandson of Iddo, thus son of Barachiah). Martin McNamara (The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch [Analecta Biblica 27; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966], 162-163, citation 163) argues that the Targum in thus attaching “the name of the post-exilic prophet to the person killed in the Temple at an earlier period” retains an old, even pre-Christian tradition. Although commentators have offered many solutions to the apparent confusion in Matt 23:35, including other Zechariahs (e.g. the father of John the Baptist or the “son of Baris/Baruch/Bariscaeus” of Josephus’ Jewish War 4.334-44), Davies and Allison conclude that Matthew simply makes a mistake. He describes the death of Zechariah in 2 Chronicles under the name of Zechariah the prophet. I would agree in part: Matthew is describing the death of Zechariah in 2 Chronicles under the name of the prophet Zechariah. But I would add that it is a traditional mistake, and one that is connected to the legend of innocent blood. Note that the Targum makes the same misidentification in the same context: both the Targum and Matthew confuse the Zechariahs in the context of the legend of Zechariah’s blood. That is, the confusion in the names here (in a gospel that elsewhere shows a precise and detailed familiarity with the OT in several languages and versions) lends support to the supposition that Matthew is drawing on a tradition about the blood of Zechariah.


has described as the “Deuteronomistic” logic of the persecution of the prophets that leads ineluctably to Jerusalem’s fall and even the Exile.\footnote{For the deuteronomistic theology summed up in 2 Chronicles 24, see esp. Odil H. Steck, Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung des deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbildes im Alten Testament, Spätjudentum und Urchristentum (WMANT 23; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967).}

A close reading of Matt 23:34-35, however, raises questions about this explanation of the provenance of Matthew’s appeal to the blood of Zechariah and its consequences. There is, certainly, similarity between Matthew’s reference to Zechariah and the story told in 2 Chronicles 24. But there is also difference, and the differences are telling. To take the similarity first: There is an overlap of vocabulary and content between 2 Chron 24:17-25 and Matt 23:34-39, in a passage whose sequence recapitulates the sequence of 2 Chron 24:17-25. The setting in both is Jerusalem (esp. Matt 23:37; cf. 2 Chron 24:21). In 2 Chronicles, the leaders of Judah persuade the king to abandon the house of the Lord (2 Chron 24:17-18). Jesus cries woe to leaders who teach the people to abandon God (e.g. Matt 23:15).\footnote{Underlining shows content common to both Matthew 23 and 2 Chronicles 24. Italicized words represent vocabulary common to both in either Hebrew or Greek.} \footnote{At 23:34 (ἀποστέλλω πρὸς ύμᾶς προφήτας) Matthew appears to quote 2 Chron 24:19 LXX (ἀπέστειλεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς προφήτας). Matthew seems to have used both Hebrew and Greek texts (or had access to a Greek version naming Zechariah) as his Greek repeatedly echoes the LXX, but he names the prophet Zechariah – the LXX calls him Azariah.} God sends prophets in 2 Chron 24:19 to whom the people will not listen. “I send you prophets,” Jesus announces (23:34), “…whom you will kill.”\footnote{Zechariah in Matthew as in 2 Chronicles is murdered in the temple. The people in 2 Chronicles stone Zechariah (24:21); Jesus names Jerusalem the city that stones those sent to her (Matt 23:37). Jesus declares that Jerusalem will therefore be abandoned (Matt 23:37-38). In Jerusalem Zechariah rebukes the people and announces that the Lord will abandon them (2 Chron 24:20; “Jerusalem” 24:18, 23). Zechariah’s blood (sg.) comes upon this generation in}
Matthew (23:35-36); Joash in 2 Chron 20:25 is killed for Zechariah’s blood (pl.). In both cases the doom of Jerusalem follows hard on the heels of the murder of Zechariah.39

It seems certain that the story of Zechariah in 2 Chronicles helps to structure Matthew’s account. Yet the parallel with 2 Chronicles is far from exact. Notably, Matthew emphasizes Zechariah’s blood in a way that 2 Chronicles does not. The sin of Israel (and especially of its leaders) in 2 Chronicles is idolatry. By its idolatry Israel abandons God, and therefore Jerusalem is defeated.40 The death of Zechariah is part of Israel’s abandonment of God. They stone him because he accuses them of abandoning the Lord (24:20-21): in this sense Zechariah’s death is linked to Jerusalem’s fall. But in the connection between Zechariah’s death and the defeat of Jerusalem in 2 Chronicles there is no mention of blood. Zechariah cries, “May the Lord see and avenge!” and in the next verse the army of Aram comes up against Jerusalem. Zechariah’s blood comes in only later, with regard to the death of Joash: Καὶ ἐπέθεντο αὐτῷ οἱ παιδεῖς αὐτοῦ ἐν αἷμασιν τίνυ ἱωδας τοῦ ἱερέως καὶ ἐθανάτωσαν αὐτὸν… (2 Chron 24:25; cf. MT: בָּדְמֵם בַּנִּי הָיוֹדֶה)

In Matthew, on the other hand, blood is primary. In Matthew there is no mention of idolatry. The problem in Matthew is not idolatry, but the shedding of innocent blood. It is expressly the blood of Zechariah that leads to the lament over Jerusalem: “all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zechariah” will come upon the people. Blood is the whole problem in Matthew. Yet blood plays no part in the

39 2 Chron 24:22-23; Matt 23:35-38. It is this sequence in particular – death of Zechariah followed by fall of Jerusalem – that argues, in the eyes of some Q scholars, that Matthew here preserves the original order of Q. The two Q passages separated in Luke, Q 11:49-51 and 13:34-35, have (atypically for Q) “a remarkably large amount of material in common” (J. M. Robinson, “Sequence of Q,” 250); they also share a dependence on 2 Chronicles 24. Thus they belong together in Q, Robinson concludes.

40 Jerusalem’s abandonment of God frames the story of Zechariah: καὶ ἐγκατέλιπον τῶν κύριων θεῶν τῶν πατέρων αὐτῶν…: “and they abandoned the Lord God of their fathers and served the Astartes and idols…; and God gave into the hands [of the Syrians] a mighty army because they [the people of Judah] abandoned the Lord God of their fathers (Ὅτι ἐγκατέλιπον κύριον θεὸν τῶν πατέρων αὐτῶν (2 Chron 24:18, 24 LXX)
account of Zechariah’s death itself in 2 Chronicles. Nor is there, in 2 Chronicles, any mention of blood “poured out.”

Matthew is, in fact, further from Chronicles in his description of Zechariah’s death and its consequences than is Luke, for Luke’s ἐκζητήθη (“will be required,” in a legal sense) is closer to 2 Chronicles’ κρινάτω (“Let [God] judge!”) than is Matthew’s quite different idiom αἵμα ἐλη ἔφ’ ὑμᾶς. Luke here preserves the reminiscence of Zechariah’s cry for divine justice, while Matthew stresses instead the consequences of blood. Luke, too, reflects 2 Chronicles’ “οἴκος” (24:21) in his description of the place of Zechariah’s death (μεταξὺ τοῦ θυσιαστήριου καὶ τοῦ οἴκου), whereas Matthew has Zechariah murdered “between the temple (ναὸς) and the altar.”

Both, however, specify the place of Zechariah’s death. In 2 Chronicles Zechariah dies simply in the court of the temple. Whence this specification? What does it mean?

Scholars stress Matthew’s similarity to 2 Chronicles for purposes of the debate about the original order of Q. Yet Matthew and Luke differ from 2 Chronicles in several particulars, and Matthew has less in common with 2 Chronicles here than does Luke. The connection Matthew makes (and Luke 11:49-51/13:34-35 does not make) between the death of Zechariah and the destruction of Jerusalem is not present in 2 Chronicles in the terms in which Matthew makes it. For Matthew it is precisely the blood of Zechariah, blood poured out upon the land, which brings disaster upon the land. Blood is necessary to the logic of Jerusalem’s desolation.

The effect of these differences between Matthew and Chronicles is to heighten in Matthew the emphasis on blood. In Matthew, blood has become a roiling sea: poured out upon the land from the beginning of biblical history to its end, it swallows up not only the murderer

41 Cf. Allison, Intertextual Jesus, 85, n. 47: “the use of ἐκχύνωμαι with “blood” (Q 11:50) is from neither LXX Genesis 4 nor 2 Chronicles 24.” He notes that it has a parallel in Lives of the Prophets Zech 23:1. It is, that is (as we will see), part of the tradition of reflection on 2 Chronicles (and Genesis) and not part of the biblical texts themselves.

himself but the whole generation. The seeds of this sea of blood may be present in 2 Chronicles’ brief mention of blood at the end of the story: because of the “bloods” (ἐν αἷμασιν; דם) of Zechariah the servants of Joash kill him. “Blood” is plural in Greek and Hebrew, to the fascination of Jewish exegetes. Matthew’s focus on blood and the logic of his history – blood poured out upon the ground; blood that spells calamity for the land; blood that comes upon the people’s heads – may follow from 2 Chronicles…but it is not yet present in 2 Chronicles.
Between the single word “bloods” in 2 Chronicles and the Matthean text’s vision of a world engulfed by blood, between the disaster that comes on Jerusalem because of its abandonment of God and the blood that comes upon the heads of the people in Matthew, lies a gap.

There is another important lacuna between the text of Matthew and the text of 2 Chronicles. There is in 2 Chronicles no place for Abel, or for Abel’s blood. If Zechariah’s story in 2 Chronicles 24 gives rise to Matthew’s reference to Zechariah, it is nevertheless not clear why Matthew also names Abel. Scholars claim that it is the blood that cries out for vengeance that links Abel, for Matthew, to the Zechariah of 2 Chronicles. Sheldon Blank states, “Even as the blood of Abel cried unto God from the ground so the blood of Zechariah cried to Him for vengeance from the pavement of the Temple where he had been stoned. The association of the death of this Zechariah with that of Abel in the Gospels is thoroughly logical.” But in fact the blood of Zechariah does not cry out from the temple stones in 2 Chron 24:20-22. It is precisely the blood that is missing in the account of the death itself.

43 Cf. the bubbling blood of Zechariah that will not cease in b. Git. 57b; b. Sanh. 96b; Eccles. Rab. 3:16: 10:4; Lam. Rab. Proem XXIII; Pesiq. Rab. Kah. 15:7, and Chapter 6. Dale Allison notes the plural, and points out that Abel’s “bloods,” also plural in Gen 4:10 MT, had a similar effect upon the “haggadic imagination” (Intertextual Jesus, 86 and n. 57).
44 Blank, “Death of Zechariah,” 336-38. Cf. Garland, Intention of Matthew 23. 183-84: “in each case their blood cried out for vengeance. This would seem to be the key to the original conjunction of these two martyrs.” But in 2 Chronicles, Zechariah cries out for vengeance; only later does his blood appear, in the story of Joash’s murder. Allison (Intertextual Jesus, 85 n. 50) quotes Blank as he offers his own list of biblical parallels, including that between Abel and Zechariah’s blood. He adds, however, that Q 11:51 “may presuppose …extrabiblical tradition” (86).
Like Blank, Kloppenborg states, “What is common to the two figures is the fact that innocent blood was shed.” This is certainly true from the perspective of Matthew. In Matthew in fact, as Kloppenborg sees, it is key. But in 2 Chronicles, there is no “innocent blood.” That concept is an extrapolation from Zechariah’s cry for divine justice and the recompense taken for his blood on the king who ordered his death. The seed of the idea is there, but it is still inchoate. In Matthew it is fully realized: Zechariah represents “innocent blood.” In Matthew, Abel and Zechariah stand together as signs and summary of the problem that haunts the generations: all the innocent blood poured out upon the land. How then does this happen? What is the process that allows Matthew to connect Abel and Zechariah precisely through their “innocent blood”?

Indeed, what is the process by which the blood of Abel, mentioned in Genesis only in relation to Cain and Cain’s fate, comes now not upon Cain but upon “you,” upon the Pharisees and this generation? By what logic does the blood of Abel shed in the beginning of the world lead to the destruction of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus? Genesis 4:10-11 does not provide an answer. Neither Genesis nor 2 Chronicles can explain the Matthean vision of a bloodied land and its tragic scope. Matthew’s text in its divergence from Genesis and 2 Chronicles, from the biblical stories of Abel and of Zechariah, thus pushes us beyond the scriptural sources for an understanding of the problem of innocent blood in the Gospel.

Dale Allison has noted in his discussion of the “intertextual Jesus” the interest in the blood of Zechariah and the blood of Abel in Jewish tradition. He suggests that Matthew’s

---

46 The rabbis, much later, make the same connection: the “bloods” of Abel are like the “bloods” of Zechariah (in both texts the word “blood” is, unusually, plural). That the rabbis make the same connection as does Matthew may suggest an interpretive tradition. See Gen. Rab. 4:10 and Allison, Intertextual Jesus, 86 n. 57.
47 Allison, Intertextual Jesus, 84-87. These tantalizing and perceptive comments point toward precisely the kind of interpretive world I am envisioning for Matthew: stories move not just from text to text, from scripture to individual reader, but within a community of reflection that shapes the biblical stories for those who read the text. See also, on
mention of Zechariah’s blood “may be intended to recall not just 2 Chr 24:25 but vivid legends about that blood, if such were already in circulation in the first century.” I propose that in the contrast between Matt 23:34-39 and Genesis and 2 Chronicles the connection begins to become clear. Precisely where Matthew differs from Genesis and 2 Chronicles, he resembles other early Jewish and rabbinic sources that reflect (respectively) on the blood of Abel and the death of Zechariah. Scholars have, in fact, studied the legends about the death of Zechariah in detail, in relation to Matt 23:35. Yet they do not draw the logical conclusion: it is not simply that Matthew here recalls legends about Zechariah’s blood. It is that the story of Zechariah has, for Matthew, a weight and shape that derives not from 2 Chronicles alone, but from a developing tradition of reflection upon Zechariah’s brief biblical appearance. Matthew is not working simply from biblical text to his own text. Rather, he works within a history of reflection on that biblical text, reading the text with eyes shaped by the community’s reflection. The connections Matthew makes between Zechariah and innocent blood, between Abel’s innocent blood and the destruction of Jerusalem, are not articulated in the stories of Zechariah and Abel in 2 Chronicles and Genesis. They are perhaps suggested by those texts. But they are not yet explicit. It requires exegesis to find them, and the tradition to hand them on. To close the gap, then, between 2 Chronicles or Genesis and Matt 23:35, to understand the role of innocent blood in Matthew, why the blood of Zechariah and also the blood of Abel now looms so large, what it means for Israel, it is necessary to look beyond the biblical text itself to the communities that exegete and reflect upon it, and the texts in which their traditions of reflection have been passed down.

Chapter 3
Cain and Innocent Blood in Lamentations

The interpretive trail that leads from Genesis and 2 Chronicles to Matthew’s story of innocent blood begins already within the Hebrew Scriptures, in reflection on the story of Cain and Abel. If the Matthean vision of innocent blood as a problem that sums up the iniquity of Israel and threatens to engulf the whole people is not apparent in the biblical stories of Abel and Zechariah, it finds a precursor in the Book of Lamentations. In Lamentations the blood of the righteous – or innocent blood – stands at the centre of the catastrophe that comes upon Jerusalem. And in Lamentations the problem of innocent blood is articulated through the story of Cain.

Lamentations “marks, with untempered immediacy,” Francis Landy says, “the focal calamity of the Bible, the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E.” Commentators find the poem vague, however, about the causes of that destruction. While the book ties the city’s suffering and exile to its transgression, reasoning “from the punishment to the sin in keeping with the most unerring Deuteronomic faith,” “[a]s to the specific sins which constitute the great iniquity of Judah,” Norman Gottwald writes, “we are surprised that more detail is not given.” For Alan

1 Landy, “Lamentations,” in The Literary Guide to the Bible (ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode; Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1987), 329-34, here 329. Cited in Adele Berlin, Lamentations: A Commentary (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 1. While virtually all scholars (though see Provan, below) take Lamentations to speak to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, the more recent commentaries hesitate to align the poem’s literary immediacy with historical immediacy. As Berlin notes, literary reactions to devastating events may emerge half a century afterward (ibid., 33). The similarities to Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Second Isaiah (and Second Isaiah’s probable dependence on Lamentations), however, point to an exilic date. See esp. Delbert R. Hillers, Lamentations: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible 7a; 2nd rev. ed.; NY: Doubleday, 1992), 14; Berlin, ibid., 33-34. Iain Provan (Lamentations [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991], 12-14, 19) finds insufficient evidence for determining matters of setting, date, and authorship, and doubts that the poem can be proven to refer in particular to the events of 587 B.C.E.; cf. Dianne Bergant, Lamentations (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003). Theirs is, however, a minority position; most scholars agree that the poem describes the exile of 587 and was written in the exilic period.

2 Norman K. Gottwald, Studies in the Book of Lamentations (London: SCM Press, 1954), 66, 68. “Deuteronomic” is, as we will see, a partial but not a sufficient description of the faith that underlies Lamentations’ logic. Cf. R. B. Salt-
Mintz, indeed, this silence on the subject of the precise nature of the city’s sin (which is to say also, in his view, Israel’s sin) is “one of the great problems of Lamentations as a whole.”

In fact, Lamentations is not entirely silent on the subject of sin. At the centre of Lamentations 4 stands one of the book’s few explanations of the crisis that has come upon Jerusalem:

There were the sins of her prophets
And the iniquities of her priests
Who shed the blood of the righteous
In the midst of her. (Lam 4:13)

The blood of the righteous (דָּם תְּמֻנָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל), according to this passage, is the problem at the root of Jerusalem’s desolation. The phrase sums up the iniquity of Israel’s religious leadership. Berlin takes “blood” here to be a metaphor: “the accusation of shedding blood is a cipher for idolatry, and need not be taken literally.” Berlin finds the key to Lam 4:13 in Ezek 22:1-5 and Ps 106:37-39, where the blood of the innocent (דָּם זָכָר) sacrificed in idol worship defiles the land, so that God gives Israel “into the hand of the nations” (Ps 106:41). The problem therefore is idolatry, to
which innocent blood points by metonymy. It is not anyone’s real blood that is at issue.⁶

Alternatively, scholars suggest, 4:13 may refer in a general way to the death-count of the siege, for which the religious leadership are by their sins indirectly responsible.⁷ Again, it is not a matter of real acts of bloodshed on the part of prophets and priests. Lamentations itself, however, insists on the concreteness of the image. The blood that the priests and prophets have shed clings to their clothing; it is dangerous to touch; as they wander through the streets the people recoil in horror.⁸ Blood itself, and not simply the more abstract problem of idolatry, is at issue. It is the blood that is defiling.

Blindly they wandered through the streets
so defiled with blood
that no one was able to touch their garments. (Lam 4:14)

And it is because of the blood in particular that the city knows defeat and even exile:

‘Away! Unclean!’ people shouted at them.
‘Away! Away! Do not touch!’
So they became fugitives and wanderers;
it was said among the nations,
‘They shall stay here no longer.’ (Lam 4:15)⁹

---

⁶ On v. 14 with its blood-stained garments Berlin comments, “All of this is, of course, a metaphor” (Lamentations, 102, n. i). She is quite right that the blood on the priests’ clothing stands for the blood of the innocent that has been shed, but it in fact describes real blood: it was the work of priests to slaughter, and so their garments were regularly stained with blood. The shock of the image lies in its multi-valence, blood that is meant to indicate the rites of purity now indicating corruption. (I am grateful to Leslie Chisholm Demson [“Response to Catherine Sider Hamilton,” paper presented at the Toronto School of Theology, Biblical Department Seminar, December 2011, p. 3] for drawing to my attention this point).


⁸ With the majority of commentators, I take “they,” the plural subject of verb and participle in 4:14, to refer to the priests and prophets. See Berlin, Lamentations, 111. For the view that it refers to the people as a whole, see Provan, Lamentations, 117-118.

⁹The text in vv 14-15 is difficult. In v. 15 the lines are unusually long and so some commentators take them to be corrupt (see for example Hillers, Lamentations, 143). The meaning of יכנן is uncertain, though (as Hillers suggests) the context seems to require a synonym of ינקן, from root יָנַן, here “wander.” It is also not clear where “among the nations” belongs – whether the nations say “they shall stay no longer” or whether it is said that they shall stay no longer among the nations. The important points for our purpose, however, remain the same: the leaders (or the peo-
Berlin makes the important point that Lamentations operates in this passage from the perspective of the purity paradigm: the iniquity of the priests and prophets, which she understands in terms of idolatry (for which bloodshed serves as a graphic image) “renders the land impure and leads to the exile of the people.” The language of Lam 4:14 supports her point: “unclean,” points us to Leviticus and its concern with purity: there the term occurs repeatedly. Berlin’s perceptive observation requires further investigation. If Lamentations is operating here from the perspective of the priestly purity paradigm, is it correct to insist that blood in this passage must be a metaphor? For the purity paradigm, like Lamentations itself, insists on the concrete character of “uncleanness.” Ritual impurity (like that caused by skin disease, and to which, as Berlin points out, sin does not necessarily attach) is in the priestly conception physical in its effects: it is contaminating. The leper is contagious in his uncleanness: “he shall…cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean’ (טמא; …He shall live alone; his
dwelling shall be outside the camp” (Lev 13:45-46). So, too, with the man who has an emission of semen or the woman who has a discharge of blood. Jacob Milgrom explains: “for both Israel and her neighbors impurity was a physical substance, an aerial miasma that possessed magnetic attraction for the realm of the sacred.”… “Thus the sanctuary needs constant purification.”

In the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) and in the Holiness source generally, the physical and contagious character of ritual impurity is imputed to moral impurity. After a lengthy description of various kinds of sexual immorality, Leviticus 18 commands, “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for by all these practices the nations I am casting out before you have defiled themselves. Thus the land became defiled, and I punished it for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants” (Lev 18:24-25). The word for defilement here is נ anoś, “unclean,” the same word used for the leper and the person made unclean by bodily discharges in Leviticus 13-15. Immoral acts, that is, present the same problem of physical defilement as does ritual impurity. Uncleaness, moral or ritual, is physical and contagious. As Israel Knohl succinctly says, the ideology of the Holiness School (which lies behind Leviticus 17-27 as well as, for example, Num 35:33-34) “presents moral injustice as ritual guilt.” Sin is concrete in character and effect: that is, it is defiling.

13 “Everything made of cloth or of skin on which the semen falls shall be washed with water and be unclean until the evening” (Lev 15:17); “everything on which [the woman] lies during her impurity shall be unclean…” (Lev 15:20).
14 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 257; 261.
15 Israel Knohl, Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 179, n. 34 (italics added). For the argument that Num 35:33-34 comes from H, see Sanctuary of Silence, 99-100. In Knohl’s view HS is the final redactor not only of Leviticus and Numbers but also of Genesis. Milgrom agrees that HS redacts P, but argues that it is pre-exilic and proposes a final, exilic, redactor H of P and JE (Leviticus 17-22 [Anchor Bible 3B; New York: Doubleday: 2000], esp. 1361-64; 1440-41).
16 See also Jacob Milgrom’s exhaustive commentary on Leviticus, in 3 vols: Leviticus 1-16 (17-22; 23-27): A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible 3, 3A, 3B; NY: Doubleday, 1991; 2000; 2001). On holiness (or purity) in the ritual and ethical realms, and their inter-relation, see esp. 1.723-736; 1.1002-1007; 2.1370-73, 2.1572-77; 2.1711-26. Milgrom and Knohl both (implicitly) dispute an absolute distinction between ritual and moral purity. Even in the Priestly source, Milgrom states, “the ethical is bound up with and inseparable from the ritual, and the Pentateuchal codes make no distinction between them” in terms of training a people toward holiness (Leviticus 1-16, 731). Rather than an absolute distinction between ritual impurity and sin in biblical literature, Milgrom, together with Knohl, describes a process of widening the boundaries of the purity paradigm from a con-
By its reference to the leper, Lamentations thus sets Jerusalem’s sin and its exile against the background of the purity paradigm and the danger of defilement. “Away! Unclean!” the people call out, like the leper in Lev 13:45, at the sight of the blood-stained prophets and priests. “Away, away, do not touch!” The comparison of priest to leper, jarring in its disjunction with the priest’s anticipated purity, highlights the theme of uncleanness. Berlin (like most scholars) identifies the problem, the source of the city’s defilement, as idolatry: “through the perversity of the priests and prophets the people of Judah have become defiled (through idolatry), and this has led to their destruction and exile.”17 Berlin’s point, however, can be sharpened. Lamentations itself draws attention not to idolatry but to blood. The offense to purity that lies behind Jerusalem’s devastation, for the author of Lamentations, is bloodshed itself: the shedding of righteous blood.

Scholars universally note the reference to Leviticus and the uncleanness of the leper in Lam 4:15. There is, however, another inter-text in this passage which generally escapes notice, one that insists, like 4:13, on the problem of blood. “There is also [in 4:15] an echo of the story of Cain,” Berlin says.18 “So they became fugitives and wanderers.” Lamentations 4:15 concludes (דִּבְנְךָ נִלְתָּם נֵלָאָם). The NRSV here echoes, perhaps deliberately, Gen 4:12: “you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth” (גָּפֵר וְגָרֵד נֵלָאָם בְּאָרְץ). The word “wanderer” (נֵלָאָם / נֵלָאָה) in Lamentations and in Genesis is identical; both texts also pair it with a parallel verb.19 For
cern in the priestly source with the realm of the temple and its holiness to a concern with the land as a whole. The problem with impurity is defilement, of the temple and (later) of the people and the land, a defilement that attaches to ritual and moral impurity alike. Cf. Martha Himmelfarb, “Impurity and Sin in 4QD, 1QS and 4Q512,” 9-37, esp. 12.

17 Berlin, Lamentations, 110.
18 Berlin, Lamentations, 110. Berlin perceptively notes the echo and its likening of Jerusalem’s exile to the wandering of Cain. I want simply to add that the problem in Gen 4:10-11 and in Lamentations is bloodshed.
19 The second verbs are different in Lamentations and Genesis but (by BDB’s reading) have similar meanings: דִּבְנְךָ in Gen 4:12, 14 (“wander aimlessly, as fugitive” BDB 626); נֵלָאָה, in Lamentations: perhaps “fly”, BDB 663, though BDB notes the text is “very dubious.” Most versions accept this reading. Provan suggests נֵלָאָה, “fall in ruins,” in-
Lamentations, that is, this wandering is (as Berlin notes) like the wandering of Cain. And the story of Cain points us quite concretely to blood.

I. Innocent Blood and Cain in Lamentations 4

Lamentations is at pains to link the fate of exiled Jerusalem to the story of Cain. Nancy C. Lee identifies 9 occurrences of words in Lam 4:13-16 that may be found also in Genesis 4.20

Chief among these are “blood” (םז) and “wandering” (לתי), both occurring twice in Lamentations in the same form.21 In Genesis, the problem is bloodshed. “What have you done?” God says to Cain. “Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!”

In the same way, in Lamentations 4:13 the prophets and priests are accused precisely of shedding blood:

It was for the sins of her prophets
And the iniquities of her priests,
Who shed the blood of the righteous
In the midst of her.

20 Lee, “Exposing a Buried Subtext in Jeremiah and Lamentations: Going after Baal and … Abel,” in Troubling Jeremiah (ed. A.R. Pete Diamond, Kathleen O’Connor and Louis Stulman; JSOTSup 260; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 87-128, here 120-121. Lee highlights the following words from Lam 4:12-17, in English: sins, iniquities, shed blood, blood (4:13); wander, blood (4:14); wander as fugitives (4:15, her translation); the face, faces, lifted up (4:16). For the Hebrew and the correspondences with Genesis 4, see note 21.

21 Lam 4:13: sin מז = Gen 4:7 sin מז
Lam 4:13 iniquity לתי = Gen 4:13 punishment לתי
Lam 4:13 blood מז = Gen 4:10, 11 blood מז
Lam 4:14 blood מז = Gen 4:10, 11 blood מז
Lam 4:14 wander נני (גנני) = Gen 4:12, 14 wander נני (גנני)
Lam 4:15 wander נני (גנני) = Gen 4:12, 14 wander נני (גנני)
Lam 4:16 face (of priests, not lifted up) תבית = Gen 4:6 face (of Cain, fallen) תבית
Lam 4:16 face of the Lord תבית תבית = Gen 4:16 face of the Lord תבית תבית
Lam 4:16 lifted up עמות = Gen 4:7, 13 exaltation; more than I can bear. from עמות

Lee, who highlights the parallels only in the text of Lamentations and only in English, lists 10. I have been able to confirm 9 of these. She also lists “shed blood”, which is in Lamentations מז …�ם. Blood certainly occurs in Genesis 4, but there is no occurrence of the verb�ם.
Their “sin” ( Heb. הָּאָדָם) and their “iniquity” ( נִצֳּעַ) likewise find a precursor in Cain, again in connection with bloodshed. At the beginning of Cain’s story God warns Cain against sin: “If you do not do well, sin ( לָאָדָם) lurks at the door” (Gen 4:7). Cain immediately murders Abel (Gen 4:8), enacting by this bloodshed the sin against which God has warned him. At the story’s end Cain’s iniquity (that is, his act of bloodshed) has resulted in a punishment ( נִצֳּעַ) greater than he can bear (Gen 4:13). Sin and iniquity, לָאָדָם and נִצֳּעַ, thus frame Cain’s murder of Abel, the blood that cries out from the ground, as לָאָדָם and נִצֳּעַ, sin and iniquity, describe for Lamentations the bloodshed of priest and prophet.

Cain’s punishment ( נִצֳּעַ) is wandering: it is the direct consequence of his act of bloodshed. “Listen!” God says, “Your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!” Cain is cursed from the ground; the ground will be barren for Cain, and Cain is cast out: “You will be a fugitive and wanderer on the earth” ( נִצֳּעַ וְאָדָם גַּזְרֶה, Gen 4:12). In the same way, Lamentations ties bloodshed closely to the wandering of the leaders and ultimately the whole people. “Blindly they wandered ( נִצֳּעַ) through the streets, so defiled by blood…” (Lam 4:14): like Cain who must wander the earth after he sheds the blood of Abel, the priests and prophets wander blindly after they shed the blood of the righteous. By the end of the passage, the whole people are cast out, and the tale of their casting-out echoes the exile of Cain:

On the meaning of נִצֳּעַ here see Claus Westermann (Genesis 1-11: A Commentary [trans. J.J. Scullion; E.T. London/Minneapolis; SPCK/Augsburg, 1984], 309): “It is characteristic of the Hebrew נִצֳּעַ that it describes an event which can include “sin” and “punishment.” The word נִצֳּעַ describes this complexity in which the stress is, according to the context, now on the one aspect, now on the other. When therefore Gen 4:13 is translated: “My punishment is too great…,” the meaning “sin” is included, not excluded.”
“Away! Unclean!” people shouted at them;  
“Away! Away! Do not touch!”  
So they became fugitives and wanderers…. (Lam 4:15)

Indeed, as Cain is sent away from the face of the Lord, so in Lamentations it is the face of the Lord that scatters the people:

Then Cain went away from the face of the Lord (which was turned away) and dwelt in the land of Nod (wandering,” cf. Gen 4:12), east of Eden. (Gen 4:16)

The face of the Lord (which was turned away) has scattered them,  
He will regard them no more. (Lam 4:16)

And as Cain’s face falls at the beginning of his tale of bloodshed, at the end of Lamentations’ tale the faces of the priests are not lifted up. Lamentations thus finds in Israel’s exile in 587 B.C.E. a repetition of the primordial exile: the exile of Cain, rooted in the shedding of blood.

As Cain’s exile is of a piece with that of Israel, so too that exile’s cause is the same: the blood of Abel cries out from the ground; the blood of the righteous stains the garments of the priests and the people are cast out. Blood is at the heart of the matter, now in the exile of Israel as it was in the beginning. Bloodshed here is not a metaphor; it is not a cipher for idolatry; it is the primordial sin: the blood of the brother poured out upon the ground.

23 The echo created by the parallel use of “the face of the Lord” is reinforced by the line that follows: the faces of the priests at the end of their tale of bloodshed are “not lifted up” (אֶת הַפֹּנֶשׁ יָזִיד, a root that occurs several times in Genesis 4 also, once to describe Cain’s being, precisely, “lifted up” (אֶת הַפֹּנֶשׁ יָזִיד, “exaltation” Gen 4:7) if he does good (cf. Lee, ibid., 121 n.105). Lee suggests a further reference to the Cain story in Lam 4:17a: “Our eyes grew weak, ever watching vainly for help” (אֲמַצְיָהוּ הֲלָמְדוּ תְּפֻלָּתָה, where אֲמַצְיָהוּ (= Abel) translated “vainly” in the NRSV, ends the line: “…in the next verse (17), the people finally speak for the first time in the book of Lamentations. They speak as the people of the dying city, sinking to its knees so to speak, in the persona of Abel” (Lee, ibid.,121; italics original).

24 Note that it is Cain and not Adam and Eve who represents for Lamentations the primordial exile (and primordial sin) repeated now in Jerusalem’s sin and exile. There is in Lamentations 4 a focus on Cain’s bloodshed (and Cain’s exile) as the primordial instance of sin that is unexpected for those schooled in Paul’s vision of Adam as the primordial fallen man; the focus on Cain instead of Adam proves to be characteristic of much of the literature we will examine. Westermann (Genesis 1-11, 314) comments that in Genesis itself Adam and Eve’s exile and Cain’s should be read as two variants of a single motif: there is reason in the text to see in Cain’s wandering (as Lamentations does) the primordial exile.
The question remains, however: what kind of blood are we talking about? Scholarly commentary suggests, as we have seen, that Lamentations means, by “the blood of the righteous,” either the blood of all the people killed in the fall of the city or crimes of religious observance. By the first view, the religious leaders are responsible for bloodshed only indirectly, insofar as their corruption has brought God’s wrath upon the city. Yet this is unsatisfactory as a reading of the text, which describes bloodshed as the cause and not the result of God’s wrath. The second reading lacks specificity and insofar as it emphasizes idolatry rather than bloodshed again reads against the text, with its echoes of Cain’s story of bloodshed.

Tremper Longman points us in a different and fruitful direction. Perhaps, he suggests (as an alternative to “the blood of the besieged” reading), the priests and prophets “saw to the death of righteous people who resisted their ways.” Longman here takes seriously the words of the text. Lamentations speaks not simply of bloodshed, but of shedding the blood of the righteous (םֵדְרֵי צְדָקָה). The term “blood of the righteous” is significant. It is scarcely conceivable, for instance, that in the perspective of Lamentations the blood at issue can be simply the blood of the besieged people, for those people call themselves in Lamentations not righteous but sinners. That is, in fact, largely the point (Lam 1:5, 8-9, 14, 20, 22; 2:14; 3:39, 42; 4:22; 5:16).

Secondly, the term “blood of the righteous” has a scriptural footprint. As an instance of הַדם שלון, “blood of the innocent,” with which it is parallel, and often paired, “blood of the righteous” describes a particular kind of bloodshed.

---

25 For the latter see esp. Berlin (Lamentations, 110 – a general reference to idolatry) and Provan, Lamentations, 118, “crimes specifically connected with religious observance.” It is not clear to me whether Provan intends by this simply the crime of idolatry, so that bloodshed is metaphorical (as in Berlin, whom he cites), or whether he is thinking of child sacrifice (which features in Ps 106 and perhaps in Ezek 22).

26 Idolatry may also be at issue insofar as it includes bloodshed (in child sacrifice: see Jer 19:4-6; Ezek 16:36; 23:37, 45; Psalm 106:36-38.) The emphasis is not on idolatry, however, but, strikingly, on the blood that has been shed. That Lamentations intends more than child sacrifice and so idolatry is indicated in its use of the term “blood of the righteous” (see below).

27 Tremper Longman III, Jeremiah, Lamentations, 384.
“Keep far from a false charge,” Exod 23:7 commands, “and do not kill the innocent and righteous…”

The term נְפֶשׁ צָדִיק, innocent blood (together with “life of the righteous,” נֵפֶשׁ צָדִיק) appears in Psalm 94:20-21:

Can wicked rulers be allied with you,
Those who contrive mischief by statute?

They band together against the life of the righteous,
And condemn the innocent to death

Here the innocent and the righteous stand parallel; to “band together against the life of the righteous” belongs to the same category as condemning the innocent to death: this is נְפֶשׁ צָדִיק, “innocent blood.” “Blood of the righteous,” “innocent blood,” thus denotes a deliberate act of murder, the wrongful death of an innocent person. It may include the murder of innocent children in child sacrifice (so for instance Ps 106:37-38). But it goes beyond idolatry. It includes also the corruption of justice that results in wrongful execution.

Exod 23:8 elaborates on the prohibition against innocent blood: “You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds (רָוָא) the officials and subverts the cause of those who are in the right (דָּמָיִם) (cf. Deut 16:19). The context is legal: wrongful condemnation, a deliberate miscarriage of justice resulting in the death of an innocent person. This problem, official

28 “They sacrificed their sons and daughters to the demons; they poured out innocent blood (נְפֶשׁ צָדִיק), the blood of their sons and their daughters to the demons.” Cf. Jer 19:4-5, where child sacrifice is one instance of the “innocent blood” for which Judah now is condemned.

29 So in Psalm 94 the rulers condemn the innocent to death “by statute.” Cf. Mic 3:9-11 (you rulers of the house of Jacob / Who abhor justice…/Who build Zion with blood/ Its rulers give judgment for a bribe) and 7:2-3, which moves from bloodshed in general to the perversion of justice: innocent blood is shed, the juxtaposition suggests, not only in the streets but in the courts.
corruption and so judicial murder, killing “the innocent and righteous,” caps the list of curses in Deut 27:25:

“Cursed be the one who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood.”

אָרוֹר לְפָנָיו שֹׁאֵד לָהֹבָה וְנֵשׁ לָא מַד נְקָי

So, too, in Ezekiel: “The princes of Israel in you…have been bent on shedding blood….In you are those who slander to shed blood…In you, they take bribes to shed blood…”(22:6, 9, 12). In a long list of Israel’s offences (father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the alien and orphan and widow are wronged; you have profaned my Sabbaths; one commits abomination with his neighbor’s wife; you make gain of your neighbors by extortion – a list that echoes the prohibitions of the Holiness Code [Lev 17-26, esp. 18-20]), innocent blood recurs in a grim refrain (22:2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 13) and serves, finally, to sum up the city’s corruption (22:13, see below). Ezekiel 22 is one of the passages to which Berlin points to argue that bloodshed in Lam 4:13 signifies idolatry. Certainly blood is here initially paired with idolatry as sources of the city’s defilement, suggesting that idolatry and the blood of children slaughtered in idol-worship is in part at issue (Ezek 22:3-4). Yet as the chapter continues Ezekiel is at pains to define blood also in terms of injustice. It is the blood of the innocent and righteous, shed by slander, shed for a bribe, which caps and frames the iniquity of Israel. The wrath that will come down upon the people is finally prompted by “the blood that has been shed within you.” At beginning and end, it is the blood that is the problem: “You, mortal, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city?” (Ezek 22:2). “See, I strike my hands together at the dishonest gain you have made, and at the

---

30 Cf. Jer 22:17, where innocent blood is associated with “dishonest gain,” which may suggest bribery and therefore judicial corruption (cf. Exod 23:8, Deut 27:25, Mic 3:9-11 etc…), and the abuse of power: “But your eyes and heart are only on your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood (יָלָל לְהֹבָה וְנֵשׁ לָא מַד) and for practicing oppression and violence.”

31 Berlin, Lamentations, 110.

32 In Jeremiah and in Isaiah also, “innocent blood” incorporates both corruption in the courts and idol worship. In both cases, the crime relates to the innocence of the person whose blood is shed.
When Lamentations, then, names the “blood of the righteous” the problem that has led to Jerusalem’s destruction, it means what it says. It is the blood that stains the hands of the priests that is at issue in the people’s exile. “Keep far from a false charge and do not kill the innocent and righteous”; “You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds (תַּנָּאָרָה) the officials and subverts the cause of those who are in the right (ךַּבֵּית).” Exod 23:7-8 commands. “Blindly (תַּנָּאָרָה) they wandered through the streets so defiled by blood….” Lamentations says (4:14a). It is not, I contend, accidental that the priests and prophets who shed the blood of the righteous (ךַּבֵּית) at the end of Lam 4:13 wander blind (תַּנָּאָרָה) through the streets in the very next verse. This is the same cluster of words with which Exodus and Deuteronomy describe and condemn the corruption of justice that results in innocent blood.33

Isaiah draws the picture fully, in a passage that has several points of verbal contact with Lamentations 4:

For your hands are defiled with blood (ךַּבֵּית מָכַם מַכַּה; cf. Lam 4:14 מַכַּה מָכַם מַכַּה); And your fingers with iniquity (יַנֵּיה בָּיָה; cf. Lam 4:13 יַנֵּיה יַנֵּיה); Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue mutters wickedness.

No one brings suit justly, No one goes to law honestly They rely on empty pleas; they speak lies, Conceiving mischief and begetting iniquity (יַנֵּיה יַנֵּיה). (Isa 59:3-4)

The iniquity of Israel – a matter of violence (cf. 59:7) and injustice, especially at law – may be described in terms of hands defiled by blood (ךַּבֵּית מָכַם מַכַּה), as priest and prophet in

33 Cf. Amos 5:12; Hab 1:2-4; Isa 1:15-17; Jer 22:17.
Lamentations are defiled by blood: the phrase in both texts is the same. The iniquity of Israel, that is, is a matter of innocent blood:

Their feet run to evil
And they rush to shed innocent blood (שֵׁם הַדַּם אֲלֵיהֶם; cf. Lam 4:13 שֵׁם הַדַּם אֲלֵיהֶם) Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity (לֶעָר) Desolation and destruction are in their highways….

Therefore justice is far from us, And righteousness does not reach us (Isa 59:7, 9)

The consequence? “We grope like the blind (כִּי חֳלָב יַרְדֵּנָה) along a wall…” (Isa 59:10). Isaiah’s vision of Israel’s corruption coincides with that of Lamentations, and through the shared vocabulary Isaiah’s fuller picture serves to illuminate the meaning of Lamentations. The blood of the innocent defiles the people’s hands as the blood of the righteous defiles the garments of the priests, and priest and people alike wander blind through the streets. For this reason, God does not hear, in Isaiah and Lamentations alike (cf. Isa 59:1-2).

It is not clear in which direction the influence in these two passages runs, whether Lamentations echoes Isaiah or vice versa. For our purposes, however, it does not matter. Both texts share a vision of Israel’s iniquity in which “innocent blood” (described in Isaiah both as murder in general and as unjust legal process, judicial murder) is central. The problem is defilement and the consequence for the people and for the land is dire. What is at issue in the blood of the righteous in Lam 4:13-15 is not simply idolatry, but rather the concrete problem of bloodshed: blood of the righteous unjustly shed, blood of the innocent (including perhaps

---

34 Some have argued that vv 5-8 are a later gloss; see Brevard Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 487. Childs takes Isaiah 59:1-8 to be a unity: “The structure of the unit reflects very careful shaping, which is usually not the case with a gloss.”

sacrificed children) cruelly shed. The problem that leads to Jerusalem’s defeat and the people’s exile is innocent blood.

In this vision, Lamentations and Isaiah belong to a pattern of reflection that is in fact pervasive in the Hebrew Scriptures. In their emphasis on blood – the blood of the righteous, innocent blood – Lamentations and Isaiah locate the question of Israel’s transgression and its fate within a complex of ideas that has to do with pollution and expiation, the sanctity and danger of blood, and the defilement of the land. This complex runs through the scriptures from Genesis and the story of Cain to Numbers and Deuteronomy and the prophets, and continues to inform later Jewish literature from the Dead Sea Scrolls to the rabbinic writings. The problem with blood, according to Numbers, is that it pollutes: “You shall not pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, except by the blood of the one who shed it” (Num 35:33). Unexpiated blood renders the land barren; indeed, Milgrom states, “the land becomes polluted with the consequence that neither God nor Israel can abide there.” Thus the land, defiled by blood, will eventually vomit out its

---

36 Num 35:33 is, according to Milgrom (e.g. Leviticus 1-16, 700-710) and Knohl (Sanctuary of Silence, 99-101), to be attributed, with Lev 17-26, to the Holiness Source. The word “shed” (NRSV) is, in Hebrew, מָּפֶר and, in the LXX, ἐξέκοιμα. “Poured out” is the more literal and vivid translation and seems to me better to reflect the concreteness of the OT understanding of blood. It is poured out in slaughter or murder or sprinkled in sacrifice; it lies on the ground and much be covered with dust. Tikva Frymer-Kensky (“The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of Genesis 1-9,” BA 40 [1977]: 147-55, here 154), translates “spilled” and “spiller.” For blood’s polluting character, see the articles on blood and bloodguilt in Encyclopedia Judaica: “innocent blood (דָּם נָקִי (נָקִי); Jonah 1:14) cries out for vengeance (Gen 4:10), is rejected by the earth (Isa. 26:21; Ezek. 24:7), and pollutes it (Num. 35:33-34)” (Jacob Milgrom, “Bloodguilt,” EncJud [2nd ed.] 3.773-74, here 773). See also Frymer-Kensky, “Atrahasis”; Raphael Patai, “The ‘Egla ‘Arufa or the Expiation of the Polluted Land,” JQR 30 (1939): 59-69; Hieronymus Christ, Blutvergiessen im Alten Testament: Der gewaltsame Tod des Menschen untersucht am hebräischen Wort dām (Theologische Dissertationen 12: Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1977); and the JPS commentaries on Deuteronomy (Jeffrey H. Tigay, Deuteronomy [JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996]) and Numbers (Jacob Milgrom, Numbers [JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990]). See also Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (2nd ed.; London: Routledge, 2002); and James G. Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion (abr. ed.; London: Penguin, 1996) for general anthropological studies of the (widespread) belief that blood pollutes and must be expiated.

37 Barrenness is the sign of the land’s pollution. After Abel’s death, the land “will no longer yield to [Cain] its strength” (Gen 4:12). A famine afflicts Israel in the days of David because “there is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death” (2 Sam 21:1), and in the days of Ezekiel when God pours out God’s wrath upon Israel “for the blood that they had shed upon the land” (Ezek 36:18). For the examples, see Raphael Patai, “‘Egla ‘Arufa,” 61-62.
inhabitants (Lev 18:25-28). Bloodshed thus has a corporate effect: the blood of the innocent shed by anyone within Israel brings blood and its defilement upon the whole people.

Hence the ceremony of the unworked heifer. In the case of an untraced murder, the elders break the heifer’s neck and wash their hands over it in a place of running water, where no crops are sown, asking God to remove the guilt of innocent blood from their midst (Deut 21:1-9). The purpose, as the conclusion (v. 9) makes clear, is to “purge” the land, to “eradicate the blood-contamination.”

This ritual, designed to cleanse the land of pollution by bloodguilt, is both old and long-lived. It reveals underlying “old Israelite and partly Canaanite religious usages,” is adapted by the later Priestly tradition, and is still referred to in Mishnaic times, precisely as the necessary expiation of the land.

Innocent blood, the problem of bloodguilt and pollution, becomes, in the time of Assyria and then of Babylon, a paradigm within which Israel understands the destruction of Jerusalem and the fate of the people. For the prophets, three great abominations defile the land and bring devastation upon it: idolatry, unchastity, and innocent blood. The image of innocent blood appears repeatedly, as we have seen already in Ezekiel 22 (cf. Jer 22), in association with Israel’s exile. “Gilead is a city of evildoers, tracked with blood,” Hosea cries at the time of the Assyrian threat. “[The priests] murder on the way to Shechem, they commit a monstrous crime…Israel is

---

38 Milgrom, Numbers, 295. Israel inherited Canaan because the nations defiled the land and it vomited them out. See also Tikva Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel,” in The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday (ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O’Connor; ASOR Special Volume Series 1; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 398-414, esp. 408.
39 Jeffrey H. Tigay, Deuteronomy, 182: The entire community bears the guilt for shedding innocent blood.” According to Deut 19:10-13, cities of refuge for accidental killers must be established “so that the blood of an innocent person may not be shed in the land…thereby bringing bloodguilt upon you [i.e. the whole people].” In the ceremony of the unworked heifer, it is the whole community that seeks absolution for the blood that an unknown killer has shed (Deut 21:1-9).
40 Patai (“‘Egla ‘Arufa,” 65-66) suggests the location has to do with the fear of blood’s contaminating effect. If bloodshed renders the land barren, the elders will kill the heifer where no crops are sown.
41 Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution,” 408: “This is clearly designed to avert the contamination of the land and the people.” So also Patai, “‘Egla ‘Arufa,” 64: “the purpose of the killing of the ‘Egla is only to expiate the ground.”
42 Patai, “‘Egla ‘Arufa,” 68-69. See t. Sot. 9.2, 6; and Patai, ibid., 62-63 and n. 15. For its adaption by the Priestly tradition, see Tigay, Deuteronomy, 473.
defiled” (6:8-10). Therefore “The Lord will bring down his crimes [lit., bloodguilt: יֵמָד; “his bloodshed” (pl.)] upon him” (12:15 [Eng. 14]). Isaiah and Jeremiah show a similar concern.\(^\text{43}\) In Ezekiel 8 God commands the devastation of the city for its idolatry and bloodshed:\(^\text{44}\) so to the executioners God says, “Pass through the city and kill: your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity….Cut down old men, young men and young women, little children and women….And begin at my sanctuary” (9:5-6). Ezekiel 22 cries out against the city’s bloodshed: “A city! Shedding blood within itself; its time has come; making its idols, defiling itself. You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed…” (vv 3-4). The city and the temple are defiled by sins that are summed up in idolatry and violence, the stain of innocent blood. Therefore the people are slain, even in the temple, and the land vomits them out (Ezek 22:15). For the prophets, exile and the destruction of Jerusalem were “seen as a necessary result of the pollution of Israel,”\(^\text{45}\) a pollution of which “innocent blood” was paradigmatic. The pollution was beyond ritual purification. Ezekiel describes Israel as a pot whose rust is in her, whose thick rust does not depart, who can be cleansed only by burning (24:6, 11-13).\(^\text{46}\)

\(^{43}\) See, in addition to Isa 1:15 and 59:7 and Jer 22:3-5, Jer 2:30; 7:4-15; 19:4-5, 8; 22:17, 26.

\(^{44}\) “Is it not bad enough that the house of Judah commits the abominations [i.e. idol worship] done here? Must they fill the land with violence (כֹּל) and provoke my anger still further? Therefore I will act in wrath: my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity” (8:17-18).

\(^{45}\) Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution,” 409.

\(^{46}\) Note here the hint of cleansing. If the disaster that comes upon Jerusalem arises, for the prophets, from the defilement of the land, its purpose, Ezekiel suggests, is not simply to destroy but to purge. The rust is to be consumed, presumably so that the city may be clean (cf. Ezek 22:15). The seeds of the idea of a destruction that is also purgation are here. Lamentations, appropriately perhaps for a lament, focuses on defilement and destruction virtually to the exclusion of any vision of the future. In Lamentations 3, however, and 4:22, there is the brief expression of hope for deliverance:

\[
\text{The punishment of your iniquity,}
\]
\[
\text{O daughter Zion, is accomplished,}
\]
\[
\text{he will keep you in exile no longer. (4:22)}
\]

The hope of deliverance in Lam 4:22 is connected to punishment fulfilled: Lamentations sees its suffering, which it describes in terms of defilement and exile, as the necessary prelude to the deliverance that may come. The idea of purgation, that is, is perhaps implied.
The concept of innocent blood thus runs through the Scriptures, providing at least from the time of Hosea a paradigm for Israel’s interpretation of its history. That history is seen not simply in abstract moral terms (as a history of disobedience) or as a history of idolatry, but in terms of pollution, the physical defilement of the land and its necessary purgation. Innocent blood stains Israel and explains the destruction of Jerusalem: the land is defiled; it vomits its people out and must be cleansed.

Seen in this scriptural context, in which defilement summed up in bloodshed looms over the land, Lam 4:13-15 has new significance. “It was for the sins of her priests and prophets, who shed the blood of the righteous in the midst of her.” “A city! Shedding blood within itself; its time has come.” If there is not more discussion in Lamentations of the nature of the sin Jerusalem has committed, it is because this verse alone is sufficient: the blood of the righteous stands – in the tradition of reflection on blood and pollution that pervades the Hebrew Scriptures – as summary of the iniquity of Israel and explanation of its exile: the problem is “innocent blood.” Why was Jerusalem destroyed? Because her blood was in the midst of her (4:13; cf. Ezek 22:3); because the blood of the righteous was poured out like the blood of Abel upon the ground; because she was defiled by blood (4:14). Therefore the city is desolate:

The roads to Zion mourn,
For no one comes to the festivals;
All her gates are desolate (‘שָׁלֶהֶם’מ) (Lam 1:4, 5;18; cf. 3:11, 1:16, שָׁלֶהֶם) (Lam 1:4, 5;18; cf. 3:11, 1:16, שָׁלֶהֶם)

The land is barren for her:

All her people groan
As they search for bread… (1:11, cf. 2:12, 19; 4:4-5, 9-10)

She sits alone (1:1).

Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution,” 409: “The idea of pollution was a major theoretical paradigm which enabled Israel to absorb and survive the eventual destruction of the state. It existed alongside, but is not identical to, the better known theoretical explanation of the destruction, the legal paradigm of misdeed and punishment.”
If Lamentations 4 belongs within a standard biblical pattern of reflection on blood and defilement and the fate of the land, it makes its own contribution to the pattern. It finds in the figure of Cain the precursor and type of Jerusalem’s own iniquity and her fate. The blood that stains the garments of the priests calls up in particular Cain’s bloodshed, the blood of Abel staining the ground, and its consequence. “So they became fugitives and wanderers”: the exile of Israel repeats the primordial history, Cain’s sin and Cain’s banishment.

II. Innocent Blood and Cain in Lamentations 1 and 2

Lamentations 4:13-15 does not stand alone, in the poem as a whole, in its interest in defilement. From the beginning, Lamentations implies the problem of defilement and describes it in the vivid imagery of blood. And from the beginning, too, Lamentations links bloodshed and defilement to the story of Cain and Abel.

Jerusalem’s suffering and exile and also her guilt are described at the poem’s opening in terms that call up images precisely of blood and defilement. “Jerusalem has sinned grievously; so she has become a mockery.” (חֵמָ֣טָה יְהוָ֑ה יְרוּשָׁלָ֖ם עֵלָ֣בֶּן לַניָּהֵֽהוּ [Lam 1:8]). Here the emphatic statement of Jerusalem’s sin (חֵמָֽטָה, the same word as is used in Lam 4:13 to describe the priests’ and prophets’ acts of bloodshed) is paired with the scorn (חֵרֶֽב] she suffers. The word חֵרֶֽב, here translated “mockery” (following the NRSV)\(^\text{48}\) has other resonances also.

In Aquila, Symmachus and the Syriac, and in many contemporary commentators, it is read as a variant of חֵרֶֽב: “impurity” or “filthy thing” (so NRSV for חֶרֶב at 1:17). This is a term used in the scriptures especially with reference to a menstruant. In conjunction with the next verse (“her

uncleanness was in her skirts” [Lam 1:9]) with its suggestion, too, of the menstruant (cf. esp. Lev 15:19-33), the image of blood and its attendant impurity comes to the fore.\footnote{Dobbs-Allsopp, \textit{Lamentations}, 65} Not only does Lamentations frame its lament from the beginning in terms of blood and defilement, it sets it against the background of Leviticus and the Holiness Code. The terms with which ידנ is surrounded in 1:8-9 place it in the context of Leviticus and the problem of purity. Jerusalem has become a mockery; “they have seen her nakedness” (׃דנ ). In Leviticus 18 and 20 the word denotes the impurity of both morally and ritually unclean sexual acts, including sex with a menstruant (Lev 18:19; 20:18). “Uncleanness” (םמל ) is in Leviticus 18 the word that repeatedly describes these acts. So in Lam 1:9 it is uncleanness (םמל ) that is in the woman’s skirts. These verses thus bring together a cluster of words that are also associated in Leviticus and set the mockery (׃דנ ) that now falls upon daughter Zion in the context of Leviticus’ purity paradigm and the problem in particular of blood.\footnote{Provan, \textit{Lamentations}, 44: “In the immediate context [of the word nidah in 1:8] we find two other terms, ‘erwāh, nakedness and tumʾāh, uncleanness, which are used elsewhere in the OT, often closely associated with nidāh, in statements about ritual cleanness and uncleanness. Of particular interest is Lev.18:19, where all three appear….” Provan thus reads the term as a variant of טנ : “therefore she became filthy.” With Berlin (\textit{Lamentations}, 54), I take it that readers would hear the echo of טנ in the word טנ (esp. given the appearance of the word טנ itself in 1:17) even if its primary meaning were taken to be “mockery.” The imagery of defilement continues in v. 10, where the enemy’s triumph over Jerusalem is pictured as a rape: 

\begin{verbatim}
Enemies have stretched out their hands
Over all her precious things;
She has even seen the nations
Invade her sanctuary….
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
eating blood: the prohibition occurs five times in five verses (17:10-14). Milgrom comments, “Such staccato repetition is unprecedented in law; it betrays the strident alarm of the legislator lest this fundamental principle be violated.”51 Why? Because “the life of the flesh is in the blood: those who slaughter an animal or eat its blood have taken its life; they are guilty of מְכֹר, bloodshed. This is, in the Hebrew scriptures, “the well-attested accusation of murder.”52 Improper bloodshed even of animals is a capital crime, defiling the land, leading to the people’s expulsion. How much more, then, the innocent blood of humans?

In Lamentations 1 this blood is of course the blood of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, poured out by the invading armies. It is not, as in 4:13-15, the blood Jerusalem has shed. But as the poem continues, the two images – Jerusalem’s own blood poured out and the innocent blood she has shed; the problem of Jerusalem’s suffering and the problem of her sin – begin to come together. In 1:17 the poet draws together the city that has sinned and become a mockery (1:8) with the נַפְּלֵי. As the enemy in 1:10 stretches out his hands over Jerusalem; as Jerusalem in 1:9 finds no comforter,[667] now in 1:17 Jerusalem stretches out her hands but finds no one to comfort her.[668] She has become a filthy thing: חֵרֶזֶה יָרָהְלָה לֹא רָה (Lam 1:17), like a blood-covered cloth. “Jerusalem has sinned; she has become a נִנְדָה” (1:8) sounds in the reader’s ears as the poet plays the changes on the word, drawing Jerusalem’s sin and the scorn she suffers into the purity paradigm, raising the problem of blood. Her uncleanness was in her skirts.53 Indeed, “unclean,” מַגְמַמָה, which describes the skirts of the woman in Lam 1:9, is the

51 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 704.
52 Milgrom, ibid., 710. The word נָפְלֵי, life, “specifically connotes capital crime or punishment” in a legal context, in P especially at Gen 9:6 and Num 35:33, but also in all sources. To shed even an animal’s blood profanely is thus to commit murder (Milgrom, “A Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11” JBL 90 [1971]: 149-56, here 150).
53 It may be that the image of “uncleanness in her skirts” is itself a reference to innocent blood. We have seen that “her uncleanness” (יָרָהְלָה מַמִּים) here can be understood to refer to menstrual blood or sexual immorality because the
same word that describes the garments of the priests and prophets who have shed the blood of the righteous in Lam 4:15. The woman’s blood and the blood of the innocent mingle as the poem unfolds, in a multi-valent image of Jerusalem’s uncleanness.

In thus highlighting in chapter 1 the problem of blood and pollution, Lamentations also makes a probable appeal to the story of Cain. The word יָשַׁר (1:8), read as “mockery” from the root יָשַׁר, also summons up wandering (again from the root יָשַׁר). “The root nwד recalls Cain (Gen 4:12-14),” Berlin notes in commentary on 1:8, “the prototype of the exiled person, who was

word occurs elsewhere in the OT in association with יָשַׁר, to describe (ritual) menstrual impurity (Provan, Lamentations, 44-45; cf. esp. Lev 18:19). But ritual impurity may not exhaust the meaning of the verse. It recalls a similar verse in Jeremiah: “Also on your skirts is found the lifeblood of the innocent poor” (Jer 2:34). Here God speaks to Jerusalem as a woman, even his bride (Jer 2:2), as in Lamentations 1 Jerusalem speaks as a woman. The blood on her skirts in Jeremiah 2 summons up, as in Lamentations 1, the defilement of sexual immorality (“How well you direct your course to seek lovers!” Jer 2:33). But it also describes murder, the blood of the innocent and righteous unjustly shed. “On your skirts is found the lifeblood of the innocent poor, though you did not catch them breaking in.” This is a reference to innocent blood. Falsely accused of theft (“though you did not catch them breaking in”), the innocent poor man is condemned. Indeed, the blood of the innocent in this verse is complemented by an earlier reference to killing the prophets, thereby shedding the blood of the righteous: “Your own sword devoured your prophets like a ravening lion” (2:30). That it is prophets whom the city kills, that it is the poor whose innocent blood they shed, increases the offence against justice; it is an offence that clings, like menstrual blood, to the skirts of the people, rendering them unclean. (Nancy Lee [“Expounding a Buried Subtext,” 102-103] argues for an allusion to the story of Cain and Abel in Jer 2: she suggests that the double occurrence of the root בָּלַח in Jer 2:5 [“They went after בָּלַח, וּבָלַח”] is a word-play on the name of Abel. If the allusion were accepted, Jer 2 would provide another instance of the logic that pairs the problem of innocent blood and the fate of Jerusalem with the story of Cain and Abel.)

Lam 3:34-36, arguably, also summons up the world of innocent blood. The passage describes the justice of God in the face of human injustice: “When human rights are perverted…when one’s case is subverted,” does God not see it? The setting here is legal; the issue is fair trial. The substance – human rights; a cause subverted – echoes Exod 23:7-8, precisely where it refers to innocent blood. “Do not kill the innocent and righteous….You shall take no bribe, for a bribe…subverts the cause of those who are in the right.” The vocabulary of the two passages is different, but their sense is the same. The failure of justice described in Lam 3:34-36 is, in Exodus and Deuteronomy, a matter of innocent blood. Again, innocent blood, the blood of the righteous, stands as the prime example of the human corruption that has no place with God. Commentators often take these verses to describe Jerusalem’s current plight, and to offer hope that God will not suffer it any longer (see e.g. Berlin, Lamentations, 94; Provan, Lamentations, 97; Hillers, Lamentations, 129-130; as Hillers explains [ibid., 116] the syntax is difficult and so the meaning of 3:34-36 is controverted). But the verses may just as easily describe the injustice committed by Israel that has brought the enemy down upon it. “When one’s case is subverted” often describes the shedding of innocent blood – as in Jer 2:34, where it forms part of God’s accusation against the people and leads directly into the warning of judgement (Jer 2:35-36: “you will be put to shame by Egypt as you were put to shame by Assyria”). God does not willingly afflict, the poet says; God sees when the people practice injustice. Therefore there is a reason for Jerusalem’s suffering – and so also, by the poet’s reasoning, some hope of deliverance from it: “Why should any…complain about the punishment of their sins? Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the Lord.” Here too the problem of innocent blood, and the paradigm of purity and pollution, helps to explain the logic of the poem; it proves a useful heuristic tool.
banished for defiling the land with spilled blood.”⁵⁵ “The notion of Jerusalem as a wanderer or exile…does not fit the context well,” Provan says in rejecting this reading.⁵⁶ The LXX and Peshitta read it this way, however. And in Leviticus the requirement for sexual and ritual purity, as described particularly in Lev 18-20, is directly connected to the threat of exile: “But you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances and commit none of these abominations….Otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it” (Lev 18:26-28; cf. 20:22). Given the chapter’s persistent evocation of blood and of sexual impurity, the notion of Jerusalem as a wanderer in fact fits the context very well. Here, perhaps, at the beginning of Lamentations, in the image of Jerusalem as a blood-stained woman there is already an intimation of Cain cast out from the blood-stained land.⁵⁷ Behind the problem of blood and defilement in Lamentations 1 as in Lamentations 4 rises the memory of Cain’s exile, east of Eden in the land of Nod.

In the images of blood and wandering and in their close association (for in addition to the overtones of exile in הָדַיִם, the thought of exile pervades the first lament and begins the whole poem), Lamentations 1 and Lamentations 4 share a thought-world: the shamed and suffering woman of chapter 1 comes together with the blood-stained and sinful city of chapter 4. The city’s sin and her suffering are intertwined, both articulated in the image of blood, both calling up Leviticus and the problem of purity. It was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquity of her priests who shed the blood of the righteous in the midst of her: the blood that defiles serves to explain the cause of the catastrophe as it also provides a graphic image for its consequences. The sin is bloodshed; the consequence is a bloodied city, Jerusalem’s exile; the defilement it has

---

⁵⁵ Berlin, Lamentations, 54.
⁵⁶ Provan, Lamentations, 44.
⁵⁷ Berlin (Lamentations, 54) runs through all three possible readings of הָדַיִם, finding resonances in these verses with all of them, and concludes, “It may be best to conclude that all three associations adhere to the word, and the dominant one shifts as we proceed from line to line, from the consequence of sin [i.e. wandering, exile], to the scorn of others, to the idea of nakedness and impurity in her skirts.” The verbal and conceptual resonance with Leviticus 18 and 20, in which blood and nakedness and defilement are closely associated with banishment, offers literary support for this reading, the multi-valent function of the word.
practiced now reflected in its own defilement. And in both cases – by a multitude of allusions in Lamentations 4; by a probable allusion to Cain’s wandering in the context of blood and defilement in Lamentations 1 – Lamentations hears behind the tragedy of Jerusalem’s destruction the primordial history: the blood of Abel staining the ground; Cain’s banishment from the land.

To the extent, then, that Lamentations seeks an explanation for the catastrophe it bewails, it finds an answer in the paradigm of innocent blood. It is for the blood that has been poured out within her that Jerusalem has fallen and the people go into exile. The blood of the righteous stains the land – stains, indeed, even the clothes of the priests – so that the land vomits the people out. And Lamentations interprets the paradigm, the problem of innocent blood, through the lens of the story of Cain and Abel. Here in this primordial story of bloodshed and exile, a land crying out from the blood that has been shed upon it, is a prototype of the present history of Israel. Sin may be summed up in terms of blood and defilement, and the consequence is exile. This is not Paul’s history of sin: there is in Lamentations’ blood-haunted vision no interest in the disobedience of Adam. Rather, Cain’s bloodshed and Cain’s exile stand behind the suffering of Jerusalem and offer both precedent and explanation. The blood of the righteous clings to the skirts of the priests in Lamentations, as in Genesis the blood of the brother calls out restlessly from the ground; like Cain after the murder of Abel, the people in Lamentations are cast out. The shedding of the blood of the righteous finds its type and first instance in the blood shed by Cain, and his exile becomes the exile of Judah: “So they became fugitives and wanderers; it was said among the nations, ‘They shall stay here no longer.’”

---

58 Ezekiel 22, to which Berlin appeals in explanation of Lam 4:13-15, also frames the question of Jerusalem’s “sin” in terms of Leviticus’ Holiness Code, and sets innocent blood at the centre of it all. The sins of Israel enumerated in the chapter’s long litany (22:6-12) form a précis of Leviticus 17-26, with special emphasis on Leviticus 19 and 20.
Chapter 4

1 Enoch and the Cosmic Sweep of Innocent Blood:

From Cain and Blood to Flood and Judgement

Lamentations thus provides a partial parallel to Matthew: like Matthew, Lamentations finds in innocent blood an explanation for the devastation of Jerusalem and in the story of Cain and Abel a pattern for Jerusalem’s fate. In Lamentations, however, it is the particular fate of Jerusalem that is at issue. Matthew’s vision is broader. For Matthew innocent blood covers the earth and leads not only to Jerusalem’s destruction but to the apocalypse (Matt 23:35-24:1ff). The Matthean vision of a blood-drenched land and its cosmic sweep (from one end of history to the other, poised on the edge of cataclysm) differs from Lamentations and is not readily evident in 2 Chronicles’ story of Zechariah or in Genesis’ story of Abel. It finds an intriguing parallel, however, in one of the earliest parts of 1 Enoch, the Book of Watchers. The original core of this book, the story of the Watchers and the women in 1 Enoch 6-11, is summed up at its central point in 1 Enoch 9:1-2, precisely in terms of blood poured out upon the land: “Then Michael and Sariel and Raphael and Gabriel looked down from the sanctuary of heaven upon the earth and saw much blood being poured out upon the earth….[T]hey said to one another, “The earth, devoid [of inhabitants], raises the voice of their cries to the gates of heaven.”¹ Interestingly, the blood that has thus been poured out speaks, as we will see, with a voice like the voice of Abel. Further, there is in 1 Enoch 6-11 a conjunction of bloodshed – with a reference to Abel’s blood –

¹ Translation by G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108 (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 202. The translations of 1 Enoch in this chapter are taken from Nickelsburg, unless otherwise stated. Occasionally I modify his translations on the basis of the Greek (as above “blood being poured out” instead of “bloodshed”).
and flood that serves to explain the fate of the land, its desolated state and the destruction and renewal that follows: from Cain and bloodshed to flood and judgement, and finally new creation.

It is a conjunction that proves influential. It is possible, we will argue, to trace various versions of this conjunction in other early Jewish literature, beginning with 1 Enoch’s own Animal Apocalypse, again in connection with the fate of the land or the people. Here we may find a pattern of thought that proves illuminating for Matthew’s appeal to the blood of Abel in 23:35, and indeed for the larger vision of innocent blood in Matthew. We will explore the conjunction of Cain, bloodshed and flood (and eschatological judgement) first in 1 Enoch. In the next chapter we will ask whether similar sequences may be found in several other early Jewish texts, beginning with Jubilees.

I. 1 Enoch 6-11 and Genesis

The centrality of blood in 1 Enoch 6-11, and the echo of Cain, has not played much part in scholarly commentary on 1 Enoch. 1 Enoch 6-11 is usually read as an “ancient Biblical Expansion,” a retelling of Genesis 6 and the story of the flood through the Shemihazah and Asael myths. Interest focuses on disentangling these myths, so that the present shape of the story, and in particular the persistence of innocent blood, tends to be lost. Further, Cain and his bloodshed play no part in the story seen as an expansion of Genesis 6. Commentators in fact stress 1 Enoch’s lack of contact with the earlier chapters of Genesis. In his magisterial commentary on 1 Enoch, G.W.E. Nickelsburg writes, “Because they do not recapitulate the whole of primordial history (with the exception of the Animal Vision), the Enochic writings all but ignore the Eden story and thus identify the watchers as the source of all substantial evil.”


3 Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 102.
angelic corruption that brings on the flood takes no account, by this reading, of the human story of sin in Genesis 1-4. Indeed, it deliberately presents an alternative account: in place of Genesis’ account of human willfulness and violence, *I Enoch* offers fallen angels and rampaging giants, a monstrous mating and the impartation of heavenly secrets. *I Enoch*, Paul Hanson argues, insists on a cosmogonic explanation of sin and evil that is, in its dualism, “quite alien to any of the levels of pentateuchal traditions in Genesis.”

Yet a close reading of *I Enoch*’s story of the Watchers and the women and the devastation that follows upon their union calls into question the usual dichotomy between the Enochic aetiology of sin and the pentateuchal narrative. For at the heart of *I Enoch*’s vision is a bloodied land and the cry that goes up from the earth to God, a cry that deliberately recalls the voice of the blood of Abel in Genesis 4.

i. *I Enoch* 6-11 and Genesis 6:1-11

*I Enoch* 6-11 begins from Genesis 6. The story of the Watchers and the women opens, as scholars note, with a near-quotation of Gen 6:1-2: “And it happened when the sons of men had

---


6 I have followed the text of *I Enoch* 6-11 reconstructed from Ethiopic and Greek mss. by Nickelsburg (*I Enoch* 1), as well as Charles’ and Knibb’s translations of the Ethiopic (Robert H. Charles, *The Ethiopic Version of the Book of*
multiplied, in those days, beautiful and comely daughters were born to them. And the angels (or “watchers”), the sons of heaven, saw them and desired them. And they said to one another, “Come, let us choose for ourselves wives.” The verbal dependence on Genesis is high, as the underlined words indicate. The opening phrase renders Gen 6:1 MT exactly, with the omission of “on the face of the ground”; the second half of the sentence brings in “beautiful” from Gen 6:2 and adds “comely.” I En. 6:2 continues with Gen 6:2, adding “angels” (Grk [syn.] “watchers”) to MT’s “sons of God” (thus agreeing with both MT [“sons of God”] and LXX Gen 6:2, which substitutes “angels” for “sons of God”), and dramatizing Genesis’ narrative report: “they chose” becomes “Come, let us choose wives for ourselves.”

At the same time, I Enoch quickly establishes its narrative independence. In its drama, Genesis’ nameless sons of God come to life and the largely neutral biblical account becomes wholly negative. The angels know that in doing “this deed” they commit a great sin (I En. 6:3);

---


Cf. Gen 6:1-2: ἀνθρώπος ἦν ἐπὶ τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἦν δαοίς καὶ δαοίς καὶ δαοίς ἔχετο ἵππον, ἦν δαοίς, ἦν δαοίς, ἦν δαοίς (And it happened when humankind began to become many upon the face of the earth, daughters were born to them. And the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful and they took for themselves wives of all that they chose). For the interaction with Genesis here see, for example, Devorah Dimant, “The Use and Interpretation of Mikra,” 404 and Nickelsburg, I Enoch 1, 176.
Shemihazah their leader fears that the others will not carry it through and so they swear an oath “all together” not to turn aside until it is accomplished (1 En. 6:5).  

If the deed itself in 1 Enoch is a sin, its fruit is disastrous. When the angels go in to the women, 1 Enoch says, they defile themselves. Their offspring are monstrous: great giants who devour the labour of humans and then humans themselves; who sin against birds and beasts and creeping things and fish, who devour even each other and who, in what appears to be the crowning crime, drink blood. In Genesis, the offspring are גיבורים, gibborim, “mighty warriors,” further described (positively, it would appear) as “men of renown” (משואות, Gen 6:4). In 1 Enoch, Genesis’ mysterious Nephilim and mighty gibborim have become ogres ravaging the land. At their violence, the earth itself protests: “Then the earth brought accusation against the lawless ones,” 1 En. 7:6 concludes.

Whence this overwhelmingly negative portrayal of the angel’s act and its consequence? Scholars point either to the Shemihazah and Asael myths or to the historical situation in which 1 Enoch is written. So for instance Nickelsburg finds the origin of 1 Enoch’s violent giants in the Diadochi who wage bloody wars in Palestine. Yet there is another obvious source for the shape of 1 Enoch’s story: even in its expansion of Genesis, 1 Enoch reads Genesis. 1 Enoch’s narrative, though unique, takes inspiration from the text of Genesis; its expansion is exegetically driven. 1 Enoch finds exegetical reason to see the angels’ deed in a negative light in the beginning of the story of angelic descent in Gen 6:1-4. Between the taking of wives in Gen 6:2 and the birth of offspring in Gen 6:4, Gen 6:3 inserts the curious comment, “And God said, ‘My spirit shall not abide in humans forever, for they are flesh, and their days shall be 120 years.’” This is a very

---

8 The oath too may be a sin. Dimant (“1 Enoch 6-11: A Methodological Perspective,” Society of Biblical Literature 1978 Seminar Papers [ed. Paul J. Achtemeier; 2 vols.; SBLSP 18; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978], 1.323-331, here 328) believes that it belongs within the category of “blasphemy,” considered, in late Jewish tradition, to be one of the Noachide prohibitions.

9 Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 169-170.
short time, as antediluvian life-spans go. Noah is 600 years old at the time of the flood; his
grandfather Methuselah (famously the oldest man in the Bible) lives 969 years; the shortest life
before the flood is Enoch’s, and even he lives 365 years, and does not die. The sequence of Gen
6:2-4 allows the reader to find in verse 3 a hint of divine discomfort at the mating of the sons of
heaven and the daughters of earth.10

That 1 Enoch reads Gen 6:3 in just this way is clear in the denouement. When God finally
acts, in 1 Enoch 10, he not only binds the angels and consigns them to the Pit, but also limits the
life of their children: “destroy the sons of the watchers….And length of days they will not have”
and their fathers’ request, that they should live an eternal life, or even (on second thought) 500
years, will not be granted (1 En. 10:9-10).11 Here is the divine restriction of Gen 6:3 applied to
the Watcher’s offspring as punishment for their evil deeds. Divine displeasure at the mating and
its gigantic consequence reveals itself in a shortened life as, in Gen 6:3, the sequence of mating
and offspring is punctuated by God’s drastic shortening of earthly life.12 Genesis, that is,
influences 1 Enoch’s story both in its overall sense that the sons of heaven are doing something
wrong and even in its detail, the (consequently) short lives of their offspring.

Similarly, the sequence of Gen 6:4-5 influences 1 Enoch’s reading. The flood story
follows, in Genesis 6, hard on the heels of the birth of the gibborim: “The sons of God went in to
the daughters of men and they bore for them the gibborim, those which are from of old, men of

10 Commentaries generally read the verse as a pronouncement of divine judgement (or at least limitation of human
and angelic power) in the wake of “a “perversion of the order appointed by God” (Calvin)” (Walter Brueggemann,
Genesis [Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982], 71). See also e.g. Claus Westermann, Genesis 1-11: A
Commentary (trans. John J. Scullion S.J.; Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1984), 376; Gerhard von Rad, Genesis: A Com-
11 Nickelsburg takes “500 years” to be an alternative to “an eternal life”; J. J. Collins (“Methodological Issues in the
Study of 1 Enoch: Reflections on the Articles of Paul D. Hanson and George W. Nickelsburg,” The Society of Bibl-
cal Literature 1978 Seminar Papers, 1.315-322) reads it as defining “eternal life” i.e. simply a very long life. Cf. E.
Isaac, 1 Enoch, 18.
12 See Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 224; “The motif of curtailing the giants’ life span relates to Gen 6:3” and J. T. Milik,
The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), note on line 6, cited in
Nickelsburg, ibid.
renown. And the Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great on the earth” (Gen 6:4-5).” For *1 Enoch*, the conjunction implies a connection. How, a careful reader might ask, did this wickedness, mentioned here for the first time, become great? *1 Enoch* looks to the story of the angels and the women and their offspring for an answer. It is a story embellished by mythic material, Shemihazah and Asael and their minions. But its main themes and overall shape, as a close reading reveals, like its conviction that the rebel angels and their offspring are corrupt and earth-corrupting, *1 Enoch* finds in Genesis. We turn then first of all (again) to the text of Genesis

---


In both cases, however, there is a fundamental difference between the proposed mythological background and the story in *1 Enoch*. The ancient rebellion-in-heaven mythic pattern always has to do with rebel gods seeking to overthrow the reigning god in heaven. Even if they start out below the earth or come down to earth to breed allies, their goal and their act of rebellion is ascent to the heavenly throne. In *1 Enoch*, the angels’ goal and their sin is descent: from heaven to earth, there apparently to stay, mixing with mortals in violation of their heavenly status and nature. T. F. Glasson (*Greek Influence in Jewish Eschatology* [London: SPCK, 1961], 62) comments: “It should be noticed that the sin of the angels [in *1 Enoch*] was not the sin of pride, aspiring to be God or attempting to usurp his position. It was rather the reverse; they had lowered themselves in consort with women and forgetting their angelic status.” Nickelsburg’s Prometheus does descend from heaven to earth, there to share secrets with mortals. The secrets he shares, however, are good gifts, fire above all, which makes the world more livable for human beings. Rather than corrupt the earth, he civilizes it. (See, e.g., Aesch., *Prom. Bound*, 442-82, 500-504, and Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 193). From the outset, Prometheus is the one who has human interests, the good of the earth, in mind. For that matter, this is true of the sages of Mesopotamian mythology too. Nickelsburg proposes that *1 Enoch* inverts the usual euhemeristic myth as ironic comment on the powers of the day. But this seems overly subtle. The fundamental structure of the mythic plot is in both cases different from – even the opposite of – the plot of *1 Enoch*. If there is in *1 Enoch* a general awareness of ancient myth, as *1 Enoch*’s population of divine and gigantic semi-divine beings seems to indicate, the myths in themselves are not sufficient to explain the meaning of *1 Enoch* 6-11, and may even distort it. Note Dimant’s caution (“A Methodological Perspective,” 331): “Sources from the second millennium B.C. such as these [‘rebellion-in-heaven’ myths] cannot have influenced a third or fourth century B.C. text. An intermediate period must be assumed” in which independent development connected with interpretation of the Pentateuch must be allowed. “[O]ne must exercise the utmost caution in comparing myths from different contexts and cultural milieux….Such an analysis must take into account the special character of the material, including its interpretive nature vis-à-vis the Bible.” The points of contact between *1 Enoch* and Gen 6:1-11 thus push us back for an account of the particular shape of *1 Enoch*’s story to the biblical text.
6, and then also to Genesis’ larger story, Genesis 1-4 and the story of creation and Cain’s bloodshed.

*1 Enoch*’s emphasis on violence already has an impetus in Genesis 6. Immediately before God speaks to Noah and declares the flood, Gen 6:11 restates the flood story’s initial declaration of the earth’s wickedness (in Gen 6:5): “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence.” This restatement is taken by contemporary scholars to indicate a second beginning, the later Priestly source spliced onto the Jahwist’s narrative. But to anyone following the text sequentially, as a connected narrative, Gen 6:11 reads as an explanation, a further definition, of Gen 6:5. The verses contain similar words; hence by the principle of similarity, as Fishbane explains for early Jewish exegesis, they belong together. “The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth” (Gen 6:5); “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence” (Gen 6:11): the text even provides the reader with a chiasmus, a verbal frame to indicate the connection. Violence defines in 6:11 the corruption of the earth that God sees; violence thus becomes the defining feature of the wickedness that in Gen 6:5 God saw to be great on the earth. It becomes also the proximate cause of the flood. God says to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth” (Gen 6:13). Violence corrupts the earth (Gen 6:11-12); therefore the earth will be destroyed.

Nickelsburg notes the emphasis on violence in *1 Enoch*’s story of sin and the devastation of the earth: the prominent issue in *1 Enoch* 6-11 is “the violence that directly results from the

---

14 See the standard (especially older) commentaries, for instance Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, 124-128. Gen 6:5-8 = J; Gen 6:9-22 = P; “the separation of the two versions [P and J], which can be done easily by means of simple source analysis, is indispensable for more precise understanding of the details” (124).
birth of the giants and that triggers divine intervention.” He finds the source of this emphasis on violence in the book’s historical setting: “A large cast of Macedonian chieftains corresponds to the giants. These two decades are a period of continued war, bloodshed, and assassination.”

But a more obvious source is close at hand: the violence that corrupts the earth in Genesis. The impetus shaping 1 Enoch’s narrative is exegetical. 1 Enoch 6-11 reads Genesis 6: it finds in Gen 6:5 and 6:11-13 the character of the earth’s corruption and the reason for the flood. It may be that the authors of 1 Enoch know a violence that corrupted the earth in their own time, as Nickelsburg suggests. We can only guess. But we can be certain that they have already in the narrative of Genesis 6 a reason to describe the wickedness that corrupts the earth and brings on the flood as violence.

Yet what about the rampaging giants? What about the blood poured out upon the earth, and the cry of the earth to heaven? In 1 Enoch and not (explicitly) in Genesis 6, the violence that corrupts the earth is summed up in terms of bloodshed: “Then Michael and Sariel and Raphael and Gabriel looked down from the sanctuary of heaven upon the earth and saw much bloodshed upon the earth.” It is this blood poured out, and the earth that cries out in response, that gets the attention of the archangels and prompts their intervention in a plea to God. And in their prayer, after recording the corrupting teachings of Asael and Shemihazah’s dalliance with mortal women, they sum up the state of the earth again in terms of bloodshed: “the women gave birth to giants to the degree that the whole earth was filled with blood and oppression.” At the beginning and at

---

16 Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 170.
17 Ibid.
18 For 1 Enoch’s close attention to the text of Genesis see also Paul D. Hanson, “Rebellion,” 198-202. Hanson notes 1 Enoch’s use of Gen 6:5-12, though he points not to the theme of violence common to both but rather to the defilement in both of the created order. For 1 Enoch as an expansion of Gen 6:1-4 see Dimant, “Mikra,” esp. 404-406.
19 Trans. E. Isaac, 1 Enoch, 17. Nickelsburg rearranges the text, including a phrase from Grk [syn]: “the daughters of men have born sons from them, giants, half-breeds. /And the blood of men is shed upon the earth, /And the whole earth is filled with iniquity.” In either case, blood shed upon the earth is the problem. Note that the word here trans-
the end, *I Enoch* 9 describes the problem with the earth, the problem that cries out for divine intervention, as a problem not just of violence but specifically of blood poured out.

Why? We cannot find this particular emphasis on blood in the Greek stories of the Titans, or in the Near Eastern flood epics. Blood is, in these tales, notable by its absence. Tikva Frymer-Kensky has pointed out that the Atrahasis flood epic, while it presents an instructive parallel to the Genesis flood story, is in fact fundamentally different from it. It offers entirely different reasons for the flood; in particular there is in Atrahasis no interest in bloodshed and the (associated) corruption of the land which is, Frymer-Kensky argues, key to the Genesis account. The problem in Atrahasis is overpopulation and the noise of teeming humankind that disturbs the gods. The problem in Genesis is “emphatically not…overpopulation.” “Be fruitful and multiply” is God’s constant command to humans before and after the flood. Rather, the problem in Genesis is a human wickedness which may be described as ḫayim, and which corrupts the land. God’s remedy for the problem, the prohibitions presented in Genesis 9, defines the nature of ḫayim and the corruption it causes. These commandments have to do entirely with blood: “Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood….Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed” (Gen 9:4-6). Bloodshed is the problem that corrupts the earth; here is the heart of ḫayim and the reason for the flood.

Further, the shedding of blood, in the biblical world-view, “involved an actual pollution of the land.” Hamas, a term that “encompasses almost the entire spectrum of evil,” “has a very

20 The last children of Ouranos, the Erinyes and Giants and the Nymphs, are, it is true, sprung from drops of his blood, but there is no interest at all in blood thereafter, even in battle scenes (cf. Theog 176-186; 617-720).
22 Ibid., 150
23 Ibid., 154.
close connection to *damim*, “bloodshed”...”. “It is the filling of the earth with *hāmās* and its resultant pollution that prompts God to bring a flood to physically erase everything from the earth and start anew.” 24 The flood in Genesis, that is, is the necessary response to an earth corrupted by bloodshed. Here we find already in Genesis, as Frymer-Kensky describes it, an implicit focus on blood in connection with the flood, a focus that distinguishes the Genesis flood story from its Near-Eastern mythic parallels. If, then, there is also a focus on blood in *1 Enoch*’s retelling of the Genesis flood story, Occam’s razor suggests that it derives from Genesis. In its portrayal of bloody giants laying waste the earth, *1 Enoch* interprets Genesis, making the problem of bloodshed explicit and, indeed, expanding upon it.

Frymer-Kensky points to Gen 9:5-6, with its prohibitions against bloodshed, as illuminating the problem for which the flood in Genesis is the solution. When the giants are born in *1 Enoch* 7, their actions recall Gen 9:1-2. “They began,” *1 En*. 7:5 tells us, “to sin against the birds and the wild animals and creeping things and fish.” When God, at Gen 9:2, blesses Noah and his sons, he gives into their hands every animal of the earth, every bird of the sky, everything that creeps upon the land, every fish of the sea. This is a rough echo of Gen 1:28; *1 En*. 7:5 picks up this echo to describe the outrages committed by the giants against creation. All the creatures given in Genesis in creation and in the new beginning after the flood suffer violence at the hands of the giants. 25

The crowning outrage in a list of outrages – devouring the labours of human beings and devouring human beings and sinning against all the creatures of creation – is this: “they began to devour each other’s flesh, and they drank the blood” (*1 En*. 7:5). After God gives the animals

---

24 Ibid., 153.
into Noah’s hands in Gen 9:2-3 and grants them to him for food, God makes this stipulation: “Only, flesh with its life, that is, its blood, you shall not eat.” The giants, devouring flesh and drinking the blood, violate the first prohibition God utters in Genesis 9 for the new creation, precisely the remedy (according to Frymer-Kensky) for the problem that has led to the flood. Further, they devour human beings, and even each other’s flesh (1 En. 7:3-5). In Genesis 9, God goes on to prohibit the killing of human beings, killing described in terms of bloodshed: “For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning…from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life” (Gen 9:5). “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall his blood be shed” (Gen 9:6). The devastation the giants wreak, that is, calls up – and violates – each of the commandments God gives to Noah in the time after the flood.

In its emphasis on blood I Enoch thus interprets Genesis: as it is bloodshed that God prohibits after the flood, so the violence that corrupts the earth before the flood may be summed up in terms of bloodshed. In the process, I Enoch makes a connection between blood and the flood that is in Genesis latent (as Frymer-Kensky demonstrates) but not yet explicit. I Enoch makes it clear that blood – blood shed, drinking blood – is the problem for which the flood is the solution: blood poured out defines יhud, the corruption of the earth. In making this connection I Enoch calls upon the first instance of bloodshed in the biblical history, the story of Cain and Abel.

____________________

26 רָאָתוֹ לָיָא הָאַבְרָהָם (Gen 9:4)
27 וְאֶת־הָאָדָם לָיוֹת הָאָדָם אֲנֵהַ יָדַר אֲנֵהַ יָדַר אֲנֵהַ יָדַר שָׁפָר אֲנֵהַ יָדַר אֲנֵהַ יָדַר
28 שָׁפָר אֲנֵהַ יָדַר אֲנֵהַ יָדַר אֲנֵהַ יָדַר.
29 Cf. Dimant, “Methodological Perspective,” 328, who argues more broadly that the sins of the Watchers and the giants in I Enoch correspond to rabbinic tables of the Noachide commandments. I Enoch, she concludes, does not present a story about the origin of evil but about crime and punishment, based on a reading of Genesis.
ii. 1 Enoch 6-11 and Genesis 4: echoes of Abel

In 1 Enoch, the murderous acts of the giants and their drinking of blood leads to the earth’s cry: “Then the earth made accusation against the lawless ones” (1 En. 7:6). The accusation of the earth recurs twice more, at 8:4 and 9:1-2, in a kind of refrain. At 8:4, after the teaching of warfare and self-ornamentation, when humans have gone astray and been made desolate in all their ways, “as men were perishing, the cry went up to heaven.” “Cry,” here, is nicely ambiguous, encompassing both the cry of the dying and the accusation of the earth on which they perish. 30 1 Enoch 9:1-3 brings both elements together. The archangels looking down from heaven see “much blood being poured out upon the earth.” They say to each other, “The voice of those crying out upon the earth (comes up) to the gates of heaven. People’s souls make accusation, saying, ‘Bring our suit to the Most High’” (1 En. 9:1-3). The clamour at the gates of heaven comes from a bloodied earth and the restless souls of those who have died upon it.

This image, the blood-stained earth crying out to heaven with the voice of those who have been killed upon it, comes straight from Gen 4:10. There the blood of Abel cries out from the ground which has opened its mouth to swallow it. Indeed, 1 En. 9:1-2 (as the Greek texts clearly demonstrate) uses the same words as Gen 4:10. In Gen 4:10 it is the voice (φωνή LXX; קול MT) of the blood (αἷματος; δέρμα) of the brother that cries out (βοα; ἀνέχεται) to God (πρὸς με; מenido) from the ground (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; חם). In 1 En. 9:1-2, much blood (αἷμα πολύ) has been poured out on the ground (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς); hence the voice (φωνή) of those who cry out (βοιντῶν) upon earth (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) reaches to heaven (and so to God). Nickelsburg

30 Grk [syn.] and Ethiopic read the cry as that of the people perishing; Grk [a] reads it as the cry of the earth already uttered in 7:6. Nickelsburg preserves the ambiguity in his translation quoted above (1 Enoch 1, 188).
suggests an allusion to Gen 4:10 here, yet it is not just an allusion. Gen 4:10 supplies not only the passage’s conceptual framework but the very words themselves.

The link here to Gen 4:10 comes by way of careful exegesis of Gen 9:4-6. In Gen 9:4, as Nickelsburg notes, blood is equated with life (or “soul,” ἐνέργεια Gen 9:4); hence the connection between blood and souls that cry out in 1 En. 9:1-3. But the connection is much closer than this: 1 Enoch sees in Gen 9:4-6 a reference to the story of brother’s blood poured out and requiring a reckoning, the story of Cain and Abel. In Gen 9:5, shedding/pouring out (ἐκχύσῃ; ἐκχύσῃ) a brother’s blood (καταρακτὴς ὀικογένειας) brings down God’s reckoning (Gen 9:5). 1 Enoch describes the slaughter of humans as “blood poured out” (= “shed”: αἷμα πολὺ ἐκχυσθέντος 1 En. 9:4, 6); blood that requires a reckoning, and attaches it to the story of brother’s blood poured out upon the earth, blood that cries out from the earth to heaven, in Gen 4:10. Cain’s act of bloodshed, that is, serves to describe the violence that in Gen 6:11 corrupts the earth: now that violence becomes, specifically and graphically, blood poured out.

The story of Cain and Abel thus underlies and informs the story of the Watchers’ gigantic offspring that springs from Gen 6:1-4 and makes sense of its focus on blood. There is, in Genesis 6, no mention of bloodshed in relation to the gibborim; the text is neutral, perhaps even positive, in regard to them. They are “heroes,” “warriors of renown” (in the NRSV translation), known in

---

31 Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 208. J. H. le Roux, “The Use of Scripture in 1 Enoch 6-11,” NeoT 17 (1983): 28-38, p. 35 sees a reference to Gen 4:10 in 1 En. 7:6. In fact all three references to the earth crying out from the blood shed upon it make sense only against the background of the story of Cain and Abel. Further, this conjunction of elements – blood shed upon the earth, the cry that goes up to heaven – is, with the partial exception of Job 16:18, unique to Gen 4:10 in the Hebrew Scriptures. Though the problem of bloodshed and its consequences in particular for the land is a serious one in the scriptures of Israel (cf. for example Num 35:9-34 and Chapter 3, pp. 79-82), only in Gen 4:10 does the thought of blood upon the earth occur together with a cry (cf. the partial parallel in Job 16:18: “O earth, cover not my blood, and let my cry find no resting place,” but it is Job’s cry here, and not, as in Genesis 4 and 1 Enoch, a cry that rises from the bloodied earth).

32 Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 208. Nickelsburg notes only the influence of Gen 9:4. In fact, as we see, 1 Enoch is reading Gen 9:4-6; Genesis 9 underlies 1 Enoch at other places as well (1 En. 7:5 cf. Gen 9:2; 1 En. 6:1 cf. 1 En. 9:1, 7 and 8:17, etc…).

33 God says to Cain, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the earth.” ( antioxid καιρ ημεριν αληθινος ο λογος ο αθωσιμος)
Numbers as giants (Num 13:32-33). In *1 Enoch* they have become rampaging monsters, sinning against the earth’s creatures, filling the earth with blood until the earth and those slaughtered upon it cry out to heaven. Nor in Genesis 6 is there any explicit mention of blood in relation to the flood: there it is simply wickedness (רֵעַ, רַע; κακία Gen 6:5) and violence (דָֹדים Gen 6:11) that fill the earth and corrupt it. The exegetical key to this transformation is Gen 4:10, the sin of Cain and the blood of Abel crying out from the ground. Now the problem that corrupts the earth and brings down upon it the waters of the flood is bloodshed, an earth awash in the blood of the murdered and crying out to heaven for cleansing. As the archangels say to God, “As for the women, they gave birth to giants to the degree that the whole earth was filled with blood and oppression” (ἀἱματος καὶ δίκιας, 1 En. 9:9 Grk [a] and Eth; trans. Isaac): the oppression or violence (δίκια, cf. Gen 6:11 LXX) that fills the earth and cries out for recompense (1 En. 9:10) is the blood of the innocent dead.

*1 Enoch* thus articulates the link between blood and δίκια (Gen 6:11) suggested by Gen 9:1-6. Here in the bloodshed first told in the story of Cain and Abel is the reason for the corruption of the land and for the flood that cleanses it. If *1 Enoch* retells Genesis’ story of the flood through the lens of the Shemihazah and Asael myths, it does so after the pattern of Genesis’ own primeval history, guided by a close reading of the scriptural text.

II. From Bloodshed to Flood

The effect is to create a focus on blood: from the blood of Abel to the flood *1 Enoch* draws a straight line. The blood that cries out from the earth, the blood poured out upon the ground from the time of Cain to the time of the giants, requires recompense. The land itself calls to heaven for help and the flood is God’s response. The connection *1 Enoch* makes between the blood shed by the giants and the blood shed by Cain illuminates a striking feature of *1 Enoch’s* characterization
of the flood: it comes not only to destroy but also to cleanse. “Cleanse the earth (God says to the
angel Michael) from all impurity and from all wrong (αδικία Grk [a]) and from all lawlessness
and from all sin; and godlessness and all impurities that have come upon the earth, remove” (1
En. 10:20, cf. 10:22). This emphasis on the flood as cleansing goes beyond Genesis 9. Hartman
notes it, and notes that though it is a small step from destroying evil from the earth to cleansing
the earth, it is nevertheless a step which “has seldom been taken in ancient Judaism.” It is
precisely in the connection between the flood and the blood poured out upon the earth, a
connection made possible by 1 Enoch’s link between Gen 9:1-4 and Gen 4:10, between the flood
and the blood of Abel, that the characterization of the flood as cleansing makes sense. Read
through the story of the brother’s blood that cries out from the ground, the story of the flood
becomes the story of an earth stained by innocent blood. Therefore, in the tradition of the
scriptures of Israel, it is an earth polluted and in need of cleansing.

Already in Genesis 4 the connection between blood and the pollution of the earth is
hinted. Abel’s blood cries out restlessly from the ground; God says to Cain, “And now you are
cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your
hand.” The earth thus bloodied is barren: “when you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you
its strength.” Cain, in fact, is cast out from the ground on which he has poured out his brother’s
blood: “you will be a fugitive and wanderer on the earth” (Gen 4:11-12). This sequence – blood
poured out on the ground, earth made barren, earth casting out its inhabitants – points toward the
long tradition of reflection in the Hebrew scriptures on the problem of bloodshed and its
devastating effect on the land. Innocent blood (יָאַגְּדָת: murder, wrongful death both private and

34 Lars Hartman, “An Early Example of Jewish Exegesis: 1 Enoch 10:16-11:2,” NeoT 17 (1983): 16-26, here 19. Philo (Quod det 170) is, he adds, the only other place he has found this step from destroying evil to cleansing the earth in connection with the flood. I suggest that this connection is in fact more widespread than Hartman supposes and that 1 Enoch may be crucial to the development of the flood story in this direction.
judicial) pollutes the land (cf. Num 35:33-34). Un-expiated blood renders the land barren (cf. Gen 4:12 and 2 Sam 21:1, Ezek 36:17-18); the blood of the innocent poured out upon the ground brings disaster upon the whole people’s head (cf. Deut 19:10-13). Indeed, the land defiled by blood will, like the earth in Genesis 4, vomit out its inhabitants (cf. Lev 18:25-28). Hence the land must be purged (Deut 21:1-9). We have seen the shape of this reflection on innocent blood and the pollution of the land in Lamentations: innocent blood stains the land and leads to exile. Already in Lamentations the blood that stains the land recalls Cain’s bloodshed. But in Lamentations, the story stops with pollution and exile. There is no cleansing flood.

In 1 Enoch 6-11, as in Lamentations, the generic violence of Genesis 6 has become specifically the violence of Cain: blood poured out, and the cry of the earth in response. But in 1 Enoch, unlike Lamentations, Cain’s bloodshed is connected to the flood, both for destruction and for cleansing. God’s promise in 1 Enoch, mirroring the rainbow promise of Genesis, is a promise not just (as in Genesis 9) of no more total destruction, but of a purified earth: “And the whole earth shall be cleansed from every stain (Grk μίασμα, i.e. pollution) and from all impurity and wrath and plague, and I shall never again send [a flood] upon them for all generations” (1 En. 10:22). When 1 Enoch reads Genesis 6 and the story of the flood in conjunction with Genesis 4 and Cain’s act of bloodshed, it brings to the flood story the whole problem of innocent blood and the pollution of the land. Read through the lens of the story of Cain, 1 Enoch’s story of the flood becomes a tale of blood and pollution, of an earth stained by the blood of the innocent. Conversely, in seeing in the flood a response to the problem of bloodshed like Cain’s – in linking the two narratives – 1 Enoch raises the possibility of purgation.

35 For blood’s polluting character, see the extended discussion above, Chapter 3, esp. 68-70; 79-82 and the studies of blood and bloodguilt listed there.
Between the blood of Abel, however, and *1 Enoch*’s blood-filled land there is a distance. If *1 Enoch* is shaped by the story of Cain, *1 Enoch* shapes in its turn the tale of blood poured out that begins in Genesis 4. Now giants stalk the earth, and a single murder becomes a bloodbath that pollutes the whole world. Giants devour plants and animals and humans alike, and humans, in *1 Enoch* 8, given the art of weaponry, devastate the earth. Bloodshed is, in *1 Enoch*, the defining characteristic of the world. Even this multiplication of bloodshed, however, has a kind of precursor or exemplar in Genesis. Genesis moves from Cain’s murder of Abel to the story of Cain’s descendants, ending with Lamech and his sons. The last named is Tubal-cain, “who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools” (Gen 4:22). Then Lamech says to his wives,

“I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold.” (Gen 4:23-24)

Commentators on Genesis see in Lamech’s words, juxtaposed with Tubal-cain and the art of working bronze and iron – the craft of weaponry – a tale of violence run amok. Like Cain, Lamech kills, but the vengeance he threatens against those who would kill him in return is multiplied 70-fold. And here the story of Cain and his descendants ends, with a reference to Cain. The story that began with Cain and bloodshed ends with Cain and bloodshed multiplied exponentially.

In *1 Enoch*, the bloodshed of the giants that ends in 7:6 with the first cry of the earth leads to a chapter (*1 Enoch* 8) detailing the teaching of the rebel angels that is first mentioned in 7:1. Here the arts of weaponry have pride of place: “Asael taught men to make swords of iron

---

and weapons and shields and breastplates and every instrument of war (8:1); then people “made their ways desolate” (8:3). At the end of the chapter, while people are perishing, again “the cry goes up to heaven” (8:4). Here, as in Genesis 4, there is a cycle of violence, the bloodshed of the giants leading into the teaching of the arts, including weaponry, and human devastation; all framed by a reference to Cain’s act of bloodshed. The cry of the earth goes up, in 7:6 and in 8:4, to heaven. Thus even *1 Enoch*’s tale of the multiplying of bloodshed on earth finds a starting point and an echo in the larger tale of Cain in Genesis.

**III. Flood as Eschatological Cataclysm**

The story of bloodshed that unfolds in *1 Enoch* thus follows the contours of Genesis. *1 Enoch* reads the flood story in Genesis 6-9 through the lens of Genesis’ primeval history because it finds that history stamped on the story of the flood, in the text of Genesis 6-9. Yet it does so in its own mode. As the blood of one man in Genesis has become in *1 Enoch* a sea of blood that covers the earth, as one man’s cry has become the cry of all the murdered people (8:4, 9:3, 9:10), so the flood that is God’s answer becomes a scene of end-time cataclysm that is both judgement and restoration. The scene begins, as in Genesis, with the deluge. “Then the Most High…spoke. …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” (10:1-2). But it proceeds immediately to judgement, and to the end-times. “[B]ind Asael hand and foot and cast him into the darkness…and on the day of the great judgement, he will be led away into the burning conflagration” (10:4, 7). Likewise, Shemihazah and the giants are bound “seventy generations in the valleys of the earth, until the day of their judgement and consummation, until the eternal judgment is consummated. Then they will be led

37 Nickelsburg reconstructs the line from 69:6, adding Grk [syn]’s second half to Grk [a]’s first half (*1 Enoch* 1, 188 and n.1d).
away to the fiery abyss, and to the torture, and to the prison where they will be confined forever” (10:12-13). The time of the flood merges, in the end, into the time of the last judgement.

This is also the time of eschatological restoration: God says, “Destroy all perversity [or violence: Grk ἀδικία] from the face of the earth…and let the plant of righteousness and truth appear…; (and) the deeds of righteousness…will be planted forever with joy” (1 Enoch 10:16). All the righteous will escape and live long lives in peace; the earth will be tilled in righteousness and bear fruit one thousand-fold. Wrong will be no more, neither harm nor sin, “and all the peoples will worship (me)…” (1 Enoch 10:21). This is a vision of the final establishment of God’s reign rooted in Genesis 9 and its new creation, drawing together Genesis 1 and Genesis 9 by way of the prophets. Reading Genesis 9 through the eschatological vision of Isaiah 65 (with reminiscences also of Ps 85:11, Zech 8:12 and Ezek 34:26ff, 36:29-30, 35), 1 Enoch 10 describes the time after the flood as a time not just of new creation, but one in which the blessings of creation are multiplied exponentially. The righteous will become tens of hundreds, and live all the days of their youth and of their old age in peace, as in Isaiah “one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth…like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be…” (1 Enoch 10:17, 19 cf. Isa 65:20-22). The blessing of fruitfulness proper to creation is restored (cf. Isa 65:21). Note that, in contrast to Genesis 9 and Isa 65:21, it is not simply vines that are planted here, but also trees and seed, the elements of the first creation (Gen 1:11-12). So, too, in Ezekiel and in Zechariah: “I will make the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field abundant.” “And they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden’” (Ezek 36:30, 35). 39 And as Ezekiel’s trees thrive in the day of the temple’s restoration, so in 1 Enoch in the time of God’s restoration “all the trees of the earth will be glad” (1 Enoch 10:19, Grk

---

38 For the echoes of Isaiah see Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 226-27. For Ps 85, Deut 28:12 and Ezek 34, see Lars Hartman, “An Early Example of Jewish Exegesis,” 21-22. The links to Zechariah and Ezekiel 36 are my own.
39 Cf. Zech 8:12; compare in Zech 8:12 the connection between fruitfulness and peace that is essential to 1 Enoch 10.
1 Enoch takes up the suggestion of new creation in Genesis 9 and expands upon it in the tradition of the hope of the prophets, a hope that becomes, in Ezekiel and Zechariah, increasingly eschatological.

As it does so, 1 Enoch draws Noah’s flood and the new creation that follows out of the past, into the eschaton. The blood that has covered the earth so that earth and heaven together cry out prompts a flood that can cleanse not just once, but forever. The trajectory of interpretation, from Abel to all the perishing people, from Cain to a host of rampaging giants, leads into the cataclysm that purges and renews all things, for all time: “And the earth shall be cleansed from all pollution, and from all sin, and from all plague, and from all suffering; and it shall not happen again that I shall send (these) upon the earth from generation to generation and forever” (1 En. 10:22).

1 Enoch 6-11 thus describes a cosmic and eschatological event: the human drama of Genesis is “ramped up” so that angels and giants walk where only a man and a woman walked before and the single murder of Genesis 4 becomes a slaughter that stains the whole world. Heaven and earth alike play a part, and the fiery pits of some dark netherworld, and the realm of chaos, and finally an age in which all the trees of the earth are glad, and the whole earth is purified, and the blessings of heaven rain down upon the labours of human beings forever. 1 Enoch, that is, takes Genesis’ story of the beginning of human history as a template for the end of history and a drama of sin and devastation, punishment and new creation that involves the whole cosmos, divine and human together. Urzeit becomes Endzeit, as many commentators have noted, in the story of the Watchers and the flood. 1 Enoch creates a sequence that it finds already adumbrated in Genesis: from bloodshed like Cain’s to flood and judgement, a judgement that is

---

40 Trans. E. Isaac, 1 Enoch, OTP 1.19. In this case I prefer Isaac’s reading; it is closer both to Grk [a] and Ethiopic. See Nickelsburg’s discussion of the ms. tradition, 1 Enoch 1, 219 n. 22c.
also restoration. Cain/blood-flood/judgement: the blood of the innocent is poured out upon the earth, calling heaven to see and intervene; the cataclysm in direct response to innocent blood destroys and cleanses, the new creation of the end-time follows. *1 Enoch* names this blood the blood of Abel, and finds in it the root of the earth’s corruption and the catalyst of the earth’s cleansing.

**IV. Cain/Blood-Flood/Judgement in *Animal Apocalypse***

This sequence, and the image of the blood of Abel at its centre, proves influential. Later sections of *1 Enoch* make it clear that the first readers of *1 Enoch* 6-11 heard the echo of Cain’s bloodshed in the blood poured out on the ground. The *Animal Apocalypse* takes up *1 Enoch* 6-11’s version of the flood story, complete with reference to Cain and Abel and its movement from blood to cataclysm and finally to restoration. In *1 Enoch* 6-11, Abel is never explicitly identified. *1 Enoch* 22, however, hears the voice of Abel in the blood that cries out in *1 Enoch* 7-9. Enoch, transported in *1 Enoch* 22 to a place of pits where the souls of the dead wait for the day of judgement, sees “the spirit of a dead man making suit, and his voice went up to heaven and cried and made suit.” These words recall *1 En*. 9:2, where, because much blood is poured out upon the earth, “the earth, devoid of inhabitants, raises the voice of their cries to the gates of heaven.” I have argued that the earth’s cry here (and in *1 En*. 8:4 and 7:6), in conjunction with the blood poured out upon it, calls up the story of Cain and Abel in Gen 4:10. *1 Enoch* 22 agrees. Enoch asks his angel-guide who this is, and why his voice thus goes up to heaven; Raphael

---

41 The Greek here is plural: “dead men,” though the singular is attested in the rest of the verse and in part in Ethiopic (Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 301, n. 5b). Charles, followed by Nickelsburg, corrects the plural to “a dead man.”
42 For “voice” (Grk [a], Eth.), 4QEn[e] has “lamentation.” If Grk/Eth. is a paraphrase of the original, it picks up on the echo in this passage of both *1 En*. 9:1-2 and of Gen 4:10, indicating that it saw the connection between them in *1 En*. 6-11.

1 *En*. 22:5b (Grk [a]): ἡ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ μέχρι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ προέβαινε καὶ ἐνετύγχανεν. cf. *1 Enoch* 9:2 (Grk [a]): φωνὴ βοῶντων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς μέχρι πυλῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. Ἑντυγχάνουσιν αἱ ψυχαὶ τῶν ἁνθρώπων....
1 *En*. 8.4 (Grk [a]): τῶν οὖν ἄνθρωπων ἀπολυμένων ἡ βο[η] εἰς οὐρανοῦ ἀνέβη.
replies, “This is the spirit that went forth from Abel whom Cain his brother murdered” (1 En. 22:7). Cain’s bloodshed provides the pattern and the first instance of the violence that plagues the earth and that continues, it would appear, in his seed: the spirit continues to sue for vengeance “until his seed perishes from the face of the earth, and his seed is obliterated from the seed of men” (1 En. 22:7, trans. Nickelsburg; Eth.: “all [Cain’s] seed”; so Isaac).

Not only is the cry of the earth connected here to Cain and Abel, but as in 1 Enoch 6-11 its consequences are eschatological. After the pattern of 1 Enoch 9-10, the cry of Abel’s blood leads to judgement “forever” for the guilty ones and satisfaction for the wronged (1 En. 22:11-12). The trajectory here as in 1 Enoch 6-11 is from Cain’s bloodshed and the cry to heaven, to judgement and the end of the age.

In the Animal Apocalypse too, Cain and Abel make their appearance in the story of the rebel angels and the corruption of the earth. As Nickelsburg notes, the Dream Vision’s history of the world follows the Book of Watchers as well as Genesis (especially for events up to the time of the flood), drawing heavily upon the Book of Watchers. Nickelsburg sees the influence of Book of Watchers beginning at 1 Enoch 86, with the fall of the stars. From the beginning of the Animal Apocalypse, however – notably in the emphasis on Cain and Abel and bloodshed – the Book of Watchers already makes its presence felt. 1 Enoch 85 begins with a reminiscence of the beginning of the Book of Watchers. As Enoch there “took up his discourse and said” (1 En. 1:2),

43 Cf. Nickelsburg, 305-06: “The terminology in vv 6-6 is especially close to 1 Enoch 9:2, 10….Both here and in 1 Enoch 6-11, the cry of the dead…continues to bring accusation until divine judgment is executed against the murderer(s). Although 1 Enoch 22 was composed after chaps. 6-11, both may contain primitive elements of a common, earlier exegetical tradition on Gen 4:10.” Or, given the common vocabulary and phrasing, 1 Enoch 22, composed after 1 En. 6-11, may be interpreting it.

44 1 En. 22:11: In the great day of judgement, “[t]here they will bind them [the sinners] forever” (cf. 1 En. 10:4, 11-12, 13 and the binding of the rebel angels followed by imprisonment “forever”). Those who make suit, who were murdered in the days of the sinners, are separated (1 En. 22:12), so that they may not be judged and bound with the others.

45 Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 359, 372-376. “From a historical-critical point of view, 1 Enoch 6-11 is an elaboration on a biblical text, and surely the author of the Vision saw it as the definitive way to read Genesis 6-8” (359). The echoes of 1 Enoch 6-11 in the story of creation and Cain and Abel in 1 Enoch 85 suggest that the 1 Enoch 6-11 influenced the Animal Apocalypse’s reading of Genesis 1-5 also.
here Enoch “lifted up (his voice) and said” (85:2, cf. 83:5). The history that follows, while it begins (unlike 1 Enoch 6-11) with Adam and Eve, moves directly from their creation to their offspring and the story of Cain and Abel. “[W]ith her [i.e. the young heifer = Eve] two bull calves came forth; one of them was black, and one was red. And that black calf struck the red one and pursued it over the earth. And from then on I could not see that red calf” (I En. 85:3-4). Commentators agree that the black calf is Cain and the red one Abel. Cain’s dark deed is signified at the outset in the black calf’s colour, as red points to the shedding of Abel’s blood. Here is a focus on bloodshed that is reminiscent of 1 Enoch 6-11.

From Cain’s bloodshed, the Animal Apocalypse moves through Eve’s grief and the birth of the white bull (Seth’s line) to the fall of the “stars.” First a single star abandons heaven to pasture among the cattle; then many stars cast themselves down and mingle with the cows and bear large and violent wild animals, elephants and camels and asses (86:1, 3, 4). In this primordial history, the fall of the Watchers is juxtaposed with the story of Cain and bloodshed, as in 1 Enoch 6-11 both occur together. And as in 1 Enoch 6-11, the distinguishing characteristic of the offspring of the fallen “stars” is violence: “they began to bite with their teeth and devour and gore with their horns;” the sons of earth tremble before them and “they began to gore one another and devour one another, and the earth began to cry out” (I En. 86:5; 87:1). The echo of I En. 7:5-6 is clear: the beasts, like the giants, devour humans and even each other; the graphic images of biting and goring suggest a bloody slaughter, and the earth cries out.

To the cry of the earth the four archangels (“white men”) respond, and the binding of the Watchers in 1 Enoch 10 and the punishment of their offspring is repeated: “he seized that first

---

46 Nickelsburg draws attention to the parallel; “lifted up” here could also be rendered “took up” (1 Enoch 1, 350).
47 See Nickelsburg, I Enoch 1, 371; Patrick A. Tiller, A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch (SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature 4; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1993); Matthew Black, The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A New English Edition with Commentary and Textual Notes (SVTP 7; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 257: “‘red’, in this context, is intended to symbolize the murder of Abel, ‘black’ Cain’s wickedness.”
star that had fallen from heaven, and he bound it by its hands and feet and threw it into an abyss”
(1 En. 88:1; cf. 1 En. 10:4). One archangel gives a sword to the wild animals, who strike one another with it (1 En. 88:2, cf. 1 En. 10:9, 12) while another hurls stones from heaven, binds all the great stars and throws them into an abyss (1 En. 88:3, cf. 1 En. 10:5, 12). The flood follows.

Primordial history in Enoch’s dream vision is history as told by the Book of Watchers. In this history, blood and violence have pride of place. Bloodshed follows closely upon creation; the blood shed by Cain is the primal evil that sets the scene for the Watchers’ fall and the violence that plagues the earth. The Animal Apocalypse too, that is, hears the voice of Abel in 1 Enoch 6-11, and understands the problem that brings on the flood not only in terms of the fall of the angel-stars, their mingling with mortals, but in terms of an earth plagued by bloodshed and crying out for deliverance.48

Commentators generally see 1 Enoch 85 as an addition based on Genesis 1-4 to the story of the fall of the Watchers that begins in 1 Enoch 86. But if the Animal Apocalypse is here splicing the Book of Watchers onto Genesis, it does so in a peculiar way. It omits entirely Genesis’ story of sin in the garden and gives inordinate space to Cain and the blood of Abel. And it moves directly from Cain and Abel through the birth of Seth to the Watchers. This is to follow the logic of 1 Enoch 6-11. There the story of the Watchers is shot through with the reminiscence of Cain and Abel in such a way that Cain’s bloodshed structures the story. The violence of the giants culminates in blood and the cry of the earth from Gen 4:10; the teaching of the angels leads again to perishing people and the cry of the earth; the whole situation may be summed up as a matter of “much blood poured out upon the earth,” so that the earth cries out to heaven. In 1 Enoch 85-86 it is the violence of Cain that first sets the earth on its course toward the flood, a

48 In this respect it is interesting that 1 Enoch 85-87 ignores the Watcher’s illicit teaching that, together with the violence of the giants, corrupts the earth in 1 Enoch 6-11. Blood and violence, the evil that gets its start with Cain, is in the AA’s reading of 1 Enoch 6-11 the primary problem.
violence described specifically in terms of blood – the blood-red calf – and repeated in the
violence of the fallen stars’ offspring, until the earth cries out. In beginning the history of the
world’s corruption with Cain and the blood of Abel, the Animal Apocalypse reads 1 Enoch 6-11.
It articulates what is, in the Book of Watchers, implied: the violence that torments the earth in the
days before the flood is the violence of Cain, the blood of Abel at the beginning of history and its
echo in all the perishing people, until the earth cries out.

This is a history to which bloodshed is key. It is, too, a history that conceives the cost of
blood in cosmic and ultimately eschatological terms. The whole earth is filled with blood and
violence (1 En. 9:9). The whole world perishes in the flood that comes upon it in the wake of the
giants’ violence: “all the floor was covered with water. And water and darkness and mist
increased on it…All the bulls and elephants and camels and asses sank to the bottom together
with every animal, so that I could not see them. And they were unable to escape but perished and
sank in the deep” (1 En. 89:3-6). In 1 Enoch 89, the flood that destroys the earth is historical. It is
followed by a new beginning, as in Genesis 9, from which the history of Israel proceeds. But at
the beginning and end of the Animal Apocalypse the flood is linked to the eschatological deluge
– and in this it is like the flood in 1 Enoch 6-11.

In the prelude to the history of the world given in the Animal Apocalypse, Enoch relates
the “first dream vision” to his son. It is a vision of cataclysm: “heaven was thrown down and
taken away, and it fell down upon the earth….I saw how the earth was swallowed up in the great
abyss. Mountains were suspended upon mountains, and hills sank down upon hills…I lifted up
(my voice) to cry out and said, “The earth has been destroyed” (1 En. 83:3-5). It is in the
sequence of 1 Enoch’s narrative a vision first of the coming flood, as the interpreter Mahalalel
reveals (83:7-8). But its imagery is reminiscent of the last judgement with which *1 Enoch* 1 opens. “All the ends of the earth will be shaken…the high mountains will be shaken…and the high hills will be made low…and everything on the earth will perish, and there will be judgment on all” (*1 En*. 1:5-7).

The *Animal Apocalypse* ends with the last judgement, in which the final punishment announced in the *Book of Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 10) at the time of the deluge is carried out: “and judgement was exacted first on the stars, and they were judged and found to be sinners. And they went to the place of judgement, and they threw them into an abyss; and it was full of fire…” (*1 En*. 90:24, cf. *1 En*. 10:13 “then they will be led away to the fiery abyss…where they will be confined forever”). As in *1 Enoch* 10, judgement opens out into a new creation: “And I saw until the Lord of the sheep brought a new house…And all that had been destroyed and dispersed <by> all the wild beasts and all the birds of heaven were gathered in that house….And the eyes of all were opened, and they saw good things” (*1 En*. 90:28, 33, 35). So God at the end of history opens the storehouses of blessing and causes them to rain down upon his people, as *1 Enoch* 11 promised. The end of the *Animal Apocalypse* enacts the judgement and restoration announced in *1 Enoch* 6-11.

Further, the cataclysm that precedes it is described in terms that recall the time of the flood in *1 Enoch* 89. When the Lord of the sheep finally acts, after a long history of straying sheep and blinded sheep and sheep that are destroyed by the shepherds and devoured by beasts and birds, he comes and strikes the earth, and the earth is split so that all the beasts “sank in the

---

49 Note the echo of Genesis’ flood story in *1 En*. 83:8: “blotted out” (cf. Gen 6:7; 7:4, 23).
50 Nickelsburg’s translation. For 90:33, Isaac reads: “All those which have been destroyed and dispersed, and all the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky were gathered together in that house....” As Donaldson points out (Judais-ism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE) [Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007], 88), by this reading the passage “clearly expects that Gentiles will be full participants in the blessings of the eschatological era.” The scale of the vision is cosmic and universal; it is not only “his people” upon whom God rains down blessing, but Gentiles as well.
earth, and it covered over them” (*I En*. 90:18). So, too, in the time of the flood all the cattle sink and are engulfed and perish in the water (*I En*. 89:5), and all the bulls and elephants and camels and asses “sank to the bottom….; perished and sank in the deep” (*I En*. 89:6).51 Here as in *I Enoch* 83, the same images describe both flood and final judgement. The flood is a preview of judgement; the last judgement a reprise of the flood. The two are intertwined, so that the flood gains cosmic overtones and the judgement resembles a flood. It is precisely this intertwining that characterizes the deluge in *I Enoch* 10, where cataclysm is flood and judgement both, the time of Noah and the end of time telescoped together. The *Animal Apocalypse* moves, like *I Enoch* 6-11, from the corruption of the earth by blood and improper mingling to flood, a flood which anticipates, which indeed is imagistically intertwined with, the cosmic upheaval of the end-times.

In the *Animal Apocalypse* we see the influence of *I Enoch* 6-11, its particular reading of Genesis. In the story that emerges as *I Enoch* 6-11 reads Genesis 6-9 through the lens both of the primeval history and of its own cosmic and mythic-eschatological vision, *I Enoch* creates something new. The flood in Genesis 6 is only tangentially related to the history of human foibles and achievements that precedes it in Genesis 1-5. In *I Enoch*, however, the flood flows out of that history. For *I Enoch* 6-11, two distinct episodes of the primeval history unfold as a single continuous narrative. The episode of Cain and Abel and the blood there poured out upon the ground leads to and offers an explanation for the flood. The flood explained in Genesis 6 as God’s response to an undefined הָאָדֶמֶשׁ becomes in *I Enoch*, through reflection on the story of Cain’s bloodshed, the necessary answer to an earth polluted by blood. Why should the deluge visit the earth? Because much blood has been poured out upon the earth, because the earth cries out to heaven with the voice of the blood that has been shed upon it, because the earth stained

51 Cf. *I En*. 83:4: “the earth was swallowed up in the great abyss…hills sank down upon hills; tall trees…sank into the abyss.”
with blood is polluted and must be destroyed. Nor does 1 Enoch stop with destruction. After the flood, there is a new beginning. The end is new creation in the Animal Apocalypse and 1 Enoch 6-11 alike. The shape of history as 1 Enoch 6-11 sees it, the vision that structures its account of the flood, from the emphasis on blood at its beginning, through flood that is judgement, to new creation at its end, illuminates the Animal Apocalypse as well.

1 Enoch 6-11 thus defines a sequence whose shape can be discerned also in the Animal Apocalypse: Cain/blood-flood/judgement – from innocent blood (for which the blood of Cain serves as first instance and type) to flood, a flood that is also judgement, the cataclysm and new creation of the last day. We turn now to several other early Jewish texts which show some familiarity with 1 Enoch and in which, we propose, various versions of a Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence may be seen.
Chapter 5

Cain/Blood-Flood/Judgement Traditions

I. Jubilees

Jubilees re-traces the biblical history from Adam to Moses, “just as the Lord told it to Moses on Mount Sinai” (Jubilees: Title). At several points in its version of the primeval history, Jubilees shows, we will argue, a particular interest in blood: first in connection with Cain and Abel, and then in connection with the flood. At these same points, Jubilees shows evidence of the story of the Watchers and the women told in 1 Enoch 6-11. Can we then discern in Jubilees a sequence similar to the sequence evident in 1 Enoch: from Cain and bloodshed to flood and judgement?

It is clear that Jubilees’ history shows the influence of traditions from a variety of sources in addition to the biblical narrative, whether these are (as most commentators hold) thoroughly woven into the final narrative by an “author,” or whether, as Michael Segal holds, various and sometimes conflicting sources are left largely intact by a final redactor. In particular, several scholars point to the influence of 1 Enoch’s Book of the Watchers on Jubilees’ flood stories.

George Nickelsburg, for instance, states that “the author [of Jubilees] interpolates a substantial

---

1 Most scholars date Jubilees to the mid-2nd century B.C.E. James C. Vanderkam (The Book of Jubilees [Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 17-21; cf. Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees [HSM 14; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977], 214-285) dates Jubilees to the period between 161-152 B.C.E. Nickelsburg (1 Enoch 1, 71) suggests a date between 168-150/140, probably between 169-164; cf. O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees: A New Translation and Introduction,” OTP 2.35-142, here 43-44: Jubilees does not indicate any breach with the larger national body (contrast the Qumran sect) and so was written before the split between the Maccabees and the Essenes (before 152 or 140). More recently, Michael Segal (The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology [JSJ Sup 117; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007], 322) has argued on the basis of similarities in legal interpretation that the book was redacted “following the formation of the Essene sect or stream, and it reflects the beginnings of the internal rift in the nation, which reached its full expression in the sectarian literature preserved at Qumran.” He also proposes, however, that the book is a composite work, consisting of sources and their redaction; therefore “one cannot speak of one date for all the material in the work, but rather the dates of each particular source or stratum, and especially the redactional layer” (40).

2 For Jubilees as the work of an interpreting author working primarily from the text of Genesis with the knowledge of early Jewish interpretive traditions, see especially J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, Primaeval History Interpreted: The Rewriting of Genesis 1-11 in the Book of Jubilees (JSJ Sup 66; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000). For the view that Jubilees is a composite work edited by a final redactor see Michael Segal, Book of Jubilees. For our purposes the important point is the influence of interpretive traditions in the author’s, or redactor’s, rewriting of Genesis.
set of traditions from 1 Enoch 6-16...into the story of the flood and its aftermath in order to explain the causes of the flood (Jub. 5 and 7) and, more important, the origin of the demonic world that is presupposed throughout the book.”

James Vanderkam concurs. The influence of 1 Enoch has been demonstrated also for Jubilees 4: Vanderkam shows that Jub. 4:15-26 draws upon parts of 1 Enoch 1-5, the AB, BW and BD, as well as the Epistle. Typically, however, commentators do not see evidence of 1 Enoch in Jubilees’ story of Cain and Abel (Jub. 4:1-6; 31-32).

Yet Jubilees’ tale of Cain and Abel sounds intriguingly like 1 Enoch 6-11 at several points. When Cain kills Abel in Jubilees, his blood “crie[s] out from the earth to heaven, making accusation because he killed him” (Jub. 4:3). In Genesis, the text reads, “And the Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!’” (Gen 4:10). Jubilees changes “to me from the ground” to “from the earth to heaven,” and adds an explanatory clause: “making accusation because he killed him.” In these changes, Jubilees resembles 1 Enoch. In 1 Enoch 7, after the giants devour animals and people and drink their blood, the earth “brought accusation against the lawless ones” (1 En. 7:6). In 1 Enoch 8 the cry goes up (while the people are perishing) to heaven. In 1 Enoch 9 both images are brought

---

3 G.W.E. Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 71.
6 I have used O. S. Winternute’s translation (“Jubilees,” in OTP, 2.33-142).
together. The archangels see “much blood poured out upon the earth”; the earth raises the voice of the perishing people’s cries “to the gates of heaven.” In this cry from earth to heaven the angels hear “the souls of human beings making accusation…” (1 En. 9:2-3). In these verses, as we have seen, 1 Enoch alludes to the story of Cain and Abel. “From the earth to heaven, making accusation”: in these words Jubilees’ story of Cain and Abel differs from Genesis and echoes 1 Enoch’s flood story, precisely where 1 Enoch calls up the blood of Abel.

In these echoes, further, there is a focus on blood poured out on the ground which goes beyond Genesis and, again, resembles the focus on the earth and the blood poured out on the earth in 1 Enoch 6-11. In Jubilees 4, as in Genesis, Cain kills Abel “in the field” and (still as in Genesis) “his blood cried out from the earth” (Jub. 4:3). God makes Cain a fugitive “on the earth” because of the blood of his brother, and God curses Cain “upon the earth” (Jub. 4:4-5). All this is in Genesis. But the proportionate emphasis, in Jubilees, is different. Jubilees retains from Genesis all three occurrences of the phrase “on/from the earth” in a passage that reduces Genesis’ story of Cain and Abel from 16 verses to 6 (or 4, properly speaking, because the last two verses of Jubilees 4 are a commentary from Deuteronomy upon the murder). In 1 Enoch 6-11, in the same way, it is the earth that is repeatedly at issue. When the giants kill and drink the blood “the earth” cries out (1 En. 7:6); in 1 En. 9:1-2 the archangels seeing much blood poured out “upon the earth” and again the cry goes up from the earth to heaven. In 1 En. 9:9 it is “the earth” that has been corrupted by blood and oppression: because of the corruption of the earth the angels appeal to the justice of God. In the story of the flood in 1 Enoch 6-11, that is – a story that makes its point by reference to the blood of Abel – it is the earth that is imperiled by bloodshed. So, too, in Jubilees’ story of Cain and Abel. As the earth cries out to heaven in Jubilees 4 with the voice not of Genesis but of 1 Enoch’s story of bloodshed and flood, so the story of Abel’s murder
reflects the concern with the land and the effect of blood upon it that is central to the movement from bloodshed like Cain’s to the flood in *1 Enoch*.

Given that *Jubilees*’ story of Abel’s murder is reminiscent of *1 Enoch* 6-11 in its wording and its emphasis on the earth, it is interesting that *Jubilees* juxtaposes the story of Cain and Abel and the story of the flood. In fact it goes to some lengths to do so. In the order of the narrative, Cain’s murder of Abel (*Jub. 4:1-6*) necessarily occurs at some distance from the birth of Noah and the flood (*Jub. 4:28* and *Jub. 5*). After the story of Cain and Abel, *Jubilees 4* continues, like Genesis 4, with Adam’s sons and their descendants (omitting Cain’s descendant Lamech), then with Enoch (greatly expanded), the generations from Enoch to Noah, and the death of Adam. At this point, immediately before the story of Noah and the flood, the narrative returns to Cain. It relates his death, recalling in the process his murder of Abel: Cain is killed when his house falls upon him; he is “killed by its stones because he killed Abel with a stone” (*Jub. 4:31*). The story of Noah follows. In this way Cain’s murder of Abel is juxtaposed with the story of the flood. We know that early Jewish interpreters often read adjacent biblical passages as connected. It is entirely possible therefore that the text deliberately returns to Cain’s murder of Abel immediately before the story of the flood. *Jubilees* sees (and the juxtaposition implies) a causal connection. *Jubilees*’ story of Cain and Abel thus not only borrows the vocabulary of *1 Enoch* 6-11, but shows a sequence like that of *1 Enoch*: the blood of Abel, the story of Cain, leads into the story of the flood.

The flood features twice in *Jubilees*’ narrative: once in chronological order, in chapter 5, and again in retrospect, in Noah’s testament (7:20-33). Though the two accounts are rather

---

different, the influence of 1 Enoch’s Watchers story is clear in both, as Nickelsburg notes. Nickelsburg lists an extensive set of parallels between Jubilees 5 and 1 Enoch 6-11: “The reference to Noah’s favor with God ([Jub.] 5:5, cf. Gen 6:8) is the first of a series of details that appear in the same order in 1 Enoch 10.” In Jubilees 5, as Nickelsburg’s parallels make clear (and in contrast to Jubilees 7), the rebel angels play a large part in the story. In keeping with 1 Enoch’s Watchers myth, the flood story in Jubilees 5 expands upon Genesis 6:1-2 and the mysterious “sons of God” and “daughters of men.” 1 Enoch’s giants, however, and their violent bloodshed play a much less significant role. Instead of violence, Jubilees 5 speaks of “injustice” and “corruption” in relation to the giants: “And they bore children for them; and they were the giants. And injustice increased upon the earth, and all flesh corrupted its way” (Jub. 5:1-2).

Jubilees includes all flesh in the corruption that begins with the birth of the giants. This depiction of a general corruption is in keeping with Genesis 6. In chapter 5, it would appear, Jubilees follows Genesis 6 and so allows the biblical narrative to structure its story, even as it reads Genesis through the lens of 1 Enoch’s Watchers and women story.

Yet even here, where the biblical flood account structures the story, Jubilees allows an emphasis on blood to emerge, obliquely at first, in Jubilees 5, and explicitly in the conclusion to the flood story (Jub. 6:7-14). While it is true that the giants make only a brief appearance, the corruption that follows from their birth culminates in “all flesh” eating each other (Jub. 5:2:

---

9 Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 73 (italics original). The details are (as listed in Nickelsburg, ibid.): “(a) Sariel is sent to Noah ([1 En.] 10:1-3; cf. Jub. 5:5). (b) Raphael is sent to bind Asael… (10:4-8; cf. Jub. 5:6). (c) God sends Gabriel to provoke war…among the giants (10:9-10 and 14:6; cf. Jub. 5:7-9), and the motif of long life (Gen 6:3) is interpreted with reference to the giants (10:10; Jub. 5:9). (d) The fathers of the giants witness their sons’ destruction and are then incarcerated in the depths of the earth until the great judgment (10:11-14; cf. Jub. 5:10). (e) There is the promise of a new creation… (10:20-21; Jub. 5:12).”
10 Corruption and injustice are mentioned twice more in v. 2: “And they all corrupted their way….And injustice grew upon the earth.”
11 See Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 95; she sees in this an indication that Jubilees 5 rewrites 1 Enoch to bring it in line with a biblical theology of sin.
“And they all corrupted their way…and they began to eat one another”). This is, of course, like 1 En. 7:5, where the giants’ violence likewise ends with eating each other: they devour animals and humans and finally even each other, and drink the blood. There is no mention, however, of “eating each other” in Genesis’ flood story. It is, then, interesting that Jubilees here preserves 1 Enoch’s description of the world’s corruption as a matter specifically of “eating one another,” even though it seeks in other respects to bring the Enochic story closer to Genesis’ flood story, minimizing the role of the giants and crediting sin to all flesh. What is the significance of summing up the corruption of the earth in terms of eating one another?

In 1 Enoch 6-11 (cf. 1 Enoch 85-90), the giants’ acts of devouring each other’s flesh and drinking blood (7:5) cause the earth to cry out and bring the flood for cleansing: the violence of the giants, that is, corrupts the earth so that the earth must be cleansed. In 1 Enoch 6-11 the problem of pollution arising from the giants’ violence has to do specifically with bloodshed: to eat each other’s flesh and to drink [the] blood are interrelated sins. To eat another’s flesh is necessarily to consume the blood of another – this is the point 1 En. 7:5 makes by adding “and they drank [the] blood” to the giants’ “devouring.” Yet Jub. 5:2 makes no mention of blood. Can we assume that blood and its polluting power are at issue in Jubilees as in 1 Enoch? “Eating one another” is a phrase, in the first place, with resonance in Leviticus. Leviticus’ Holiness Code, as we have seen in our discussion of Lamentations, articulates the problem with eating flesh; at the same time it establishes an essential link between eating flesh and consuming blood. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev 17:11); therefore to eat blood is to take a life: it is murder. Likewise, to eat flesh which has the blood in it is to take a life; it too is murder, even if the flesh is that of a slaughtered animal.12 How much more, then, when it is the flesh of the living

---

creature? In the perspective of Leviticus, the problem with “eating one another” is that it is a form of bloodshed: it takes the blood, and so the life, of the creature. “And all flesh began to eat one another”: the phrase thus implies the problem of bloodshed.

If all we had in Jubilees’ flood story was this reference to eating one another our hypothesis – that the logic of Leviticus and the problem of bloodshed is here implied – would have to remain speculative. That Jubilees here has the problem of bloodshed in mind gains support, however, from the flood story’s conclusion. Jubilees appends to its account of the flood in chapter 5 an extensive discourse on blood and the danger of blood (Jub. 6:4-9). In the process it appeals in particular to Leviticus 17.

In the aftermath of the flood, Noah in Jubilees 6 makes a covenant before God. The covenant is based on Gen 9:1-6, paraphrased in Jub. 6:4-9. The entire content of the covenant, for Jubilees, may be summed up in the command not to eat blood: “And Noah and his sons swore that they would not eat any blood which was in any flesh. And he made a covenant before the Lord God forever…” (Jub. 6:10). Here the problem with eating flesh – or eating one another – is clear: it entails eating blood, that is, taking the life of the creature. Jubilees then comments: “This testimony is written concerning you so that you might keep it always lest you ever eat any blood of the beasts or birds or cattle throughout all of the days of the earth” (Jub. 6:12). Anyone who eats blood “shall be uprooted, he and his seed from the earth” (6:12). Not to eat blood is the command Israel must keep in the aftermath of the flood “so that their names and seed might be before the Lord God always” (6:13). If they keep this law, they will not be rooted out (6:14).

In Jubilees 6 blood has thus become the supreme danger to the life of the people in the land. And eating blood is as bad as shedding it: the two are interchangeable in significance, as Jubilees’ rendition of the Noachide prohibition against bloodshed makes clear. “But flesh which is (filled) with life, (that is) with blood, you shall not eat—because the life of all flesh is in the
blood—lest your blood be sought for your lives” (Jub. 6:7). This is a paraphrase of Gen 9:4-5, read through the lens of Leviticus 17. Jubilees inserts Lev 17:11a (“for the life of the flesh is in the blood”) into its quotation from Genesis; in thus reading Gen 9:4-5 through the lens of Leviticus, Jub. 6:7 takes Gen 9:5 to be a comment on Gen 9:4.13 “For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning...” now refers back to Gen 9:4: “only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.” Because the life is in the blood, as Lev 17:11 makes clear, eating blood constitutes shedding lifeblood: it amounts to murder. For the shedding of lifeblood God will require a reckoning.

Note, too, that Jubilees renders Gen 9:4 so that it may describe not only the eating of (slaughtered) meat together with its blood, but also the eating of living flesh. “But flesh which is (filled) with life...you shall not eat.” We are reminded of Jub. 5:2 and the sin of the giants (and all flesh) before the flood: “and they began to eat one another.” In the conclusion to the flood story, Jubilees recalls the story’s beginning. In the beginning of the flood story, eating one another – eating flesh – sums up the corruption that mars the earth. At the story’s end, eating flesh and eating blood is the one thing that must be avoided, because it constitutes taking the life of the creature. It seems therefore that at the beginning as at the end of the flood story, Jubilees has the problem of bloodshed in view.

13 Gen 9:4-5 reads: “(4) Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood (יָדַעַת מֶשֶׁת דַעֲמָל לָא כָּל) (5) For your own lifeblood (דַעֲמָל לְנָשֹׁת) I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life.” Jubilees finds Lev 17:11 to be suggested by Gen 9:4. In both verses, “blood” and “life” stand together. Cf. Milgrom, Leviticus 17-22 (Anchor Bible 3A; New York: Doubleday: 2000), 1503, on Jub. 6:7-8 and 12b: he points to Lev. 17:14a (in 6:7-8) and comments “blood should not be ingested because it contains life; so whoever ingests blood is guilty of murder, and he and his line will be cut off.” On the Noachide law, see Nahum Sarna, Genesis = [Be-Reshit] The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 61 and 376-77.
In *Jub.* 6:11-14, further, eating blood – that is, bloodshed – has consequences for the life of the people in the land. “The man who eats blood…shall be uprooted,” he and his seed from the earth (6:12). Again *Jubilees* reads Genesis 6 through the lens of Leviticus. *Jub.* 6:11-14 cites Leviticus 17 three times in four verses (Lev 17:10 [*Jub.* 6:11]; Lev 17:12, [*Jub.* 6:11]; Lev 17:11 [Jub. 6:14]). In Leviticus, the consequence of bloodshed (which includes eating blood) is clear: it defiles the person and the land. Whoever eats blood “shall be cut off” (Lev 17:14). “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways,” the Lord says to Moses, “…otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it” (Lev 18:24, 28).

The issue in *Jubilees* as in Leviticus is, thus, holiness, not only of the temple but of the land. No one who resides in Israel shall eat blood, according to Lev 17:10-12; they shall be cut off. The point is the defilement of the people in the land. *Jubilees* goes further: they shall be uprooted. Van Ruiten notes the “striking difference” between *Jubilees* and Leviticus 17 in this statement: not only “cut off” but “uprooted from the earth.” *Jubilees*, that is, stresses the effect of bloodshed not only upon the community but also upon the land. A reference to the flood follows immediately (6:15). In its difference from Leviticus, however, *Jubilees* does not depart from Leviticus but reads Leviticus 17 in the context of the rest of the Holiness Code. Not only the people but the land as well is defiled by the sins of the people; the land that is defiled will vomit the people out (Lev 18:28). For *Jubilees* as for Leviticus’ Holiness Code, bloodshed, eating blood, defiles not only the people but also the land. The consequence is uprooting, enacted in *Jubilees* 5-6 in the flood.

---

14 Though *OTP* does not note the reference, *Jub.* 6:7 also refers to Lev 17:11 (cf. 17:14), as we have seen.
This emphasis on the earth in *Jubilees* 6 recalls the similar emphasis on the earth in *Jubilees*’ story of Cain and Abel. *Jubilees* 6 is, indeed, perhaps explanatory: as in Leviticus, the blood that is (not just eaten but even) poured out upon the earth is the problem. We noted, in *Jubilees* 4, the echoes of *1 Enoch* 6-11. In *1 Enoch*’s flood story, too, there is a focus on the earth: blood is poured out upon the earth; the earth itself cries out with the voice of the blood that has been poured out upon it (*1 En*. 9:1-2; cf. 7:6). The consequence of bloodshed (which comprises also eating blood) is, in *1 Enoch*, the flood; the *bouleversement* of the land. The consequence in *Jubilees* of bloodshed (which in *Jubilees* 5-6 again and in particular includes eating blood) is, in the context of the flood story, “uprooting from the earth.”

That it is the earth that is imperiled by the eating of blood *Jubilees* 6 makes clear at this chapter’s beginning. There, in an addition to Genesis, Noah makes atonement for the land with the blood of a kid, atonement “for all the sins of the land because everything which was on it had been blotted out…” (*Jub*. 6:2). This blood-atonement after the flood for a corrupted land is paralleled before the flood by an insistence on the corruption of the land: “And injustice increased upon the earth, and all flesh corrupted its way; man and cattle and…everything which walks on the earth…[A]nd they began to eat one another. And injustice grew upon the earth” (*Jub*. 5:2). Van Ruiten notes this focus on the corruption of the earth and connects it both to the blood atonement at 6:2 for the sin of the land and to *Jub*. 7:33, and the earth that must be purified because of the blood shed on it.  

There is a line running through *Jubilees*’ entire treatment of the flood, from *Jubilees* 5 to *Jubilees* 7, that links blood – blood eaten, blood poured out – to the corruption of the land and therefore, as in *1 Enoch*, to the flood.  

---

16 Van Ruiten, *Primaeval History*, 225.

17 Cf. *Jubilees* 11, where there is again a focus on bloodshed in relation to the wickedness of the earth. As Noah predicted in *Jubilees* 7, bloodshed features prominently in the lives of his sons: “And the sons of Noah began fighting in order to take captive and to kill each other, to pour the blood of man upon the earth, to eat blood, to build fortified
While *Jubilees* 5, the flood story proper, follows the structure of Genesis 6 and interpolates elements from *1 Enoch* 6-11, *Jubilees* 7, Noah’s testament and the book’s second treatment of the flood, is structured in the same way as *1 Enoch*’s story of the flood. Explaining that “on account of these three [fornication, pollution and injustice] the Flood came upon the earth” (*Jub.* 7:21), *Jubilees* 7 launches into a brief reprise of the story of the Watchers. The story begins, like the Enochic version, with the Watchers and the women (*Jub.* 7:21). Its real interest, however, lies in what happened afterward. The bloody violence of the giants and their corruption of the earth is for *Jubilees* the climax and the point of the Watchers story. This climax, the earth’s corruption, is described, as in *1 Enoch* 7-9, in terms of blood poured out upon the earth. As van Ruiten notes, though *Jub.* 7:21-25 elaborates on the proscription of fornication, uncleanness and injustice, “[m]ost attention is paid to acts of injustice, seen under the label of ‘the shedding of innocent blood’.” In this flood story, that is, the problem of bloodshed implicit in *Jubilees* 5 takes centre stage. Again, it is expressed first of all in terms of “eating one another.”

From the Watchers’ illicit unions the giants are born. The giants begin by eating each other, in a spiral of violence that spreads finally to all people: “And each one ate his fellow. The giants killed the Naphil, and the Naphil killed the Elyo, and the Elyo mankind, and man his neighbour” (*Jub.* 7:22). With its insistence on the giants’ eating each other, *Jubilees* echoes *1 Enoch* 6. Indeed, bloodshed is the crowning evil of the world: “And [Mastema] sent other spirits to those who were set under his hand to practice all error and sin and all transgression, to destroy, to cause to perish, and to pour out blood upon the earth” (11:5). “To pour out blood upon the earth”; “to eat blood”: these are the sins of the giants in *Jubilees* 7 and in *1 Enoch* 6-11. Here, in the aftermath of the flood, they become the sins of humans as well. And as in *Jubilees* 5-6 and 7, the danger is to the earth. The passage begins and ends with blood poured out upon the earth.

---

18 Van Ruiten, *Primaev History Interpreted*, 297.

19 *Jubilees*’ three classes of “Naphidim,” giants, Naphil and Elyo, appear already in the *Animal Apocalypse*’s retelling of *1 Enoch* 7: the bovids mounted by the fallen stars (who are the Watchers) bear “elephants, camels and asses” (*1 En.* 86:4). In Syncellus’ version of *1 Enoch* 7 their names are recognizably the same names as in *Jubilees*: οἱ δὲ γίγαντες ἐτέκνωσαν Ναφηλεῖμ, καὶ τοῖς Ναφηλεῖμ ἐγεννήθησαν Ἐλιουδ ([syn.] 7:2). Charles (Book of *Jubi*...
En. 7:3-5 and creates a link with the flood story in Jub. 5:2 where, again, all flesh “began to eat one another,” as in 1 Enoch 7 the giants “devoured” the labour of humankind, and “devoured” humans, and finally “devoured” each other’s flesh (cf. 1 Enoch 87:1: “Again I saw them, and they began to gore one another and devour one another, and the earth began to cry out”). The result, in Jubilees 7 as in 1 Enoch 7, is blood and oppression. “And everyone sold himself that he might do injustice and pour out much blood, and the earth was full of injustice…” (Jub. 7:23). This is almost word for word the result of the giants’ activity as the angels describe it to God in 1 En. 9:9: “the women bore giants, by whom the whole earth was filled with blood and injustice.”

Echoing as it does Jub. 5:2 (in 7:22), Jubilees 7 also illuminates that story: what happened when all flesh began to eat each other? In light of Jub. 7:22-23, the reader can answer, “the earth was full of bloodshed and injustice.”

Jubilees elaborates upon the giants’ violence in words that closely resemble 1 Enoch 7:5: “And afterward, they sinned against beasts, and birds and everything which moves or walks upon the earth” (Jub. 7:24; cf. 1 Enoch 7:5: “and they began to sin against the birds and beasts and creeping things and the fish”). Then it sums up: “And they poured out much blood upon the earth” (7:24). In this summation, Jubilees echoes 1 En. 9:1: the archangels see “much blood poured out upon the earth.” Further, the consequence of all this blood is, in Jubilees as in 1 Enoch 10, the flood: “And on account of the blood which they poured out in the midst of the land, [the Lord] blotted out everything” (Jub. 7:25); the term “blotted out” echoes Genesis’ flood story (Gen 6:7, 7:4, 23: God “will blot out” humans and every living thing). Jubilees thus draws a straight line

---

20 Following Ethiopic and Grk [a]: ἄλη ἣ γῆ ἐπλήθη σίμακτος καὶ ἀδίκιας. Nickelsburg translates: “And the blood of men is shed upon the earth, / And the whole earth is filled with iniquity” (1 Enoch 1, 202; cf. E. Isaac, I Enoch, 17: “the whole earth was filled with blood and oppression”).
21 That God’s “blotting out everything” refers to the flood is clear not only in its echo of Gen 6:7 (“I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created…..”) but also in the verses that follow: “on account of the blood…he
from blood poured out upon the earth to the flood. In verse 24 it makes the connection explicit, splicing a paraphrase of Gen 6:5 onto the Enochic story of gigantic bloodshed.\(^{22}\) The evil inclination of the human heart in Gen 6:5, the evil which brings on the flood, is for \textit{Jubilees} 7 summed up in the blood poured out upon the earth.

In making this connection in its retelling of the story of the flood, \textit{Jubilees} 7 resembles \textit{1 Enoch} 6-11 and 86-87. Here again, in a narrative clearly influenced by \textit{1 Enoch}, is the logic we have seen already in \textit{1 Enoch}, the sequence from primordial bloodshed to flood. It is a sequence implicit in \textit{Jubilees} 5-6 and also in the juxtaposition of Cain and Abel’s story with the flood in \textit{Jubilees} 4-5. As in \textit{1 Enoch} 6-11, Genesis’ tale of an unspecified violence and corruption has become the story of blood poured out upon the earth, bringing the flood.\(^{23}\) \textit{Jubilees} 7, indeed, increases the emphasis on blood already evident in \textit{1 Enoch}’s retelling of the flood story.

\textit{Jubilees} compresses into five verses the story which in \textit{1 Enoch} covers three chapters (\textit{1 Enoch} 7-9; cf. \textit{Jub.} 7:21-25). In these five verses the word blood occurs three times; “blood poured out” becomes a refrain, and the central feature of the story: “And everyone sold himself in order that he might do injustice and pour out much blood….And they poured out much blood upon the earth…And on account of the blood which they poured out in the midst of the land, [the Lord] blotted out everything (\textit{Jub.} 7:23-25).” In Noah’s comment upon the story, the emphasis on

---

\(^{22}\) “And they poured out much blood upon the earth. And all the thoughts and desires of men were always contemplating vanity and evil” (\textit{Jub.} 7:24). Cf. Gen 6:5: “The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.”

\(^{23}\) There is a difference: in \textit{Jubilees} 7 there is no allusion to the blood of Abel. The problem of bloodshed and pollution leading to the flood is not mediated here through the story of Cain and Abel. This is not to say there is no connection for \textit{Jubilees} between the flood story and Cain and Abel. \textit{Jubilees} 4, as we have seen, suggests a link between Abel’s death and the flood by juxtaposing Cain’s death for the murder of Abel with the flood story; in \textit{Jubilees}’ version of Cain and Abel’s story there are also echoes of \textit{1 Enoch} 6-11. Further, there are allusions to Cain’s story (along with \textit{1 Enoch} 6-11) in \textit{Jub} 11:2, where Noah’s sons “pour out the blood of man upon the earth,” and then build cities, acquire weapons and go to war (cf. Gen 4:17-24). And \textit{Jubilees} 4-5 places a reprise of Cain’s murder of Abel immediately before its story of the flood. In \textit{Jubilees}’ larger primordial history, Cain and Abel are in view in connection with bloodshed and the flood.
blood continues. Noah sees the corruption of his sons’ deeds and fears “that after I die, you will pour out the blood of men upon the earth” (Jub. 7:27). That is, the evil done upon the earth in the time after the flood as in the time before it may be summed up in terms of blood poured out.

Further, Jubilees 7 imagines the flood in two parts: the flood in the time of Noah, brought on by the blood shed by the giants, and the flood that may come again, after Noah. In the blood-flood sequence as we have seen it in 1 Enoch, there is also a two-stage flood: the flood in the time of Noah merges into the cataclysm at the end of the world. Though Jubilees does not speak explicitly of the end-time, it too imagines a second, final judgement for the shedding of blood: “And no man who eats blood or sheds the blood of man will remain upon the earth; …and into the place of judgment they will descend. And into the darkness of the depths they will all be removed with a cruel death” (Jub. 7:29). This description recalls the final punishment of the rebel angels in 1 Enoch 10; given the extensive links between Jubilees 7 and 1 Enoch 6-11 the influence of 1 Enoch’s vision of judgement here seems likely. Indeed, Jubilees 7 continues with a vision of the earth renewed in righteousness, a vision which explicitly echoes 1 Enoch’s promise of new creation after the flood: “And now, my children, hear (and) do justice and righteousness so that you might be planted in righteousness on the surface of the whole earth” (Jub. 7:34; cf. 1 En. 10:16).

Not only in its movement from bloodshed to flood, then, but also in the two-stage flood it imagines, the second stage describing a final judgement and a new

---

24 “And now I fear for your sakes that after I die, you will pour out the blood of men upon the earth. And you will be blotted out from the surface of the earth” (Jub. 7:27). Though the word “flood” does not occur, the image of being blotted out from the earth comes from the flood story (Gen 6:7, 7:4, 23: “For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground” [7:4]). It is used at Jub. 7:24-25 in the description of the flood. In the time of this second destruction, blood is again the problem leading to destruction that is this time final.

25 OTP here provides a marginal reference to 1 En. 103:7f. But see also 1 En. 10:12-13: “…bind them for seventy generations underneath the rocks of the ground until the day of their judgment…. In those days they will lead them into the bottom of the fire – and in torment – in the prison (where) they will be locked up forever” (trans. Isaac, OTP 1.18).

26 “Destroy injustice from the face of the earth….and the plant of righteousness and truth will appear forever…” (1 En. 10:16, trans. Isaac).
creation, the vision of history in *Jubilees* 7 imitates the shape of history in *1 Enoch*. For *Jubilees* 7 as for *1 Enoch* 6-11 and 85-90, the primordial history is chiefly a story about bloodshed and flood, a flood that shades into final judgement (though that judgement is not explicitly eschatological, in *Jubilees*) and a new beginning.

*Jubilees* 7 and *1 Enoch* 6-11 thus share a sequence, from bloodshed to flood, that is primordial and shaping: history, both past and future, may be understood in these terms. One more element of this sequence in Noah’s testament echoes the later development of the sequence in *1 Enoch*: it is through the nefarious influence of demons that more bloodshed will, Noah fears, arise. “For I see, and behold, the demons have begun to mislead you and your children. And now I fear for your sakes that after I die, you will pour out the blood of men upon the earth” (*Jub*. 7:27). These demons appear also in *1 Enoch* as “spirits” birthed (according to *1 En*. 15:9-12) from the bodies of the slain giants and, like the giants, breeding violence. In *Jubilees* 7 (though not in *1 Enoch* 15), this violence is described explicitly in terms of bloodshed. As in the time of the first flood, so in the future it is the blood poured out that leads to divine destruction: you will be blotted out.

Noah then expands upon the danger of blood in a commentary that is as long as the story of the giants and the flood itself (*Jub*. 7:28-33, cf. *Jub*. 7:21-26a), and in which the word “blood” appears twelve times. The effect is to render the story of the Watchers and the flood a story above all about blood and the danger of blood. Blood frames Noah’s commentary: “For all who

---

27 Segal (*Book of Jubilees*, 149-154, citation 152) discusses at some length the identity of *Jubilees*’ “demons” in relation to the spirits of *1 Enoch*. He concludes that *Jubilees* 7 and *1 En*. 16:1 “both preserve a complex tradition: Watchers → Giants → Spirits.” This tradition is to be distinguished from that represented by *Jubilees* 10 (contra Charles, *Book of Jubilees*, 62, 78) where the spirits are the children of the Watchers. Segal wants to argue that *Jubilees* 7 represents a discrete tradition not from the hand of the final redactor of *Jubilees*. I want simply to point out the continuity between *1 Enoch*’s vision in the *Book of Watchers* and *Jubilees* 7. I am, however, doubtful as to a clear-cut distinction between Noah’s testament in *Jubilees* 7 and other parts of *Jubilees*, such as chapters 5, 10-11. The interest in blood that is characteristic of *Jubilees* 7 (where the story follows the outline of the Watchers’ story found in *1 Enoch*, even while it gains a new emphasis on blood) recurs elsewhere in *Jubilees*, for instance in *Jubilees* 11.
eat the blood of man and all who eat the blood of any flesh will be blotted out, all of them, from the earth….For the land will not be cleansed of the blood which is poured out upon it, because by the blood of one who poured it out will the land be cleansed in all of its generations” (Jub. 7:28, 33; the opening and closing sentences of the commentary). The concern with bloodshed and the movement from bloodshed to destruction that informs 1 Enoch’s story of the Watchers here becomes central, ultimately occluding the Watchers story. Indeed, in Noah’s emphasis on the cleansing of the land, the logic of that movement – the polluting effect of blood upon the land – is also suggested.

Jubilees 7’s version of the flood story is thus intriguing, for like 1 Enoch it takes it to be a story primarily about bloodshed and its consequences, leading to the flood. In 1 Enoch 6-11, however, the illicit teaching of the rebel angels also figures largely in the corruption of the earth. In Jubilees 7 the rebel angels drop out almost entirely, and only the giants and the blood are left.28 Here even more clearly than in 1 Enoch the problem is bloodshed, and the flood is the consequence. In this reworking of Genesis through 1 Enoch 6-11 the logic connecting bloodshed to the flood again emerges and is in fact emphasized.

Jubilees 7 shows signs of reflection upon the logic it describes, the movement from blood to flood. In the concluding citation from Numbers, Jubilees articulates the problem with blood: in the wake of bloodshed, the land must be cleansed.29 For Jubilees as for 1 Enoch, the problem with blood, shed or eaten, is that blood pollutes. But whereas 1 Enoch 6-11 (and 85-90) describes this pollution in narrative terms only, Jubilees 7, which is, after all, a testament,

28 Even in Jubilees 5, where the rebel angels play a large part in the flood story, the theme of illicit instruction falls out. In Jubilees 5, too, it is only “eating each other” – that is, bloodshed – that is explicitly connected with the corruption of the earth in the wake of the rebel angels. See Reed (Fallen Angels, 93): in Jubilees “the motif of illicit angelic instruction…[is] given a diminished role both in the account of angelic sin and in the history of human decline.”

29 Jub. 7:33: “For the land will not be cleansed of the blood which is poured out upon it, because by the blood of one who poured it out will the land be cleansed in all of its generations” (cf. Num 35:33).
explores the halakhic dimension of bloodshed and pollution. Noah appeals throughout this section to Leviticus 17-19 and Ezekiel 24, ending with Num 35:33.30 Here too, that is, as in chapters 5-6, Jubilees sets the problem of blood against the background of the Holiness Code and the problem of the pollution of the land. Jubilees 7 expresses the crucial importance of purity and the problem bloodshed creates for the person and for the land in commandments that are both ritual and moral in nature. “No man who eats blood or sheds the blood of man will remain upon the earth” (7:29); “And let no blood…which is in anything be seen upon you…when you sacrifice” (Jub. 7:30); do not eat with blood (7:31); “Cover the blood” (7:31). Noah is evidently as concerned about ritual infringements as he is about murder. Throughout the commentary, in fact, Noah highlights not only bloodshed, but also eating blood: both constitute the sin against blood that causes humankind to be blotted out from the earth. “And no man who eats blood or sheds the blood of man will remain upon the earth” (7:27). In the commentary as a whole, the prohibition against eating blood occupies more space than the prohibition against bloodshed.

This is the logic we have seen already in Jubilees’ other flood story (Jubilees 5-6), a logic rooted in the Holiness Code and its insistence that the life of the creature is in the blood (Lev 17:11).31 The same logic appears here in Jubilees 7: as in Jubilees 5-6, eating blood is another

30 These are also, as we shall see, precisely the texts used by the rabbis to explain the consequences of Zechariah’s blood. For the rabbis as for Jubilees, innocent blood falls within the paradigm of purity and pollution. Innocent blood defiles the land and so the land vomits the people out. On Leviticus 17 and Ezekiel 24 in relation to the blood of Zechariah, see further below, Chapter 6.

31 The similarities, both conceptual and in detail, between the flood stories in Jubilees 5-6 and 7 call into question the judgement of Segal (Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, 145-167) that Jubilees 7 represents a distinct tradition, not attributable to the hand of the redactor of Jubilees. Here we see the parallels: eating one another in 5 and 7; the Enochic background; the emphasis on blood in the aftermath of the flood in Jubilees 6 and in Jubilees 7; the suggestion of new creation that follows the flood; the interpretation of the blood-flood sequence by means of Leviticus. Cf. R. H. Charles (Book of Jubilees, 61 n. 20): Jub. 7:20-39 (like Jubilees 10) is a fragment of a lost Book of Noah, adapted by the author of Jubilees to its present setting. If Charles is correct, then the blood-flood sequence and the logic of the purity paradigm is present in the Book of Noah as well – an indication perhaps of a fairly widespread tradition. As we see in Jubilees 5, however, that logic has come over into Jubilees: it is not limited to the Book of Noah. It seems to me that the differences in emphasis in the flood stories in 5 and 7 may be explained by their different functions in the narrative: Jubilees 5 tells the story of the flood where it follows in the biblical narrative; Jubilees 7 is Noah’s testament, after the flood (and without a precedent in Genesis), reflecting upon the flood.
word for murder. That eating blood is equivalent to murder is evident from the beginning of
chapter 7, where “eating each other” is made equivalent to killing each other and thence to
bloodshed. “And each one ate his fellow. The giants killed the Naphil….And everyone sold
himself in order that he might do injustice and pour out much blood” (Jub. 7:22-23). Toward the
end of the commentary, Noah spells out the problem with eating each other: “you shall not eat
living flesh lest it be that your blood which is your life be sought by the hand of all flesh which
eats upon the earth” (7:32). Here the text “thinks” in the same way as does Jub. 6:7: it brings
together Lev 17:11 (as OTP notes) and the prohibition against bloodshed and against eating
blood given in Gen 9:4-5 at the time of the flood.32 Again, Jubilees takes the second statement in
Gen 9:4-5 to apply to the first: to eat blood or to eat flesh with the blood is to take the life of a
creature; for that lifeblood “your blood which is your life [will] be sought by the hand of all flesh
which eats…..” Thus “no man who eats blood or sheds the blood of man will remain upon the
earth” (Jub. 7:29).

No man who eats blood will remain upon the earth: in this verse Jubilees articulates the
connection between bloodshed and the land already introduced in Jubilees 6. It does so, here as
in Jubilees 6, through the lens of Leviticus. Jubilees cites Leviticus five times in 7:30-33. Blood
– eating blood, shedding blood – is a danger to the land; in these acts the life (of person, of
animal) is poured out upon the land; by the blood that is poured out upon it the land is defiled:
“For the land will not be cleansed of the blood which is poured out upon it…” (Jub. 7:33). “Do
not defile yourselves in any of these ways,” the Lord says to Moses in Leviticus, “…otherwise
the land will vomit you out for defiling it…” (Lev 18:24, 28). We have seen this logic in our
exploration of Leviticus and the problem of bloodshed in Lamentations, where Cain’s bloodshed

32 “Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckon-
ing” (Gen 9:4-5).
serves as paradigm for the sins of the city and their defiling effect: for the blood poured out in the midst of her, Lamentations says, Jerusalem is destroyed and her people cast out. For the blood poured out upon the earth, Noah says in Jubilees, “you will be blotted out” (Jub. 7:27). Jubilees thus articulates the implications of the blood-flood sequence evident in 1 Enoch. Why does the giants’ violence culminate, in 1 Enoch 7, in “drinking the blood”? The Levitical purity paradigm suggests that in this way 1 Enoch signifies the extent of the pollution: ritual impurity is joined to moral impurity in a defilement that is total. But it is Jubilees that spells out in halakhic terms the meaning of the sequence, and the danger of blood. “Cleanse the land”: as in Lamentations, the blood that is shed renders the people and the land unclean. The desolation of the land, by Babylon (in Lamentations) or (in Jubilees’ vision) by flood, looms.

Jubilees 7 thus reads the story of the Watchers and the giants, their bloodshed and the flood against the background of the Holiness Code, setting it within the purity paradigm, articulating in halakhic terms the implications of the Enochic flood narrative. Blood – blood eaten, blood poured out upon the earth – is a problem for purity, of the person and of the land. To this extent Jubilees understands the problem of bloodshed in the same way as does Lamentations. Jubilees differs from Lamentations, however, and resembles 1 Enoch, in this: bloodshed leads to the flood. And in the image of the flood there is not only devastation, but the promise of renewal. What is required in the wake of bloodshed is not only the eradication of the evil from the land, but the land’s cleansing.

Jubilees’ emphasis on cleansing in its concluding citation from Numbers is in fact an alteration of the biblical text. Where Numbers speaks of the necessary expiation of the land for the blood that is shed in it, Jubilees speaks of cleansing: “For the land will not be cleansed of the blood which is poured out upon it, because by the blood of the one who poured it out will the land be cleansed in all of its generations.” In its interest in cleansing, Jubilees resembles 1
Enoch. It is precisely the cleansing of the land that is God’s promise in 1 Enoch 10; it is a cleansing that follows upon the flood. Jubilees follows the same pattern. The purpose of the land’s desolation by flood is not only to expiate or wipe out the evil, but to cleanse the land. And this cleansing is associated, in the language of “blotting out,” with the cataclysmic destruction of the flood. The move from destroying evil from the land to cleansing the land occurs in conjunction with the move from bloodshed to the flood. In this way Jubilees shares the vision of 1 Enoch: from bloodshed to flood, a flood that is both destroying and cleansing.

In its primordial history, Jubilees thus reveals a particular interest in blood and its consequences for the earth; repeatedly, it connects bloodshed to the flood. It does so in both Jubilees 5 and 7 in contexts which show the influence of 1 Enoch’s story of the flood. Jubilees’ flood stories are not identical to 1 Enoch’s, or even to each other. Notably, in Jubilees 5 (which retells the biblical flood story through the lens of 1 Enoch) the rebel angels play a large part in the story, and bloodshed is mentioned only by implication, in “eating one another.” In Jubilees 7, by contrast, the giants and bloodshed take centre stage. Importantly, too, there is no mention of Cain and Abel in Jubilees’ flood stories themselves. Blood is central, but it is the giants’

33 Hartman (“An Early Example of Jewish Exegesis: 1 Enoch 10:16-11:2,” NeoT 17 (1983): 16-26, here 19; see above, Chapter 4, p. 103) argues, as we have seen, that the step from destroying evil from the land to cleansing it is a step rarely taken in early Judaism. That it is taken in both 1 Enoch and Jubilees is thus all the more interesting. It should be noted that Ezekiel 24, to which Jub. 7:30 refers, suggests the idea of cleansing in its image of Jerusalem as a rusted pot being purified upon the fire: “Stand it empty upon the coals, so that it may become hot, its copper glow, its filth melt in it, its rust be consumed…. [Y]ou shall not again be cleansed until I have satisfied my fury upon you” (24: 11-13). There is in Ezekiel 24, however, no connection with the flood.

34 “Cleanse the earth from all uncleanness and from every injustice and from all lawlessness and from all sin, and take away all uncleannesses that have come upon the earth” (10:16, 20; cf. 10.22: “And the whole earth will be cleansed from every pollution and from every uncleanness...”). My translation, following Greek [a]. Nickelsburg translates: “Cleanse the earth from all impurity and from all wrong and from all lawlessness and from all sin; and godlessness and all impurities that have come upon the earth, remove” (10:20); “And all the earth will be cleansed from all defilement and from all uncleanness” (10:22). The cleansing of the land leads, in 1 Enoch, into the new creation: “Then I shall open the storehouses of blessing that are in heaven; and make them descend upon the earth…” (1 En. 11:1).

35 Note, too, that while Lamentations finds in Cain’s bloodshed a figure for Jerusalem’s own bloody deeds (priests and prophets “who shed the blood of the righteous in the midst of her,” [Lam 4:13]), it stops with Cain and exile. There is in Lamentations no connection between Cain’s bloodshed and the flood. That interpretive move occurs in 1 Enoch. And in 1 Enoch, the hope of cleansing follows upon bloodshed and the pollution of the land.
bloodshed; there is no allusion to the blood of Abel. In *Jubilees* 5-6 and 7, we might thus speak of a blood-flood/judgement tradition related to but not identical to *1 Enoch’s* Cain/blood-flood/judgement tradition.

Elsewhere in *Jubilees*’ primordial history, however, there are signs of a logic connecting not just bloodshed, but the blood of Abel in particular to the flood. In *Jubilees*’ story of Cain and Abel, Cain’s bloodshed gains an emphasis proportionately far greater than it has in the biblical story – and at this point the text echoes *1 Enoch* 7-9, precisely where it alludes to the story of Cain and Abel. The flood then follows in *Jubilees*’ text immediately upon a reprise of Cain’s murder of Abel. Again the Enochic logic emerges: from Cain’s bloodshed to the flood. Whether it is shed by Cain as in *Jubilees* 4, or by the giants (and indeed all flesh) in *Jubilees* 5 and 7, blood leads to the flood in *Jubilees* as in *1 Enoch*. The Enochic convergence of ideas – rebel angels and devouring giants, the blood that leads to the flood, the flood that is cleansing, the blood of Abel crying out from earth to heaven making accusation and leading into the flood – and the centrality of blood here appear again in various combinations in *Jubilees*’ primordial history. *Jubilees* thus allows us to trace the blood-flood pattern that appears in *1 Enoch*, here appearing in two variations: a Cain-blood-flood sequence and a (giants)-blood-flood sequence. Though these sequences occur separately in *Jubilees*, nevertheless all the elements of the Enochic sequence are present in the primordial history as a whole: Cain and bloodshed and a flood that is also judgement and new creation. *Jubilees* makes its own contribution to the sequence: it explicates the Enochic logic, articulating what is in *1 Enoch* implicit. In its concern with the earth and in its allusions to Leviticus and Numbers, *Jubilees* sets the blood that is poured out in the context of the purity paradigm, and raises the question of pollution and the land. This is a concern we have seen already in Lamentations in connection with Cain’s bloodshed. But in connecting bloodshed to flood, *Jubilees* (like *1 Enoch*) goes beyond Lamentations: the
point is not simply destruction, to wipe out the stain of bloodshed from the land, but the land’s cleansing.
II. The Damascus Document

In the *Damascus Document*, the problem of blood stands at the beginning and in the midst of a long list of errant heroes whose straying brings disaster upon the people and upon the land. The logic of the list owes a good deal to the Watchers’ story as it is told in *1 Enoch* 6-11. Three times, in CD 1-3, the narrator bids the listener “Now hear” (וּמָעֵן, 1.1; 2.2; 2.14)\(^{36}\) as a prelude to three interconnected descriptions of Israel’s history in terms of a pattern of sin, punishment (conceived in terms of destruction and, in CD 1.6, exile) and deliverance – a chosen remnant, and return.\(^{37}\) The third “Now hear” introduces a kind of reverse catalogue of heroes by means of which the narrator traces this pattern in the biblical narrative from primeval times to Kadesh. The list begins not with Adam and Eve, however, but with the Watchers and the time of the flood. “Brave heroes” stumbled on account of “the thoughts of a guilty inclination” and “lascivious eyes” from ancient times until now, and the first to do so were “the Watchers of the heavens” (CD 2.16-18).\(^{38}\) It is immediately apparent that this is a vision of primeval history akin to *1

\(^{36}\) There is a fourth “Now hear,” or rather a first, at the beginning of the original *Damascus Document*, as the DSS fragments reveal. This seems to be an introduction to the body of the Admonition and sets the tone, but contains (now) only 7 vv., none of which deal with blood or the Watchers story. I have used the Cairo Genizah document, supplemented by existing fragments of 4Q266.

\(^{37}\) Compare for instance 1.3-5 and 1.12 with 2.7-8, 11 and 3.4-9 and 12 ff. Cf. Annie Jaubert, “Le Pays de Damas,” *RB* 65 (1958): 214-248, here 217: CD 1 describes a pattern of sin-punishment-return that is paradigmatic. Though the Admonition is a composite document, scholars note the extensive literary connections between its sections. See, for instance, Philip R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant: An Interpretation of the “Damascus Document”* (JSOTSup 25; Sheffield: JLOT Press, 1982), 50: “while undoubtedly compiled from existing literary sources, the *Admonition* is … the outcome of an extremely accomplished piece of redaction. The individual components and their sequence are secured not only by a clear and simple plot, but by numerous links of vocabulary, by means of which one passage comments on and develops what precedes.” Cf. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “An Essene Missionary Document? CD II, 14-VI, 1” *RB* 77 (1970): 201-229, esp. 225-26. He identifies a number of literary points of contact between section 1 and section 2.14ff, although he sees these as originally separate documents with different ideologies and audiences.

Enoch’s: the place to begin a tale of fallen-ness is not with Genesis 3 and the serpent but with Genesis 6, and the Watchers and the flood.

CD, like Jubilees 5, weaves together Genesis and the Watchers’ story. The term that governs the category of fallen heroes is נבורהּים, “mighty warriors” (CD 2.17, “brave heroes,” García Martínez). This is a stock phrase in the Hebrew Scriptures for heroes, especially warriors. It occurs for the first time in the scriptures at Gen 6:4. In Genesis the gibborim are, as we have seen (and like the gibborim throughout the Hebrew Scriptures), neutral or positive figures: “men of renown” (הברים אסרא מזונים אסיה יהוה). In 1 Enoch 6-11, however, Genesis’ mighty warriors become entirely negative; violent giants bent on destroying the earth. Their violence brings on the flood.

CD makes the same shift. Though like Genesis it describes the Watchers and their sons as “mighty heroes,” now the gibborim are fallen; they have “wandered off” the paths of God because of “a guilty inclination and lascivious eyes.” “For many wandered off for these matters, נבורהּים yielded on account of them from ancient times until now. For having walked in the stubbornness of their hearts, the Watchers of the heavens fell (נסל וניירו אסורים, CD 2.18); …And their sons, whose height was like that of cedars and whose bodies were like mountains, fell” (CD 2.17-19). CD here refers not only to the story of the Watchers in general, but to the details of the text in 1 Enoch. In Gen 6:2 it is the “sons of God” who see the daughters of men and take them; in 1 Enoch the sons of God have become “the angels [or Watchers], the sons of heaven” (1 En. 6:2). CD’s “of the heavens” parallels 1 Enoch, not Genesis. So, too,

---

39 For example: Gideon, Jephthah, the father of Saul, David, Zadok, Boaz, David’s fighting men are all נבורהּים. The word נבורהּים alone also identifies mighty warriors: Nimrod (Gen 10:8 and 1 Chron 1:10) and the armies of Gibeon (Josh 10:2); Sisera’s army (Judg 5:13, 23); David’s warriors, God himself as a warrior (Isa 42:13).
40 “Watchers, sons of heaven” Grk [syn]; “angels, sons of heaven” Grk [a] and Ethiopic. Nickelsburg prefers Watchers here (and in 1 En. 6-16; see 1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108 (Herm-
does its description of the Watchers’ sons. *1 Enoch* (but not Genesis) draws attention to their
giant size: the women bear “great giants of 3000 cubits” (*1 En. 7:2, Grk* [a]; *Ethiopic:* “great
giants, and their stature was 300 cubits each”). In the same way (though rather more
imaginatively), CD gives us offspring as tall as cedars and as broad as mountains.

Further, their sin, which becomes in turn the sin of all the fallen mighty ones, derives
from *1 Enoch*. That the descent of the sons of God is a misdeed, a “fall” in the first place is, as
we have seen, *1 Enoch*’s idea and not Genesis’ (though Genesis hints at it). CD follows *1 Enoch*:
the Watchers and their giant sons have wandered off the path; they fell (כַּפָּר נָעָר הָאָנָשִׁים, *CD* 2.18). Compare the development of the Watchers story in *1 En*. 86:1: “behold, a star fell down
from heaven…. And the cause of their falling in CD is “the thoughts of a guilty inclination and
lascivious [or “lustful”] eyes” ([טִיוֹנָהּ, מַחֲשָׁבָת עֵינֵי וַעֲשָׁרֵי מַחֲשָׁבָת], *CD* 2.16). *1 Enoch* begins
with the Watchers’ lustful eyes: they see and desire the beautiful daughters of earth (*1 En*. 6:2).
On account of their desire, Grk [syn] adds, they went astray after them. In Genesis, the sons of
God see that the daughters of humans are fair, but there is no mention of desire (though it is
perhaps implied). CD 2.16 combines Genesis 6 and *1 Enoch* 6. Further, in Genesis, God sees
(immediately after the story of the Watchers and the women) that “the wickedness of humankind
was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts
(בֹּלַס יִֽזְרָאֵל מַחֲשָׁבָת לִבּוֹ, Gen 6:5) was only evil continually.” CD picks up from Genesis the
problem of an evil inclination and adds to it from *1 Enoch* the Watchers’ lascivious eyes. Hence
the problem as CD presents it, not just for the Watchers but for all the mighty heroes: they

---

neia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 174 n. 2a and 140-41, and Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A
New English Edition with Commentary and Textual Notes* (SVTP 7; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 28. I have used “angels,”
but if Nickelsburg is right, then the parallel is still closer.

41 Cf. Grk [syn], which lists three kinds of giants, and concludes, “and they were growing in accordance with their
greatness.” In all ms. traditions, that is, there is an emphasis on the giant size of the Watchers’ offspring that is not
present in Genesis.

42 Translations of the MT are taken from the NRSV; where they differ from the NRSV they are my own.
“wandered off” because of “the thoughts of a guilty inclination and lascivious eyes,” from ancient times till now (CD 2.16-17).

As the sin is the same in *I Enoch* and in CD, so is its consequence. The giants and their fathers – indeed, all flesh – perish in a cataclysm that, though it is not called a flood, is described in the language of the flood. The Watchers and their giant sons fell, and “all flesh which there was on the dry earth [בְּלָה יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל הָאָדָם] perished [מָתָן], “expired,” Garcia Martinez and Tigchelaar] and became as if they had never been, because they had realized their desires…” (CD 2.20-21). In Gen 7:21, as a result of the flood, “all flesh perished that moved on the earth” (ויהי כל חיות הארץ). In Gen 7:22, everything living “from all that is in the dry earth” died (מקられて הארץ).43 That this cataclysm results from “having realized their desires” is from *I Enoch*, where the rebel angels “desire” women and so fall. CD here combines the flood imagery of Genesis with the plot of *I Enoch*, so that the biblical flood becomes the result of the lascivious eyes and consequent fall of the Watchers and their offspring. From fallen Watchers and giants to a flood-like destruction: CD’s plot in these verses mirrors that of *I Enoch* 6-11 (and its retelling in *1 En.* 85-89) in an episode that combines the language of *I Enoch* 6-11 with that of Genesis. *I Enoch’s* Watchers story serves to interpret Genesis.

There is this difference, however. In *I Enoch*, the wickedness that brings on the flood is not only the Watchers’ lustful eyes, but the violence of their giant sons. Bloodshed sums up, in *I Enoch*, the corruption on earth for which the flood is the necessary solution. In CD’s reprise of the Watchers’ story in CD 2.16-21, there is no mention of blood. Yet blood does appear in CD 2-3, in two places. At the beginning and near the end of its reprise of biblical history, blood is named as the problem that explains the destruction that has come upon the world. God, CD 2.8

---

43 Cf. Gen 6:17: God says, “I am bringing flood-waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh (בְּלָה יִשְׂרָאֵל); everything which is on the earth will perish (םָתָן").”
declares, “abominated the generations on account of blood” (trans. García Martínez and Tigchelaar; on 2.8 see further below). The story of the Watchers follows. In the history of Israel that in CD 3 succeeds the story of the Watchers, blood appears again: the Israelites in Egypt rebelled against God, “and they ate blood” (CD 3.6). In CD 2.17-21, that is, corresponding roughly to Gen 6:1-4 and culminating in a destruction described in terms of Genesis’ flood, CD makes no mention of blood. But blood brackets the larger story in CD 2-3. At the beginning of the catalogue of fallen heroes and near its end, outside the Watchers and flood story proper but in relation to it, blood surfaces as a problem, the problem in fact that causes God to abandon the people and leads to the devastation of the land. Is there evidence here, then, for the kind of logic we have seen in 1 Enoch and in Jubilees, a connection in the context of the story of the Watchers between blood and flood (or, in CD, a flood-like destruction)? The question is complicated by an apparent textual problem: many commentators emend or omit the first occurrence of blood, in CD 2.8. We will begin with CD 3.6, where the reference to blood is not contended, and turn then to CD 2.8.

In CD 2-3, the flood-destruction (CD 2.20) does not end the tendency of the “mighty heroes” to follow a guilty inclination and lascivious eyes, to realize their desires rather than keeping God’s precepts (CD 2.21). Through it,⁴⁴ CD 3.1 continues – through this tendency to follow their own desire – Noah’s sons stray and are cut off, and although Abraham, Isaac and Jacob keep God’s precepts, Jacob’s sons return to straying. The story of Israel from then on, in Egypt, in the wilderness, at the time of the covenant and at the entry into the promised land, is a

---

⁴⁴ The antecedent of “it” here is not entirely clear as there is a blank immediately before “through it.” But the phrase “through it” occurs several times in the preceding verses to refer to the causes of straying there described. The phrase “through it” (מָּשָׁתִים; מָשָׁתִים in the plural) first occurs with reference to the “mighty heroes” in 2.17: “For many wandered off for these matters (מָּשָׁתִים); brave heroes yielded on account of them (מָּשָׁתִים).” “These things” are “following after the thoughts of a guilty inclination and lascivious eyes” (2.16). This is further described in 2.21 as “having realized their desires and failing to keep their creator’s precepts.” “Through it,” CD 3.1 continues, “the sons of Noah…strayed.” “Through it” thus refers to all these things – guilty inclination, lascivious eyes, realizing their desires, not keeping God’s precepts.
history of disobedience. They do not listen to the voice of their creator but prefer the desire of their hearts, and the wrath of God flares up against them (3.7-8). “And their sons died through it, and through it their kings were cut off and through it their warriors perished and through it their land was laid waste” (CD 3.9-10). The sin of the Watchers, this following their own desire, dogs the history of Israel as well, and devastates the land. It ends in Jerusalem’s defeat: their land was laid waste, and “the very first to enter the covenant…were delivered up to the sword” (CD 3.10-11). In the middle of this catalogue of sin, CD says this: “And in Egypt their sons walked in the stubbornness of their hearts, plotting against God’s precepts and each one doing what was right in his own eyes; and they ate blood [or “the blood”]” (CD 3.5-6). “And they ate blood”: In the entire catalogue, this is the only specific sin named. Eating blood serves here to illustrate and sum up a whole history of disobedience. And it leads directly to destruction: “and they ate blood, and their males were cut off in the wilderness” (CD 3.6-7).

The sudden appearance of blood in the midst of CD’s catalogue of transgression seems anomalous. In a description of sin that is consistently vague and general, describing attitudes of mind rather than particular acts (“they walked in the stubbornness of their hearts”; “each one did what was right in his own eyes,” CD 3.5; 3.6), why this sudden specificity? “And they ate blood” is not an attitude, but transgression of a particular commandment (see Gen 9:4; Lev 17:10-12; Deut 12:16, 23, 24, 25: “no person among you shall eat blood”). And why, of all possible sins, eating blood? Why is this the one transgression that needs to be named? On its own, the text is puzzling. But we have seen elsewhere in early Jewish literature a particular interest in blood,

and in eating blood as the transgression *par excellence*. And this interest has surfaced, as it does here, in the general context of the Enochic story of the Watchers.

In *1 Enoch* 7, the violence of the giants culminates in eating blood. *1 Enoch* catalogues the giants’ misdeeds, a gruesome progress of acts of “devouring,” ending with this terse statement, “and they drank blood.” Here bloodshed – which is described graphically in terms of eating each other and drinking the blood serves to sum up the corruption of the earth. Blood – blood shed, blood consumed (which, as we have seen, comes to the same thing) leads ultimately to the flood. When *Jubilees* tells the story of the flood through the lens of *1 Enoch*’s Watchers story (*Jub. 5*-6, 7) it too draws attention in particular to bloodshed. And in both *Jubilees* 5-6 and *Jubilees* 7, the signal crime is “eating blood.” The flood story in *Jubilees* 5-6 begins and ends with eating (flesh and) blood, and *Jubilees*’ retelling of the flood story (through the lens of *1 Enoch* 6-11) in chapter 7 comes to its climax with the warning against eating blood: “For all who eat the blood of man and all who eat the blood of any flesh will be blotted out, all of them, from the earth” (*Jub. 7*:28).

In the same way, in the midst of CD’s own litany of sin, in a general context influenced by *1 Enoch* and the story of the Watchers, blood suddenly raises its head: it stands as the culminating problem in a series of problems that leads to the people’s devastation. The sons of Jacob “walked in the stubbornness of their hearts, plotting against God’s precepts and each one doing what was right in his own eyes; and they ate blood, and their males were cut off in the wilderness.” Not only blood, but eating blood, serves in CD 3 as in *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch* to illustrate and cap the catalogue of corruption that leads to the devastation of the land.48

---

46 *1 Enoch* 7:5. Verses 4-5 read “And the giants began to kill men and to devour them. And they began to sin against the birds and beasts and creeping things and the fish, and to devour one another’s flesh. And they drank the blood.”

47 See above on *Jubilees* 5-6, pp. 123-128.

48 CD’s similarity to *Jubilees* here is noteworthy. Ben Zion Wacholder (*The New Damascus Document: The Midrash on the Eschatological Torah of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Reconstruction, Translation and Commentary* [STDJ 56;
In the perspective of the concern with eating blood in *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees*, that “eating blood” should be the one sin worth naming in CD’s catalogue of sin and its consequences begins to make sense. Eating blood has drastic consequences for the people and the land. In Leviticus, it leads to being cut off; in *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* it corrupts the land and leads to the flood. In CD 3, eating blood leads immediately to the people’s being cut off (“and they ate blood, and their males were cut off in the wilderness” CD 3.6-7). Two verses later the kings too are cut off and the land is laid waste, and the people are delivered up to the sword (CD 3.9-11). The consequence of the people’s rebellion, a rebellion which may be described in terms of eating blood, is ultimately, in CD as in *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees*, the land’s destruction. CD’s picture of sin and its consequences, and the representative role in it of “eating blood,” coincides with these other texts.49

The centrality of blood in CD 3 is evident in its use of Deuteronomy in 3.6. CD 3.6 quotes Deut 12:8. God has, in Deuteronomy 11, set before the Israelites blessing and curse, blessing if they obey the commandments of God (םְלֹא), curse if they do not obey but turn aside from the way (הָיִשָׁים מֵאָדָם, Deut 11:28; CD 2.6: The roots

Leiden: Brill, 2007], 109-110; 138) believes that CD 1-3 is a midrash on *Jubilees*. Yet certain elements of CD’s Watchers narrative follow *1 Enoch’s* story and have no clear counterpart in *Jubilees* – as, for instance, “lascivious eyes” as the root of straying. In *Jubilees* 7:21 the problem is “fornication,” which correctly represents the angels’ action but loses the connection with the text of *1 Enoch*, where the angels see and desire the daughters of men. CD, however, sounds like *1 Enoch*. Likewise, CD’s phrase “Watchers of the heavens” echoes *1 En*. 6:2. *Jub*. 7:21 has simply “Watchers”, and *Jub*. 5:1 “angels of God.” If CD is influenced by *Jubilees*, or traditions arising from it, it seems to know *1 Enoch* also. The point for our purposes is that CD shares a particular understanding of blood with the blood-flood traditions found in *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch*.

49 It is perhaps curious that CD mentions blood here, in the midst of Israel’s history, and not in the story of the Watchers and the women. Yet it is in this respect too similar to *Jubilees*. *Jubilees* 5 recounts Genesis’ flood story with clear reference to the Watchers, but without explicit mention of bloodshed. The story of the flood in *Jubilees*, however, culminates in a covenant in which the prohibition of bloodshed is central (Jubilees 6), and begins with an implicit reference to bloodshed: the corruption of “all flesh” on earth escalates until “they began to eat one another” (*Jub*. 5:2). In its retelling of Genesis 6 and the flood, that is, *Jubilees* does not focus on blood. But it adds blood in, at beginning and end of the Genesis flood story. And it is “eating blood” (or “eating one another,” which as we have seen represents bloodshed) that is in particular the problem.
are different in Deuteronomy [םָדְרָם ] and CD [םָדְרָם ] but the meaning is the same; the words seem to be used interchangeably). In Deuteronomy 12, Moses tells the Israelites that in the land the Lord is giving them they shall not act as they had been doing, “each one [according to] all that was right in his eyes” (אַחַי בְּלָתָא דְּחָרָה בְּטִינוּן , Deut 12:8). This is the sin of Jacob’s sons in CD 3.6: “each one doing what was right in his eyes” (אַחַי בְּלָתָא דְּחָרָה בְּטִינוּן ). Deuteronomy 12:11-25 goes on to give specific direction about worship, including a prohibition against eating blood: meat they may eat within their own towns; “the blood, however, you must not eat” (Deut 12:15-16). This stricture against eating the blood is repeated three times (Deut 12:23, 24, 25).

The last time, the text ties eating blood to the fate of the people in the land: “Do not eat it, so that all may go well with you and your children after you, because you do what is right in the sight of the Lord.” Here eating blood (or rather not eating it) plays a large part in doing what is right in the eyes of the Lord, as opposed to doing what is right in one’s own eyes. CD 3.5-6 makes the same connection between doing what is right in one’s own eyes and eating blood.

In Deuteronomy, however, it is not only eating blood that is problematic. There is a whole list of guidelines about worship, of which eating blood is only one. CD sees only the blood: eating blood alone sums up the disobedience of the people, their determination to follow their own desires and not the precepts of God. Nothing else registers in the echo of Deuteronomy in the text of CD 3. In CD 3, as in I Enoch and Jubilees, blood becomes the primary problem, the catalyst that unleashes the curse.

If this reference to eating blood in CD 3.6 were all, we might still question the parallel with I Enoch and Jubilees and their treatment of blood. For there is this important difference: blood in CD 3 sums up Israel’s sinfulness in the time after the flood, rather than the giants’

50 לא חסלו להם למסים ימס הכל מבנץ א澥ר וירדניא עשוה מקדש וירדניא יווהו, Deut 12:25
sinfulness in the time before it. Blood leads in CD 3 not to flood but to the devastation of the land and the sword: to the exile.51 Immediately prior to CD’s story of the Watchers and the earth’s destruction, however, there is another – contested – reference to blood: God “abominated the generations on account of blood (םָנְתָּבִים)” (CD 2.8). This reference to blood serves to set all the sin that follows under that heading. Before it launches into the story of the Watchers and their sons and all the fallen people, CD sets the theological scene: “And now, listen to me, all entering the covenant,” CD 2.2 commands, “and I will open your ears to the paths of the wicked.” CD moves from the announcement of God’s impending judgement to an elaboration on the fate of the wicked that is both deterministic and explanatory. God has patience and abundance of pardon for all those who repent, but “strength and power and a great anger with flames of fire by the <hand> of all the angels of destruction against persons turning aside from the path” (2.5-6). Those who turn aside from the path face God’s wrath for two reasons: God “did not choose them at the beginning of the world” (CD 2.7) and God “knew their deeds, and abominated the generations on account of blood” (CD 2.8). What are the deeds of the wicked that cause God to abominate the generations? They are the deeds of blood. Here, too, it seems, as in CD 3.6, wickedness, the errant deeds of the whole generation, may be summed up in terms of blood. The problem of blood thus heads and sums up CD’s history of wickedness – in the text as it stands.

The phrase “on account of blood,” however, is problematic. In the first edition of the Cairo Genizah manuscript, Schechter footnotes “on account of blood” (םנבות) and suggests that it is corrupt. The problem for Schechter appears to be one of sense: it is not that the text is not clear

51 We note, however, the connection between Cain’s bloodshed and exile in Lamentations: exile is a consequence of the blood that has been poured out on the land. Indeed, exile in CD 3 stands parallel to the flood. The sins of the generation of the Watchers lead to the flood (and the devastation of the land) as the sin of Jacob’s descendants lead to the devastation of the land, and exile. The flood is precursor and sign of exile. See further below.
but that it is, in his view, incoherent. Schechter emends פֶּלְגָּד, “from of old.”52 The majority, from Charles to Baumgarten in his 2006 edition of the DSS’s Cave 4 fragments, follow Schechter in the judgement that the text is corrupt. Various emendations are proposed, from Schechter and Charles’ פֶּלְגָּד to Baumgarten’s פֶּלְגָּד.53 Again, the problem for these scholars is more one of sense than it is textual. What is blood doing here, after all? There has been no mention of blood in the accusations against the wicked to this point in CD; rather the problem has been straying from the path, turning aside, abominating the commandment. What might it mean, in any case, for God to abominate the generations “from” or “on account of” blood? Hence the attempts to make sense of the text: Wernberg-Møller, for example, suggests that, because ב and ב look very similar in the Cairo Genizah manuscript, we should assume that the scribe confused the two letters here; we should read not פֶּלְגָּד but פֶּלְגָּד: not that God abominated the generations “on account of blood” but that God abominated “the generations of their congregations.” The latter, at least, is comprehensible. All the proposed emendations seek to offer a reading that makes more sense, and is perhaps less awkward, than פֶּלְגָּד.

Yet the problem with the phrase is not textual. The Cairo Genizah text A reads מדם and, while the text of most of line 8 is missing in 4Q266, there appears to be sufficient space for the phrase.⁵⁴ Hence a few scholars retain מדם. M.-J. Lagrange translates, « il a eu en horreur leur générations sanguinaires. »⁵⁵ García Martínez and Tigchelaar, in their study edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls, read « on account of blood. »⁵⁶ Ben Zion Wacholder, in commentary on the text he reconstructs from the CD manuscripts and the DSS fragments, concurs: this passage declares that “God knew the acts of humanity prior to their birth, hating especially those generations that shed blood (CD 2:7b-8a).”⁵⁷ Wacholder here offers an interpretation of García Martínez’s terse translation “on account of blood”: because of bloodshed, God abominates the generations.

In fact it is not the case that “blood” appears in CD 2.8 out of nowhere. Though the word blood does not occur until 2.8, the problem of blood – and in particular innocent blood, i.e. blood shed unjustly – has already raised its ominous head. In 1.18 the narrator describes the straying of “the last generation, the congregation of traitors” (1.12). Among their errors (for they sought easy interpretations, scrutinized loopholes), is that of unjust judgement. They “chose the handsome neck, acquitted the guilty (ד VE נא ל Sinai) and sentenced the just (וכ VE נא ל Sinai), …colluded together against the life of the just man” (CD 1.19-20, in García Martínez’s translation). The passage describes the death of the innocent righteous person at the hands of those who have

⁵⁴ See for instance the facsimile of the Cairo Genizah text in Broshi, ed., Damascus Document Reconsidered, p. 13 and Baumgarten’s reconstruction of 4Q266 (Damascus Document, 37).


power to judge: judicial murder. This is to shed the blood of the innocent: we are in the realm of innocent blood. CD alludes here to Exod 23:7. In the context of commandments for the court-room (Exod 23:1-3, 6-8), v. 7 prohibits false charges: “do not kill the innocent and those in the right (כתי), for I will not acquit the guilty (שהם).” But this is just what CD’s wicked generation does. Psalm 94:21 calls it condemning “innocent blood”: “They band together against the life of the righteous, and innocent blood they condemn” (וַיִּתְנַשֵּׁם שֵׁם עָזִירִים וּדֹם נַפְךָ). Here דומ נפק and נפש צדיקים stand as parallel instances of the righteous one wrongly condemned to death: judicial murder, “innocent blood.”

It is precisely this verse that CD goes on to quote: the “congregation of traitors” “banded together against the life of the righteous (וַיַּכְכְּרוּ בְּלָא נָשִׁים עָזִירִים),…they hunted them down with the sword” (CD 1.20-21).

Blood is thus by implication already a problem in CD: unjust judgement, the shedding of innocent blood, defines in part the waywardness of the people who violate the covenant. CD draws on Exodus and Psalm 94 to explain the coming judgement: because of innocent blood, because the people have ignored the commandments of God in thus shedding blood, the wrath of God is kindled against his congregation in CD 2.1. These are the deeds that God knew “before they were established” (CD 2.7). Therefore God “abominated the generations on account of blood.” To a reader attuned to the echoes of Exodus 23 and Psalm 94 in CD 1.19-20, the conclusion makes perfect sense. The reading בְּלָא מִדְמָך follows from the logic of the Damascus Document itself. In CD, as in 1 Enoch and Jubilees, the sequence of transgression that ends with the giants and the flood has innocent blood at its beginning.

That the problem of blood – and the phrase בְּלָא מִדְמָך – belong here, at the beginning of the story of primeval transgression and flood, is supported by the many echoes in CD’s text of that
other story of bloodshed and flood, *1 Enoch* 6-11. Blood is, in *1 Enoch*’s vision of corruption and judgement, central to the story. In the wake of the Watchers and the violence of the giants, the angels see “much blood being shed upon earth,” so that the earth cries out with the voice of all the perishing people, demanding justice (*1 En*. 9:1-3). Their violence summed up in terms of blood poured out, and the answering cry of innocent blood for justice, drives the action of *1 Enoch* 6-10: it is this that prompts God’s response, this that brings on the flood and yields, finally, to a new beginning. Bloodshed in *1 Enoch* leads to God’s destruction of the land and of the wicked.

CD follows the same sequence. The Israelite’s transgressions, these deeds of blood, cause God to hide his face from the land: “before they were established he knew their deeds, and abominated the generations on account of blood, and hid his face from the land until their extinction” (2.7-9). As in CD 3.6 the people’s eating blood is swiftly followed by their being cut off – abandoned, it would appear, by God in the wilderness – so too in CD 2.7-9 God abandons the land because of blood. In both places, blood serves to characterize the wickedness of the generation and leads into God’s judgement: “their males were cut off in the wilderness”; “God hid his face from the land.” In CD 2.7-9, therefore, as in CD 3.6-7, the Enochic sequence emerges: from blood as the sum of all wickedness to destruction, God’s abandonment of the land. It emerges here in the preface to the story of the Watchers and the giants and the flood that extinguishes the land. Blood stands in the background of the story as the summation of the generations’ wickedness, of which the Watchers and their sons are the prime examples. In the shape of this text, too, a sequence like that in *1 Enoch* 6-11 can be seen: from blood to flood, in the context of the story of the Watchers.

Nor is it only this sequence and the story of the Watchers that the *Damascus Document* has in common with *1 Enoch*. Reminiscences of *1 Enoch* pervade the Admonition. Indeed, the
final element of 1 Enoch’s blood-flood sequence, the restoration that follows the flood, occurs also in CD 1-3 taken as a whole. After the catalogue of sinners, after the straying which may be summed up in the eating of blood and which leads to God’s wrath and the devastation of the land – so that the land is laid waste and the first to enter the covenant are delivered up to the sword (CD 3.10-11) – CD turns to the good news. “But with those who remained steadfast in God’s precepts…God established his covenant with Israel for ever” (CD 3.12-13). For them God builds a safe house in Israel, “and all the glory of Adam is for them” (CD 3.20). Nickelsburg points out the similarity between the idea of “awakening” in CD 1.1-2.1 and the opening of the newborn sheep’s eyes in 1 Enoch 90:6. In CD 3.18-20, too, in its image of the new and safe house built for them (or into which they are built) by God, CD resembles 1 Enoch 90: “And I saw until the Lord of the sheep brought a new house…And all the sheep were within it.” “And all that had been destroyed and dispersed…were gathered within that house” (1 En. 90:29, 33). Like 1 Enoch, and in an image that recalls the Animal Apocalypse’s concluding hope, CD here moves from waywardness summed up by “blood,” through devastation to restoration.

Similarly, as its hope recalls 1 Enoch, in particular in the detail of the new house, the Damascus Document’s earlier description of the fate of the wicked likewise reminds of 1 Enoch, this time 1 Enoch 10. God has patience and abundance of pardon for those who repent, but for those who turn aside from the path God has, CD 2.5-6 declares, “strength and power and a great anger with flames of fire by the [hand] of all the angels of destruction.” When God’s wrath is

58 Instead of “he built for them a safe home” (3.19, trans. García Martínez), Nickelsburg (Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah, 124) proposes that the remnant itself is built “as a sure house in Israel” (citing 1 Sam 2:35). Cf. Baumgarten and Schwartz, “Damascus Document,” 17 and n. 26.
59 Nickelsburg, ibid., 123. One might point, too, in both CD and 1 Enoch to the theme of blindness associated with straying from the path and the leader who opens eyes. In CD the remnant are initially blind; they grope for the path until God sends them the Teacher of Righteousness (CD 1.9-11). In 1 Enoch 89, the “sheep” repeatedly become blind and stray from the path (89:32) until a leader rises up to open their eyes and lead them. In both, the time of this leader and of the opening of the people’s eyes is the time of God’s coming in judgement (1 En. 90:18ff; CD 1.15-21; 2.1).
finally aroused against the Watchers and their brood in *1 Enoch* 6-11, God sends his angels to bind Shemihazah and Asael hand and foot and cast them into the darkness “until the eternal judgement is consummated,” when they will be led away to the fiery abyss (*1 En*. 10:4, 11, 12-13). By the hand of his angels, that is, God condemns the Watchers to flames of fire.

We have seen (above, Chapter 4) that the judgement in *1 Enoch* 10 recalls and enacts the division between the wicked and the chosen righteous in *1 Enoch* 1. Before it tells the story of the Watchers, *1 Enoch* 1-5 sets the scene: God is coming in judgement, and Enoch promises blessing to the chosen righteous (*1 En*. 1:1) when God comes with his mighty host to destroy all the wicked (*1 En*. 1:1-9). In its theological preface to the catalogue of fallen heroes, and so to the story of the Watchers, CD 2.2-13 likewise describes blessing and punishment and draws the same dichotomy between chosen and wicked, in reverse: in *1 Enoch* the righteous are the “chosen”; in CD the wicked are those whom God “did not choose” at the beginning of the world (CD 2.7). God will destroy them by the hand of his angels (CD 2.6), as he comes to destroy the wicked in *1 Enoch* with his angel host (*1 En*. 1:4, 9).

*1 Enoch* moves from its opening judgement scene to a meditation upon the unchanging order of the seasons – creation’s obedience to the economy of God, God’s ordering of creation – and thence to the story of the Watchers. CD moves from God’s wrath upon all who stray from his path to a declaration of God’s omniscience and ordering of all things. “And he knew the years of their existence, and the number and detail of their ages, of all those who exist over the centuries, and of those who will exist, until it occurs in their ages throughout all the everlasting years” (CD 2.9-10). But those he hates, God causes to stray: hence, the fallen heroes, beginning with the Watchers (CD 2.13ff.). There is here a common logic: the prospect of judgement and the problem of the wicked raises for both *1 Enoch* and CD the question of how wickedness can
arise in a universe ordered by God. Both texts underline God’s order, the divine control of creation, between their initial vision of judgement and their tale of the first who fell.

And, as we have seen, both texts insist not only on judgement but also on restoration. For CD the restoration is only for the few, a remnant who remained steadfast while those who first entered into the covenant turned away from it. In the same way, *1 Enoch* 1:1 distinguishes the “chosen righteous” who receive God’s blessing in the time of judgement, from all the rest who will be destroyed (cf. *1 En.* 10:16-17). Elements of CD’s remnant-hope resemble *1 Enoch*’s vision of restoration. In CD 1.7, God visits the people at (or after) the moment of wrath, the Babylonian exile, and causes to sprout from Israel and Aaron “a shoot of the planting.” After the binding of the Watchers and the promise of their final consignment to fiery chaos in *1 En.* 10:16, the “plant of righteousness and truth,” the text goes on to say, “will appear.” In those days “all the righteous will escape” (*1 En.* 10:17) to live in an earth that produces 1000-fold the blessings of the earth. So in CD, the shoot of the planting will possess the land and “become fat with the good things of his soil” (CD1.8). The pictures both of judgement for the wicked and of restoration for the righteous in CD and in *1 Enoch* show some striking similarities. There are differences too, of course – for instance in CD’s insistence on the remnant, while *1 Enoch* 90 (and perhaps also, in the end, *1 En.* 10:21-11:2: “and all the peoples will be serving and blessing and worshipping me” [10:21]) seems prepared to countenance the possibility that all the sheep; indeed all the people, may be saved.60 Yet in its broad outlines and at times in its details too, the

60 *1 En.* 90:33 (trans. Isaac; contrast Nickelsburg): “All those which have been destroyed and dispersed, and all the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky were gathered together in that house; and the Lord of the sheep rejoiced with great joy because they had all become gentle and returned to his house….All the sheep were invited to that house but it could not contain them (all).” On the inclusion of all peoples in *1 Enoch*’s vision of salvation see Terence Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* [Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007], 88. Cf. *1 En.* 10:21: “And all the children of the people will become righteous, and all nations shall worship and bless me…."

history of Israel in the *Damascus Document*, like its theological setting, resonates repeatedly
with that of *1 Enoch*.

These commonalities are suggestive: they demonstrate the degree to which *1 Enoch* and
the *Damascus Document* share a conceptual world. Lars Hartman has shown that *1 En*. 1-5 and
CD 1-3 both belong to the same category of “rib-patterned” texts. The correspondences between
*1 Enoch* 1-5 and CD 1-2 are particularly close: in ten instances, the same elements occur with the
same vocabulary.61 *1 Enoch* and CD occupy, too, the same world of chosen and wicked, blessing
and destruction, an impending judgement – complete with angels of destruction and flames of
fire – and an existence ordered by God.62 This is a context to which the blood-flood-restoration
sequence belongs in *1 Enoch*; in this context the same sequence appears in the *Damascus
Document*.

CD thus shares in many respects *1 Enoch*’s conceptual world. It is then likely that in the
same way, and in the context of the story of the Watchers and their giant sons and the flood that
follows, it shares *1 Enoch*’s interest in blood. In light of the logic of *1 Enoch* and the Cain/blood-
flood/judgement sequence so central to it, the phrase מדם makes sense. Innocent blood sums up,
here as in *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees*, the wickedness that characterizes the world: before they were
established God knew their deeds and abominated the generations on account of blood. Here, too,
the blood-flood sequence structures the story of fallenness, in the time before the flood and also
in the time after it.

Hartman identifies a significant number of early Jewish texts that display the “rib” pattern and posits a common
background, perhaps cultic or liturgical. See also the discussion of Hartman’s work in Davies, *The Damascus Cov-
enant*, 57-59. The 10 elements are: observe, know, (God’s) works, (human) works, change, not doing commandments,
transgress, great and hard words, hard-hearted, inherit the land; the idea of “turning away” uses similar vocabulary.
62 Compare *1 Enoch* 2-5, and its description of a world whose times and seasons that “do not alter” reveal the immu-
tability of God’s order, with CD’s similar (though much briefer) statement of God’s ordering and its immutability in
2.9-10. In both cases the reverie on immutability, God’s ordering and God’s omniscience, follows the vision of
judgement.
The Damascus Document, then, presents a scenario of judgement (and, for the remnant, restoration) that has at its centre the problem of blood. Those who stray from the path do so in large part through their shedding of innocent blood, by unjust judgement and by the sword. God therefore abominates the generations; on account of blood he abominates them and hides his face from the land. As in 1 Enoch, this history moves from a people whose rebellion against God is realized in bloodshed, to the wrath of God against people and land together. Though it begins in primordial times, it is a history of Israel, for devastation and for restoration. First among those who serve as examples of the people’s waywardness are the Watchers and their brood, breeding the earth’s annihilation (2.19-20). But the pattern of bloodshed and devastation continues in Israel in the generations that follow the flood; the transgressions of Jacob’s sons signally include “eating blood,” and they are cut off. The blood-flood pattern found in 1 Enoch and Jubilees, the movement from blood and the corruption of the earth to cataclysm (or exile) and only then to new hope, proves formative for the vision of the Damascus Document as well.

Like Jubilees 5 and 7, CD offers its own version of the blood-flood sequence. While innocent blood serves as the summary sin under which the story of the Watchers and the earth’s destruction unfold – the Watchers’ “wandering” serving as the narrative example of the straying imputed to Israel in the Admonition and described there in terms of innocent blood – the Watchers story itself emphasizes lascivious eyes. Notably, too, it does not mention Cain. CD’s primordial history begins with the Watchers and continues with the history of Israel; Cain plays no part in it. Blood, however, does, and it is described in the same terms as the giants’ offense in 1 Enoch. They ate blood: this is the problem that leads to Israel’s destruction, as it summed up for CD the iniquity that led to the flood (2.8). The Enochic focus on blood as the heart of the problem – expressed as in 1 Enoch 7 in terms of eating blood – and the Enochic logic of bloodshed leading to flood appears again in CD. But it stands on its own, without allusion to the
blood of Abel. Here, then, is another variation on the blood-flood sequence: From innocent blood to flood, or the land’s destruction, and thence to new creation.
III. Sibylline Oracles 3

Sibylline Oracles 3 at once stands apart from *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees* and *Damascus Document* for its Hellenistic character. Of Jewish provenance, it “express[es] Jewish views of the world” in the voice and literary forms of the Greek world.\(^{63}\) Whereas *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees* and *Damascus Document* speak primarily to a wider or narrower Jewish community, the Sibyl is conceived as having the authority to address all nations.\(^{64}\) Indeed, the purpose of the “sibylline enterprise,” as Collins sees it, is “to develop the common ground shared by Egyptian Jews and their environment.”\(^{65}\) Yet in spite of *Sib. Or.* 3’s different context and aim, in spite of its debt to Greek literature and the pagan oracular tradition, the problem of blood and an ensuing destruction that has run through *1 Enoch* 6-11 as well as *Jubilees* 5-7 and *Damascus Document* 1-3 surfaces briefly here, too – as does the echo of *1 Enoch*. We shall seek, in what follows, first to trace the outline of a Cain/blood-flood/judgement theme in *Sib. Or.* 3.300-333 and in relation to overtones of *1 Enoch*; we shall then consider the distinctive shape of the theme as it appears in *Sib. Or.* 3.

In the middle of *Sib. Or.* 3 stands a series of woes against various nations (vv. 295-488). Though the oracles from 350-488 are generally considered a later addition, the section we are considering (3.300-333) belongs to the book’s main corpus.\(^{66}\) The woes, in part or as a whole,

---


\(^{64}\) Nikiprowetzky, *Troisième Sibyle*, 37.

\(^{65}\) Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 54.

\(^{66}\) See Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 117; J. J. Collins, *Sibylline Oracles*, 24, 28. Collins believes that vv. 350-380 are a later addition (from the time of Cleopatra) to the main (2nd century) corpus; 400-488 may have been added at the same time (1st century B.C.E.). See also Collins, “The Third Sibyl Revisited,” in *Things Revealed:*
are often thought to have no connection to the preceding and following sections.  

Nikiprowetzky notes, however, the Jewish theme of the section’s opening oracles. Babylon, destroyer of the temple; Gog and Magog, eschatological foes of the last battle in Ezekiel 38, whose defeat by the power of God marks God’s final deliverance of his people: these are the biblical enemies of Israel whose fall signals Israel’s salvation. Indeed, far from having no connection to what precedes, the oracles against the nations are a necessary part of the scriptural prophetic pattern: the history and fate of Israel, rehearsed in vv. 215-294, culminates here as it does in the prophets in condemnation of the nations who have attacked Israel.

The woe against Babylon with which the larger section of woes opens is in fact tied closely to the history of Israel that precedes it. That history traces first the holy and fruitful life of the people, the “offspring of righteousness” (214-215), who live around the great temple of Solomon. Even to these, however, disaster comes: “But on these evil will come”: exile and the end of the temple and the land’s desolation (3.273-75). Exile, however, is followed by restoration: “But a good end and a very great glory await you” (3.282); the good end is realized in a restored temple (3.294).

This vision of Israel’s history and its hope, a vision beginning and ending with the temple (3.214, 294), leads into the woes against the nations, and in these woes it is the temple that is in
the first place at issue. “Woe to you, Babylon,” because you destroyed “[God’s] great temple” (3.303, 302). The fate of Babylon mirrors the fate it visited upon “the offspring of righteous men”: destruction and total desolation. Israel’s desolation by the “Assyrians” in the preceding oracle (3.268) is answered here by the desolation of “Babylon and the race of Assyrian men” (3.303). “Rushing destruction will come upon the whole land of sinners;” a tumult will destroy “the entire land” (3.304-305). Babylon will be desolate: “as if you had not been” (ὡς μὴ γεγονότα, 3.310). This section of woes against the nations thus shows clear literary links to the preceding section on Israel; it follows from it, in terms of the logic both of the narrative and of the biblical prophets. Doom visited upon Israel by God at the hands of the nations finds an answer in a corresponding doom visited upon the nations.

This doom takes the form of blood poured out. Babylon will be filled with blood, as Babylon itself formerly poured out the blood of the righteous, “whose blood even now cries out to high heaven” (καὶ τὸ τε πληθησθῇ ἀπὸ αἵματος, ὡς πάρος αὐτῇ ἐξέχεας [αἵμα] ἀνδρῶν τῇ ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν τε δικαιῶν, ὃν ἐτι καὶ νῦν αἷμα βοσὶ εἰς αἰθέρα μακρόν, 3.311-13). J. J. Collins finds a reference in the blood that cries out to Gen 4:10 and the blood of Abel (Φωνή αἵματος τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ βοσὶ πρός με ἐκ τῆς γῆς, LXX Gen 4:10).71 In its details, however, Sib. Or. 3:311-13 is different from Gen 4:10; in these differences it resembles the allusion to Abel’s blood in 1 En. 9:1-3. A significant number of parallels can be drawn between Sib. Or.’s version of Gen 4:10 and that of 1 Enoch. (1) In Genesis, Abel’s blood cries out from the earth “to me” (πρός με, i.e. God). In 1 Enoch’s echo of the cry, heaven stands in for God: now the cry of the earth from the blood shed upon it reaches “to the very gates of heaven” (μέχρι πυλῶν τοῦ

In Genesis, it is Abel alone whose blood cries out. In *1 Enoch*, it is all the perishing people. In *Sib. Or.* 3, it is the blood of many people, the good and righteous, that now raises its cry to heaven ([αἷμα] ἀνδρῶν τ’ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν τε δικαίων, 3.312). (3) Further, in both *Sib. Or.* 3 and *1 Enoch* but not in Genesis 4, the blood of all the slaughtered people is “poured out”: ἐκχέω (*Sib. Or.* 3.312 ἐξέχας; *1 Enoch* 9:1 ἐκχυννόμενον). Genesis 4 has no equivalent verb; this is a reading of Genesis 4 found in *1 Enoch*. (4) In *1 Enoch*, again, the earth is filled (ἐπλησθη, 9:9) with blood (and violence or injustice, Grk ἀδικία). In *Sib. Or.* 3 Babylon will be filled (πλησθήση, 3.312) with blood, just as it poured out the blood of righteous men. (5) And in the “righteous men whose blood cries out” ([αἷμα] ἀνδρῶν … δικαίων ὄν ἔτι καὶ νῦν αἵμα βοᾷ, 3.312-313) we have the concept of “innocent blood” (ἀἵμα ἀθρόων/ἀἵμα δίκαιου). The blood of the slaughtered righteous cries out for justice, as in *1 Enoch* (9:1-3, 10) the souls of the dead cry out for justice after much blood has been poured out. It is in fact *1 Enoch* 9 that makes the link between Abel’s blood and “innocent blood,” the blood of the innocent and righteous, in interpreting the echo of Gen 4:10 in *1 En.* 9:1-3 through the image of the souls of the dead making suit. In its own echo of the Cain and Abel story, *Sib. Or.* 3 links the blood of Abel to the blood of the righteous – that is, to the problem of righteous or innocent blood in general. (6)

---

72 Cf. *Jubilees*’ story of Cain and Abel, where Abel’s blood cries out “from the earth to heaven” (Jub. 4:3, above pp. 120-121).

73 There is much blood poured out upon earth (*1 En.* 9:1); the earth, devoid of inhabitants raises the voice of their cries to heaven (9:2); the souls of humans make suit (9:3; cf. 8:4 – “as men were perishing, the cry went up” – and, in the reprise at the end of the angels’ prayer, “The spirits of the souls of the people who have died make accusation, and their groan has come up to the gates of heaven,” 9:10). The blood of Abel has become, in *1 Enoch*, the blood of all the perishing people.

74 Blood “poured out” is the image for bloodshed found also in *Jubilees* 7, precisely where *Jubilees* links bloodshed to the flood and shows the influence of *1 Enoch* (Jub. 7:23, 24, 25, 27, 33; cf. 11:2, 6).

75 The archangels see much blood poured out upon the earth. “And they said to one another, “The earth has brought the cry of their voice unto the gates of heaven. And now, [O] holy ones of heaven, the souls of people are putting their case before you pleading, ‘Bring our judgment before the Most High.” (*1 En.* 9:2-3 [trans. Isaac]). Cf. *Jub.* 4:3 where, as in *1 Enoch*, the blood of Abel “makes accusation” to heaven.
*Enoch*. *1 Enoch* repeats the cry of the earth and its slaughtered people three times, at 7:6, 8:4 and 9:1-3, as it details the continuing corruption of the earth. The point of the archangels’ prayer in chapter 9 is that all this “blood and injustice” (9:9) goes on and on while God does nothing. In the development of the tradition in *1 En. 22:67*, the voice of Abel cries out to heaven continuously, until Cain’s seed perishes from the earth. “Still even now,” *Sib. Or.* 3.313 says, the blood of good and righteous men cries out to high heaven.

In its details, then, the culminating reference to bloodshed in the oracle against Babylon resembles not just Gen 4:11 but *1 Enoch* 6-11 and the blood there poured out and crying out from earth to heaven. As we have noted, this reference to bloodshed occurs in *Sib. Or.* 3 in a passage about judgement: the Sibyl prophesies destruction against the nations who have destroyed Israel. “Woe to you, Babylon….For a heavenly eternal destruction will come upon you, Babylon…” (3.303, 307). The judgement that comes upon Babylon is in recompense for the righteous blood it has shed: “Then you will be filled with blood, as you yourself formerly / poured out the blood of good men and righteous men” (3.311-12). It is, indeed, this blood that cries out for justice (3.313). Here is the same logic we have seen in *1 Enoch* 6-11 (and in *Jubilees* and the *Damascus Document*): from the blood of the innocent to judgement. And in *Sib. Or.* 3.310-13 as in *1 Enoch* 6-11 this sequence from blood to divine judgement is connected, by allusion, to the story of Abel.

Indeed, the judgement as *Sib. Or.* 3 describes it is both cataclysmic and final. “At some time a rushing destruction will come upon the whole land of mortals / and a tumult will destroy the entire land of mortals…” (3.304-305). This is judgement as cataclysm,\(^\text{76}\) enveloping and destroying the earth. It is also eternal, at least for Babylon (3.307). Insofar as it imagines the

\(^{76}\)…as cataclysm and possibly even as flood, for the word Ροίζος ("rushing destruction," in Collins’ translation) suggests a vast whistling or rushing like that of wind or rushing water.
judgement following upon bloodshed as a final cataclysm, *Sib. Or.* 3.300-313 resembles, in broad terms, *1 Enoch* 6-11.\(^\text{77}\)

This broad correspondence with the vision of judgement in *1 En.* 10-11 is reinforced by other echoes of *1 Enoch* in the context of the Cain/blood/flood/judgement theme in *Sib. Or.* 3. In its depiction of judgement, *Sib. Or.* 3 may recall *1 Enoch* 1 and 10. The wrath that will come upon Babylon in retribution for the blood it has poured out comes down from heaven “from the holy ones” (ἀν’ οὕρανόθεν καταβήσεται ἐξ ἀγίων, 3.308). So God comes forth in judgement at the beginning of *1 Enoch* “with his myriads and with his holy ones” (τοῖς μυριάσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῖς ἀγίοις αὐτοῦ, *1 En* 1:9, Grk [α]). In a later passage in *Sib. Or.* 3, events of the end-time mirror those in *1 Enoch* 1 and 10, in a passage in which giants and the abyss (cf. *1 Enoch* 6-7, 10) also appear. In those days, the earth will be shaken; the Immortal One will break the summits of mountains and the mounds of giants and the dark abyss will appear (3.675; 680-81, cf. *1 En.* 1:6: mountains and high places will fall down and hills will be made low, and *1 En.* 10:10-12: the rebel angels will be cast underneath the earth, and at the end led into the pit, or

---

\(^{77}\) It is possible that there is another similarity to *1 Enoch* and the connection between blood and judgement a few lines later, in the oracle against Gog and Magog. “How great a pouring out of blood (πὸσον σίματος ἔχωμα, 3.320) you will receive,” the Sibyl exclaims: “your dewy earth will drink black blood” (καὶ πιέται σου γαία πόλυδροσος ἀμά κελαῖνον, 3.322). The image of the earth drinking blood recalls Gen 4:11, where the earth has opened its mouth to receive Abel’s blood. But the vocabulary – pouring out, drinking blood – is not present in Genesis. It is present, however, in *1 Enoch*. In *1 Enoch* 7 the problem that causes the earth to raise its first cry is not only the giants’ proclivity for violence but their drinking of blood (*1 En.* 7:5-6: “and they drank the blood. Then the earth brought accusation against the lawless ones”). That the earth “drinks blood” here in *Sib. Or.* 3.322 shortly after the echo of *1 Enoch* 9 in 3.312-13 is thus interesting. At first glance any relationship between *1 Enoch*’s image of drinking blood and *Sib. Or.*’s seems unlikely, as the ideas are different: in *1 Enoch* 7 it is the giants that drink the blood they shed, rather than the earth that drinks blood poured out upon it. Yet the blood that the giants drink and the blood that is poured out upon the earth come together in *1 Enoch*’s story: the giants’ violence, described initially in terms of drinking blood, is finally described in terms of blood poured out upon the earth, with a reminiscence of the story of Cain and Abel. Further, the image of the earth drinking blood is peculiar in the Greek-inspired context of *Sib. Or.* 3. Though this is a passage (like many in *Sib. Or.* 3) rich with Homeric overtones, that the earth “drinks blood” does not derive from Homer. In the *Iliad*, as here, blood is often “black” (ἀμά μέλαν [14xx: *Il.* 4.149; 7.262; 10.298, 469, etc…] or ἀμά κελαινών / κελαινεῖς [10xx: *Il.* 1.303, 7.329, 11. 828, 844 / 4.140, 5.798, 14.437, etc…]). But the earth never drinks it. The earth runs with black blood (*ρέτ*, *Il.* 4.140, 451 etc…) or is soaked by it (δεύτερ, δεύτετο 13.655 etc…) or turns red with blood (ἐρυθαίνετο, 10.484). Whence, then, the image of an earth that drinks blood? It is, perhaps, an image not from Homer but from Cain’s murder of Abel in Genesis by way of *1 Enoch*. 
abyss, of fire). These are perhaps generic images for the end-time cataclysm, but that they have something in common with *1 Enoch*’s images of judgement is suggestive in view of the oracle’s other echoes of Enoch. Erich Gruen notes that *1 Enoch*, like other apocalyptic literature of Hellenistic Judaism, is “potent in inspiration” for *Sib. Or*. 3.78 Nikiprowetzky, in fact, says that *Sib. Or*. 3 is closest to *1 Enoch* in respect to the apocalyptic literature of early Judaism.79 The similarities in their visions of judgement may thus not be accidental.

Earlier, describing the righteous people whose destruction by Babylon these end-time events help to vindicate, *Sib. Or.* 3 again may evoke *1 Enoch* 6-11. This people, concerned always with “a good will and good works” does not care about the courses of the sun or moon, or augurers’ signs, or mantics or sorcerers or soothsayers, or the astrological predictions of the Chaldeans (3:220-228).80 These are the very vices taught to humans by the rebel angels in *1 Enoch* 7-8, described in the same words.81 *1 Enoch*’s picture of the world corrupted by the rebel angels, that is, seems to provide the (implied) background against which the righteousness of Israel shines all the more brightly. The passage ends with a reference to a mysterious “they” who taught wandering ways “from which many evils come upon mortals on earth”; people are led astray as to good ways and righteous works (καὶ ὁ πλάνος ἐδίδαξαν ἀεικλίους ἀνθρώπους ἐξ ὧν δὴ κακὰ πολλὰ βροτοῖς πέλεται κατὰ γαῖαν, τοῦ πεπλανήθαι ὁδοὺς ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἔργα δίκαιαν, 2.231-33).82 This is the story-line and indeed the vocabulary of *1 Enoch* 6-8, the

---


79 Nikiprowetzky, *Troisième Sibylle*, 70.

80 On astrology, see Collin’s note in *OTP* 1.367, n. b2. There may be a polemic here against the view that Abraham practiced astrology, the “Chaldean science.”


82 It is interesting that there is a parallel here also, in the language of wandering from the way, with *Damascus Document*. For at 3.310, in the midst of Sibylline Oracles’ description (in Enochic terms) of blood and judgement, the oracle says to Babylon, “Then you will be as you were before, as if you had not been” (ὦς μὴ γεγονὼς, 3.310). “As if they had not been” is exactly the phrase used in CD for the Watchers and the giants, wiped off the earth by
story of the Watchers and the women and the corruption of the earth by their teaching. Collins notes an allusion here to *1 Enoch* 8.\(^{83}\) It seems that *Sib. Or.* 3 has *1 Enoch* 6-11 “on the brain” – the story of Watchers and women and the blood poured out on the earth that cries to high heaven lies in the background of the Oracles’ history of Israel and of Israel’s enemies.

We have thus good reason for seeing continuity between the Cain/blood-
[flood]/judgement sequence in *Sib. Or.* 3 and the Cain/blood-flood/judgement logic of *1 Enoch* 6-11. In the woe against Babylon in particular, *Sib. Or.* 3 displays a way of thinking about judgement that has the same main elements as those we have identified in *1 Enoch* 6-11: bloodshed like Cain’s, leading to cataclysmic final judgement. Yet there is also discontinuity. For *Sib. Or.* 3 recalls the Cain/blood-flood/judgement complex of *1 Enoch* 6-11 in a passage that pays no attention to the story of the Watchers within which that complex emerges in *1 Enoch*.\(^{84}\) In this, *Sib. Or.* 3 is different from both *Jubilees* and CD, where the [Cain]/blood-
flood/judgement sequence is linked to the story of the Watchers. This is not to say that *Sib. Or.* 3 has come independently to the same association of ideas – Cain and blood and judgement (flood) – that we have seen in *1 Enoch* (and *Jubilees* and the *Damascus Document*). The echoes of *1 Enoch* 7 and 9 and the poem’s evident (if implicit) familiarity with *1 Enoch*’s mythic world rule out an independent development of the same theme. Rather, it would seem, the way of seeing connecting (Cain’s) bloodshed to the flood and final judgement that is already evident in *1 Enoch* 6-11 can be used by *Sib. Or.* 3 independently of the narrative in which it is imbedded in *1 Enoch*. This particular association of ideas, this theme deriving from *1 Enoch* has also a life of its own. We are in the realm of interpretive traditions. So, on the one hand, *Sib. Or.* 3

---


84 There are, however, as we have just seen, indications of that story’s influence “behind the scenes” in *Sib. Or.* 3.
understands blood and judgement in the same way as *1 Enoch*. This is the way to describe final judgement, with reference to the blood poured out on the ground; this is the way to read Genesis’ story of Abel, with reference to blood that fills the earth and to eschatological judgement. On the other hand, the theme in *Sib. Or.* 3 stands free of its narrative context in *1 Enoch* 6-11.

It has, also, its own distinctive shape. Though there is final cataclysm, and though that cataclysm (ὑποίχος suggests) may resemble a flood, the primordial flood itself does not play a part in the story. This is an eschatological vision, and so the echo of Cain and Abel, the blood poured out on the ground, leads directly into the destruction of the final days. What is interesting is that in this thoroughly eschatological context the blood of Abel still serves as explanation for the destruction that is coming upon the people. How does *Sib. Or.* 3 get from the echo of Cain and Abel to the eschatological cataclysm? In the logic of *1 Enoch*, which connects Cain’s bloodshed to the flood and thence to the cataclysm, we find the missing intermediate step. Again, there is evidence here of an interpretive tradition. The idea of innocent blood shed like the blood of Abel and leading to destruction appears here in an entirely eschatological variation and apart from its Enochic context – but coloured by the logic and even the language of *1 Enoch*’s Cain/blood-flood/judgement progression, in a poem that shows other signs of familiarity with the world of *1 Enoch* 6-11.

*Sib. Or.* 3 also departs from *1 Enoch* and the other instantiations of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement theme that we have seen so far in its focus on the Gentiles. *1 Enoch* 1 makes it clear that the judgement that comes upon the violent in *1 Enoch* 10 is the judgement that will come upon the wicked in Israel. So, too, in CD: the perpetrators of bloodshed are the wicked
within Israel. In Sib. Or. 3 the wicked are Gentiles, who pour out the blood of righteous Israel. This is Sib. Or.’s distinctive application of a common theme: for Sib. Or. 3, as for 1 Enoch and Jubilees and CD, wickedness may be summed up in terms of blood poured out upon the earth, a bloodshed that began with Cain and Abel. Bloodshed like Cain’s is the problem, whether the perpetrators are Israelites or Gentiles. Again, it is noteworthy that although the theme’s application is different, its logic is the same: from innocent blood, of which Abel’s blood is the prototype, to the cataclysm. This is a tradition of interpretation: it is visibly related to 1 Enoch 6-11, but it also has a life beyond its original setting.

Finally, in 1 Enoch (6-11 and 85-90) the flood and judgement that follow upon bloodshed yield to restoration. For the righteous, for the sheep of Israel – even perhaps for the world more widely (cf. 1 En. 10:21-22, 90:33) – the aftermath of judgement is a new creation. The end of the story that begins with the blood of Abel and culminates in the flood is hope. In Sib. Or.’s treatment of the blood-judgement theme, however, there is little sign of hope. For Babylon, for Gog and Magog, for Libya, the story ends with destruction. “Then you will be as you were before,” the oracle announces to Babylon, “as if you had not been” (3.310). “Woe to you, land of Gog and Magog….Your dewy earth will drink black blood” (3.319-22). “Woe to you Libya,…All your land will be desolate and your cities desolate ruins” (3.323-333). Only in the case of Egypt is there a hint of restoration after judgement: after affliction and sword, scattering

85 So too, by implication, in Jubilees 4, 5-6 and 7 (cf. 10): though it is the primordial history that is told it is continu-ally intertwined with Israel’s history so that, for instance, God’s commandments to Noah after the flood are uttered in the words of Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

86 In its application of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement schema to the Gentiles, with Israel as the people whose blood has been shed, Sib. Or. 3 is in fact anomalous in the literature in which the theme occurs. In every other case (with the partial exception of Wisdom of Solomon) both those who shed blood and those whose blood are shed belong within Israel or, in Jude, within the Christ-following community.

87 See Donaldson, Judaism and the Gentiles, 87-90, and above Chapter 4, p. 116 and n. 50.
and death and famine, in the seventh generation of kings, “then you will rest” (3.318). In this phrase there is a suggestion that Israel’s hope is broad enough to have a place even for the Gentiles who have been her oppressors.

In this work of Egyptian Judaism, far removed as it likely is in language and place of origin from ¹Enoch, a particular form of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement theme again emerges. Blood cries out to heaven like the blood of Abel, bringing on the judgement of God. Sib. Or. 3 renders the Enochic theme in its own way: its Cain/blood-flood/judgement theme is both related to ¹Enoch and independent of it. The Enochic association of Cain’s bloodshed and the flood (which becomes the eschatological judgement) has become a way of seeing, no longer embedded in the Watchers story, shaped by Sib. Or. 3’s distinctive perspective even as it gives that perspective voice.

---

88 This note of hope for the Gentiles in the time after the seventh generation of kings coincides with the suggestion of restoration for the Gentiles in the other “seventh king” oracles (3.191-95, 608-623). In both of these the restoration of the Jews, or the eschatological triumph of God, inaugurates a time in whose blessings of righteousness and of plenty the Gentiles share. See Donaldson, Judaism and the Gentiles, 118-120.
89 For another instance of a Cain-flood/judgement tradition in Egyptian Judaism see Appendix 2: Wisdom of Solomon.
IV. Susanna

George Brooke, in “Susanna and Paradise Regained” has shown that Susanna reads as a reversal of the “Eve in the garden” story of Genesis 3. Sarah Pearce independently demonstrated that Susanna provides an “explicit contrast” to Eve. This reversal, or contrast, is accomplished by assimilating the narrative of Susanna to the narrative of Genesis 3. As Brooke and Pearce both show, there is extensive overlap of vocabulary in a story set in a garden (παράδεισος, cf. Gen 2:8 and Gen 3:2 et passim) about a woman whose beauty is lush and desirable (καλή, Sus θ 2, 31; τρυφερά, OG/θ 31, cf. Gen 3:6 καλόν; Gen 3:23 παράδεισος της τρυφής); and beguiles (ἀπατάω, OG/θ 56, cf. Gen 3:13) elders who seek to force her into an action that is (like the taking of the fruit in Genesis) death to her. By her risky refusal, a refusal that is obedience to the commandments of God, she – and the people – are saved from shedding “innocent blood” (Sus 62). So, as Brooke concludes, “The Eden narrative is reversed; paradise is regained…Just as through Eve’s disobedience death came into the world, so through a woman’s obedience vindication is shown to be available for all who fear God and stand under the authority of the Law.”

Brooke’s compelling argument raises a question. If Susanna has Genesis 3 in mind, so that the faithfulness of the woman in the garden stands at the centre of the story, why does the


91 For the vocabulary shared by Susanna and Genesis 3 see Brooke, “Paradise Regained,” 103-108. He lists also “ashamed/not ashamed” (the elders, θ 11; Adam and Eve before the fruit, Gen 2:25); “hiding” (θ 16, 18, 37, 42; Gen 3:8, 10); “fear” (θ 2, OG/θ 57; Gen 3:10); the parallel between Gen 3:6, where the tree is καλόν and pleasing to the eyes and desirable for wisdom and the description of Susanna, who is not only καλή but also “the reason for the elders turning their eyes from heaven (v 9) and the one whose wisdom is to fear the Lord (v 2)” (108-109). There are also parallel motifs: in both narratives two trees, and a sword that cleaves the elder in Susanna and blocks the way to the tree of life in Genesis; the punishment of the elders is based on a word play on their names as is, in part, the punishment of Adam and Eve in Genesis; both are, in their own ways, stories about marriage. The effect, Brooke argues, is to create in Susanna a narrative so saturated with the words and themes of Genesis 3 as to invite the reader to hear it against the background of Genesis – “to portray the possibility of Paradise regained and in Susanna herself a Second Eve” (109).

92 Brooke, “Paradise Regained,” 111.
story come to its climax in the cry of “innocent blood”? “I am innocent of this woman’s blood”: Daniel’s words are the pivotal moment in the narrative.93 With this cry the action stops and the course of the narrative is reversed: the death that was going to be the innocent Susanna’s becomes the death of the wicked elders. Indeed, the point of the story, according to its end, is precisely this reversal: “So innocent blood was saved on that day” (Sus 62). While it is clear that Susanna recalls Eve, it is intriguing that the story moves in this way beyond the story of Eve to the question of bloodshed – for this is precisely the movement of the primordial narrative. Eve’s disobedience is followed by the story of Cain and the blood of Abel. Might we, that is, add to George Brooke’s insight? It is not only the episode of Eve that Susanna reenacts and reverses, but the bloodshed that in Genesis follows.

I propose that Susanna does indeed follow the trajectory of Genesis’ primordial history, incorporating both the sin in the garden and the bloodshed that follows. It does so, however, not simply by recourse to Genesis, but through the lens of 1 Enoch. Susanna’s story, even before it raises the problem of innocent blood, contains elements that are not present in the Eden story. If this is a reprise of the story of Eve, why, as Robert Doran asks, the motif of the false accusation of adultery against an innocent woman?94 Whence, one might also ask, the lecherous elders? Nickelsburg finds the source for the adultery motif in the Joseph story, which has echoes also in Daniel proper; Mackenzie points out that with adultery, the Susanna story fills out the trio of sins in Daniel: unclean food, idolatry and now unchastity.95 I suggest that the answer lies in 1 Enoch.

Concinnities between the narrative of Susanna and the narrative of 1 Enoch 6-11, as well as

---

93 Sus 46 8. In the OG Daniel says, “Are you so foolish, sons of Israel? Did you condemn to death a daughter of Israel without…knowing the facts?” (Sus 48 OG; translations of Susanna in this chapter are generally my own). Though the term innocent blood is not used, the point is the same: Susanna has been wrongly condemned to death.


occasional and striking verbal echoes, give rise to the possibility that the story of the Watchers and the women, itself in part a reflection on Genesis 3, lies in the background of the story of Susanna.\footnote{For echoes of Genesis 3 in 1 Enoch 6-11 see Hamilton, “Blood and Secrets: The Retelling of Genesis 1-6 in 1 Enoch 6-11 and Its Echoes in Susanna and the Gospel of Matthew,” in The Synoptic Gospels (ed. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias; vol. 1 of ‘What Does the Scripture Say?’ Studies in the Function of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity; ed. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias; SSEJC 17; London: T&T Clark, 2012), 90-141, esp. 99-105.} Genesis 3 is in Susanna filtered through an Enochic lens. In the same way, the theme of innocent blood in Susanna suggests the influence not only of Genesis’ sequence (from Eve to Cain’s bloodshed) but of 1 Enoch’s: innocent blood is the other problem in paradise, and it threatens destruction for the whole people. We will examine first the echoes in Susanna of 1 Enoch’s Watchers and women story, and then consider Susanna’s theme of innocent blood.

i. Angels and Elders: Illicit Desire

Susanna begins with a beautiful woman (γυνὴ...καλὴ, Sus 3; γυνὴ ἁστεία, 7/8 OG).\footnote{I take ἃ to be a later version of the story, certainly using the Old Greek and expanding upon it. See Carey A. Moore, Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 44; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977), 79-84. Moore makes a good case for an independent Semitic Vorlage for both LXX and ἃ; in any case, ἃ’s narrative is faithful to the thrust and character of the Old Greek. Occasionally the Old Greek seems closer to the text of 1 Enoch, but the correlation with 1 Enoch 6-11 that I seek to demonstrate is evident in both.} That she is the wife of one of the “sons of Israel” is stressed in the Old Greek; that she is also a daughter (θυγάτηρ) is stressed in ἃ (2, 3). She is, in any case, out of bounds. Enter two elders, judges in the community of Israel in Babylon. Seeing the beautiful woman, they desire her (ἐπιθυμήσαντες σὺν ἑ, 7/8 OG; ἐπιθυμία σὺν, ἃ 14). “And they turned aside their mind and bent down their eyes so as not to look at heaven or to be mindful of just judgements” (9 OG/ℏ), Susanna recounts. At first they hide their shameful / wicked (ἡ σχύνοντο, 11 ἃ; τὸ κακὸν, 11 OG) desire; nor, the Old Greek adds, does the woman know about “this business” (τὸ πράγμα τοῦτο, 11 OG). But when the elders discover their mutual passion, they make a pact: “and one said to the other,” the Old Greek relates, “‘Let us go in to her,’ and having made a pact
they went to her and tried to force her” (καὶ ἐἶπεν ἐῖς τῷ ἐτέρῳ Πορευθῶμεν πρὸς αὐτὴν· καὶ συνθέμενοι προσήλθοσαν αὐτῇ καὶ ἔξεβιαζοῦτο αὐτῇν, 19 OG; cf. 7:14: καὶ τότε κοινὴ συνετάξαντο καιρὸν…).

All this parallels, in word and deed, the beginning of the story of the Watchers and the women. The plot unfolds in the same way, and in the same words: it begins with beautiful women (καλαὶ, 1 En. 6:1; γυνῆ, 6:2, 7:1), daughters (θυγατέρες 6:1) of the sons of men (υἱοὶ τῶν ἄνθρωπῶν, 6:1) who ought to be out of bounds; the angels (like the judges, power figures) see them and desire them (ἐπεθύμησαν αὐτᾶς, 6:2) and in doing so, turn their eyes away from heaven (the “sons of heaven,” the text specifies, look [down] upon the “daughters of men”). Knowing their desire is a “great sin” they make a pact with each other to do “this deed” (τὸ πράγμα τοῦτο, 1 En. 6:3). Then they go in to the women (εἰσπορεύεσθαι πρὸς αὐτᾶς, 7:1) and, in 1 Enoch, the story of bloodshed and the earth’s devastation begins.

Susanna’s story of the lustful elders thus resembles, in its overall shape and even in its vocabulary, 1 Enoch’s story of the Watchers and the women. There are several more striking similarities. In both stories, the woman is trapped by the wicked desire of the judges/angels. In 1 Enoch, the angels simply “take” the women, with the result that death visits the earth in the bloody rampage of their giant children. For Susanna, the only choice is death: either the death of sin, death before God, or immediate death at the hands of the thwarted elders.

Again, both texts describe the situation of the victims – the people in the hands of the giants and Susanna in the hands of the elders – in the same terms: as the groaning of the trapped. When the archangels finally hear the cry of the slaughtered in 1 Enoch they say to God, “And now behold, their groaning (ὁ στέναγμος αὐτῶν) has gone up and they cannot get out from the

---

98 The angels say to each other, “Δεῦτε ἐκλεξόμεθα ἐσοτείν γυναίκας” and they bind each other with an oath not to turn aside until they have done this deed (1 En. 6:2, 4).
face of the lawlessness (τῶν ἀνομματῶν; ἀδικημάτων [syn]) that has come to pass upon earth” (1 En. 9:10 Grk [a] and [syn]). Susanna, surrounded by the lecherous elders (called frequently “the lawless ones,” οἱ ἀνομοὶ Sus 35a OG, cf. 28 OG; θ 5, 28, 32, 57), cries out – groans in θ (ἀνεστέναξεν) and says, “Στενά μοι πάντοθεν (θ 22): I am hemmed in on every side.” “For if I do this, it is death to me, and if I do not do it, I shall not escape from your hands” (22 OG and θ). Susanna, like the children of earth, is trapped by lawlessness and cannot get out.

ii. The Blood of the Innocent

Secondly, in both stories the desire of the angels or the elders leads to innocent blood; in both stories, in fact, the blood of the innocent becomes the problem that haunts the narrative. In 1 Enoch 6-11, the angels’ giant offspring devour people and drink blood until the earth cries out (7:6). It is precisely the blood of people poured out upon the earth, crying out for justice, that finally gets the attention of the archangels (9:1). Susanna thwarts the elders’ desire, and so they seek her blood. 1 Enoch makes it clear that the blood that has been poured out is innocent blood, blood shed unjustly, blood that “makes accusation,” crying out to heaven for requital; those who shed it are the “ἀνομοὶ,” the lawless, the unjust (1 En. 7:6 Grk [a]; cf. 9:10). At its critical moment, Susanna’s narrative likewise names the problem one of blood unjustly shed, the blood of the innocent that (because it is innocent) demands requital. When Susanna has been condemned and is being led off to death, Daniel protests: “ἀθέως ἔγρω,” he cries in θ, “ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀιματος ταύτης”: I am innocent of this woman’s blood. In the OG he says, more explicitly, to Israel: “Sons of Israel – you fools! Have you condemned a daughter of Israel without knowing the facts?” (OG 48). To the judges he says: “You condemned the innocent

99 θ 46. Vaticanus has ἀθέως; Joseph Ziegler (Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999]) reads ἀθέως, citing Sus 53 and Exod 23:7, and Matt 27:24, all of which use ἀθέως. All manuscripts except the Codex Vaticanus have καθαρός here. Rahlfs, with most commentators, reads καθαρός. The implication in either case is that this is the blood of an innocent person; it is shed unjustly. Therefore it is necessary for the just judge to be “innocent” or “clean” of it. Innocent blood defiles those who shed it, as the word καθαρός makes clear.
(ἄθροον κατέκρινας) but let the guilty go, against the command of the Lord: ‘You shall not kill the innocent and righteous’” (Ἄθροον καὶ δίκαιον οὐκ ἀποκτενεῖς, OG/θ 53; cf. Exod 23:7). Susanna’s death is a problem of innocent blood.

In both 1 Enoch and Susanna, bloodshed – the blood of those murdered by devouring giants and weapons of war; the blood of the innocent woman condemned to death – follows upon illicit desire and brings the story to its crisis. In both cases, this bloodshed is also injustice. In Susanna it is obviously the result of unjust judgement engineered by corrupt judges; in 1 Enoch the giants devour people who are helpless against them and the earth, covered with blood, raises a cry for justice (1 En. 9:1-3). The angels say, “the whole earth has been filled with blood and oppression,” ὡς ἡ γῆ ἐπλήσθη σίματος καὶ ἀδικίας, 1 En. 9:9 Grk [a]). This is not just any bloodshed, not the violence of warfare or just execution, but “innocent blood”: murder, judicial or otherwise.

Because it is unjustly shed, this blood of the innocent is also defiling. As, in 1 Enoch, the earth cries out at the blood that has been poured out upon it and must be cleansed, so in Susanna the shedding of innocent blood is connected, in various ms. traditions, with defilement. “καθαρός ἐγώ,” I am “clean” (literally) of this bloodshed, Daniel says in all versions except Vaticanus. The ms. traditions, that is, understand Daniel’s statement of innocence in the shedding of Susanna’s blood (ἀθρόος ἐγώ, probably the original reading) to be also a statement about the defiling character of innocent blood. Daniel seeks to be “clean” of the stain of innocent blood. It would seem, given the predominance of the reading “καθαρός,” that defilement was,

100 In Gen 6:11 LXX, ἀδικία renders the MT’s דמון, “violence;” καὶ ἐπλήσθη ἡ γῆ ἀδικίας (Gen 6:11 LXX). 1 En. 9:9 Grk [a] seems to echo this verse. The obvious meaning of ἀδικία is “unjust deed,” wrongdoing. As its use at Gen 6:11 makes clear, however, the sense of “harm, hurt” and so of oppression is within its semantic field. Cf. Luke 10:19 (ἀδικέω) and Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains (ed. J.P. Louw and E.A. Nida; 2 vols.; repr.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1989/1988), 20.25; 1.231. 1 Enoch, as we have noted, parses the LXX’s generic “violence/injustice” with “blood.”
in the matter of innocent blood, a primary concern. Similarly in the OG the desire of the elders is described (in what is probably an insertion) as “defiling”: ἡ μιαρά ἐπιθυμία (OG 56). This is Daniel’s accusation against the second elder; the parallel accusation against the first elder puts “desire” in the context of innocent blood: “Your sins have now come home, which you have committed in the past, pronouncing unjust judgements, condemning the innocent and acquitting the guilty, though the Lord said, ‘You shall not put an innocent and righteous person to death’” (52-53). Illicit desire leads to innocent blood; defilement is all around. Indeed, the word μιαρά means, in origin, “stained with blood.” That μιαρά is probably an insertion makes the point: this editor, and the copyists who preserved this reading, associated the sins of the elders – their desire and the innocent blood to which it leads – with blood-defilement. The story of Susanna is a story stained by blood. In both Susanna and 1 Enoch 6-11 the consequence of (defiling) desire is the bloodshed that defiles: the blood of murdered humans that does in fact cry out from the ground in 1 Enoch for cleansing; the innocent blood of Susanna whose stain Daniel refuses and that is, by Susanna’s prayer and his intervention, saved.

iii. The Scope of Innocent Blood: Judgement and Salvation

Further, the consequences in both cases are severe. The earth stained by blood cries out in 1 Enoch and the whole earth is destroyed (10:2). The giants and rebel angels alike come under judgement; the giants devour each other, as they have devoured human beings, in “a war of destruction” (1 En. 10:9) When, in Susanna, Daniel declares this woman’s death a matter of

---

101 Cf. 1 En. 7:1, where the angels’ desire is also defiling. The angels, going in to the women, defile themselves with them (μιανίζονται ἐν αὐτάς, Grk). The word μιανόμενος means, in origin, “stain”, as μιαρά means “stained by blood.” We are in a world where sin (in both cases taking the form of desire and then bloodshed) is concretely defiling; it stains the person and the earth.

The phrase ἡ μιαρά ἐπιθυμία is likely secondary. Rahlfs includes it; Joseph Ziegler’s 1999 edition prefers the reading μιαρά (Sy) and brackets the whole three-word phrase (contrast Ziegler’s 1926 edition [Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1926)], which retains μιαρά). Whether or not the phrase is original, it is a faithful reading of the narrative. With its overtones of blood-defilement it is consistent with Susanna’s interest in the problem of innocent blood and the defilement associated with it.
innocent blood, the whole story stops. At his words, πᾶς ὁ λαός, the whole people, turn in their tracks to hear his charge. The narrative, that is, highlights the danger of innocent blood. Why is it important for Daniel to declare his innocence? Because those who kill the innocent by unjust judgement or, like Joab, by weapons of war, have innocent blood upon their heads. There is no recourse, in the case of innocent blood, except by the blood of the one who has shed it (Gen 9:5-6; Num 35:31-33). Nor is it only the individual who suffers the consequences of innocent blood.

“[Y]ou shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer…You shall not pollute the land in which you live; for blood pollutes the land…” (Num 35:31-33). Innocent blood pollutes the land and the people as a whole bears the consequences. In Daniel’s dismay, in the phrase πᾶς ὁ λαός, Susanna summons up this scriptural vision, the cost of innocent blood not just for the individual but for the land as a whole. “These men have born false witness against her,” Daniel says to the people. And πᾶς ὁ λαός – the narrative repeats the phrase – the whole people, already on their way to stone Susanna, “turn around with haste.” For innocent blood, in the vision of Leviticus 17-26 and Numbers 35, will pollute the land, will stain the city and the παράδεισος in which the woman walks, and the people will bear its cost. Like Cain, perhaps, they will be “cursed from the ground that has opened its mouth to receive the blood” of a sister from their hand; the land itself may cast them out (Gen 4:11; cf. Num 35:33-34 and Lev 18:25-28). There is more at stake here, the narrative suggests, than the wrongful death of one woman. The whole people are at risk, together with their life in the garden.

As in 1 Enoch, here too the question of innocent blood brings us back to creation and the garden, and the walk with God. The urgent question that underlies the whole story is this: shall the people be saved? What will become of the garden where the people gather? The narrative of Susanna θ sets up precisely this question at the story’s beginning. In the beginning there is the παράδεισος, the home of the most worthy man and the woman who fears the Lord, the
beautiful garden where all the people gather (Sus 2:4). Enter, then, the elders: “concerning whom the Lord said ‘Wickedness went out from Babylon, from elders who were judges, who were supposed to govern the people’” (Sus 2:5). The garden, that earthly paradise, like the ordered world of God’s creation in 1 Enoch, is under threat, drawn into corruption by the presence in it of the wicked elders. Their wickedness – their hypocrisy, their lust, their anger, their thirst for blood – culminates in “innocent blood”: the wrongful condemnation of the innocent woman. Here is the fruit and sum of ἀνομία in the garden: the blood that taints paradise, the expulsion from the garden that looms, unspoken, over the people. Therefore the people stop in their tracks at Daniel’s cry; therefore the story ends with a vast sigh of relief: “and innocent blood was saved on that day (62).” Therefore the story ends with the whole people’s deliverance: “Then the whole assembly [πᾶσα ἡ συναγωγή] raised a great shout and blessed God, who saves those who hope in him” (2:60). It is not just that Susanna has been saved. It is that innocent blood, with its vast consequences for land and people, was not shed. If with the elders’ arrival the garden stands under threat, corrupted by the wickedness that culminates in innocent blood, with Susanna’s prayer (as we will see) and Daniel’s intervention innocent blood and the garden are saved.

This is, in fact, the progression that marks the narrative of 1 Enoch. Both stories describe the παράδεισος, the ordered world of God’s creation (cf. 1 Enoch 2-5), under threat, suffering at the hands of powers who pervert their proper role: angels who take mortal women; judges who are lawless. Both stories sum up that threat in the image of the blood of the innocent; both stories move through corruption and innocent blood to a final purgation and restoration. There is this difference: in Susanna innocent blood is not shed. In 1 Enoch the women are helpless against

---

102 Compare, in OG 63, the praise for youths from Israel as a whole: “therefore youths are beloved to Jacob”; “let us preserve for ourselves youths of power as sons.” Daniel’s wisdom has served and saved the whole people.
the rebel angels and mingle with them, and the earth is defiled by blood and secrets alike. Only
in the wake of blood and defilement and destruction, only by an eschatological act of God, is
there renewal, and a return to the garden and the walk with God. In Susanna, the woman, though
helpless against the errant judges, nevertheless does not accede to their wickedness. Instead she
prays, and at her prayer God acts and Daniel intervenes to save the people from shedding
innocent blood. The restoration, in Susanna, is this-worldly; because of the faithfulness of the
woman and the wisdom of the young man it need not wait until the eschaton. But it is, just as in
*1 Enoch*, a restoration. As in *1 Enoch* the rebel angels are cast out and imprisoned and the giants
destroyed and the earth healed so that it may be again a paradise, so in Susanna the elders are
punished with the death they would have meted out to the innocent woman, and “no shameful
thing” is found in Susanna or, any longer, in the garden.

This happy ending, the restoration of innocence in the garden, comes about in both *1
Enoch* and Susanna in the same way. In both stories it is a prayer uttered at the critical moment,
a prayer prompted by innocent blood, which moves the narrative to its resolution: in *1 Enoch*, the
prayer of the angels as they look down upon the bloodied earth; in Susanna, the woman’s prayer
as she faces the shedding of her own blood. Susanna’s brief prayer at the moment of her
condemnation (or of her trial, in OG) is the hinge on which the plot turns, away from blood,
toward salvation: “and the Lord heard her prayer,” the narrative reads (*Sus* θ 44, *OG* 35a).103 In
the wake of her prayer, at the moment she is about to die, Daniel prompted by God cries out
against the shedding of her innocent blood, and the time of reckoning for the judges arrives. In
the same way, the angels’ prayer in *1 Enoch* occurs as they see “much blood being poured out
upon the earth”; their prayer prompts, finally, God’s act. At their prayer the narrative turns from

---

103 Καὶ εἰσῆκουσαν κύριος τῆς φωνῆς αὐτῆς (*Sus* θ 44); καὶ εἰσῆκουσε κύριος τῆς δεήσεως αὐτῆς (*Sus* *OG* 35a).
the bloody hegemony of the rebel angels and their brood to the cataclysm in which the rebels are overthrown: the flood and final judgement that cleanses and restores the earth.

As it serves the same narrative function (to turn the plot), so too Susanna’s prayer echoes the final words of the angels’ prayer in 1 Enoch 9. Κύριε ὁ θεὸς ὁ σιώνιος, Susanna says, Lord God Eternal, you “who know all things before they come to be (ὁ εἴδως τὰ πάντα πρὶν γενέσεως σύνων, 35a OG; 42/43 ὦ); you know that I did not do what these lawless men have wickedly brought against me.”104 Her prayer is simply this: a witness to her unjust death before the God who knows all things. There is no petition, no plea for help. It is rather a bald statement of the inconcinnity of things, of the gap between what is – innocent blood being shed – and the omniscience and omnipotence of God.

So, too, in 1 Enoch. The angels, praying to the one who is “Lord of Lords and God of Gods and eternal king (βασιλεὺς τῶν σιώνων)” (1 En. 9:4) state the facts: the whole earth is filled with blood and injustice, and the souls of the dead cry out and their groaning goes up to the gates of heaven, and they cannot escape the lawlessness that reigns upon earth. And you, they conclude, “know all things before they come to be and you see these things and allow them, and you do not tell us what we are to do” (1 En. 9:9-11). Σὺ πάντα οἶδας πρὸ τοῦ αὐτᾶ γένεσθαι: the statement is the same, in 1 Enoch and Susanna. Though God’s omniscience is a common theme in Jewish prayers of petition,105 nowhere else is it said exactly like this. Further, as Nickelsburg notes, only here, only in 1 Enoch 9 and Sus 42-43, is there no petition.106 Susanna, caught like the women of 1 Enoch and their world in the vise of unjust powers, in an earth

---

104 (OG 35a); “and behold,” ὦ 43 reads, “I am going to die, though I have not done any of the things which these men have wickedly brought against me.
105 Cf., for instance, AddEsth 13:12, 14:15-16; Jdt 9:5-6, TMos 12:4-5 and the helpful chart in Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 206.
106 Nickelsburg, ibid.
threatened by innocent blood, makes, like the angels, a plea that is no plea but simply the cry of
the innocent in the hands of the unjust to the all-knowing God.

God, in both stories, acts. In both cases innocent blood leads to destruction for the
ungodly and for the righteous restoration: the movement is from innocent blood to flood or
judgement. In 1 Enoch God sends the angel with a message of punishment and restoration: the
coming flood and the imprisonment of the rebel angels and the healing of the earth. In Sus OG
(44-45) God sends by an angel a spirit of understanding to Daniel (or, in θ 45, awakens a holy
spirit in Daniel), enabling Daniel’s witness and the punishment of the elders and Susanna’s
deliverance, which is the salvation of the people too. The elders meet a fate like that of 1
Enoch’s rebel angels: they are, in the OG, gagged and led away and cast into a chasm (cf. 1 En.
10:4-5, 10-13). Here is a hint not only of 1 Enoch’s angels but of the cosmic scope of the story:
we have to do, in innocent blood, with life and death, with heaven and the subterranean depths,
with πᾶς ὄ λαός, the whole people and their fate. “And innocent blood was saved on that day,”
the narrative triumphantly concludes. This is the happy ending of the story of the garden and the
elders and the beautiful – and faithful – woman, and the story’s point. Where in 1 Enoch, as
indeed in Genesis 4, blood has already been shed and the earth with the voice of Abel has cried
out and must be destroyed before it can be healed, here by the steadfastness of the woman,
n innocence and the garden are preserved.

If this is a story that reverses Genesis 3 and the tale of the first woman in the garden, it is
also a story that reverses, even as it echoes, 1 Enoch 6-11 and the story of Cain and Abel that
informs it. Innocent blood shall not be shed, and the earth and the people shall not be made

---

107 Sarah Pearce tentatively suggests a “demonic identification” of the elders in the detail of gagging or binding
(φιμώκω, OG 62), citing 1 En. 10:4 among other witnesses to the binding of demons in apocryphal and pseudepi-
graphic literature (“Echoes of Eden,” 29 n.48.) In fact, the parallel between the rebel angels in 1 Enoch 10 and the
elders in OG Sus goes beyond “binding”: elders and angels alike are also led away and thrown into a pit (cf. 1 En.
10:4-5, 10-13). I would say the identification, not just with demons but with 1 Enoch, is clear.
desolate, because the woman is faithful. Whereas *1 Enoch* turns the human story of Genesis into a cosmic drama of angels and giants and an earth that looks to the eschatological action of God for its healing, Susanna takes up the problem of evil powers and innocent blood and humanizes it again. Evil and salvation alike are matters of this world, present-tense rather than eschatological. The garden is the home of the faithful Judahite, and the powers are Israel’s unjust judges, and the woman who is both powerless and true becomes the source, not of bloodshed and the people’s devastation, but of its salvation. “And innocent blood was saved on that day.”

Even in Susanna’s reverse version, however, the shape of *1 Enoch* and the blood-flood traditions is evident. Here is fable that enacts again the primordial history, beginning (it is true) with the temptation in the garden, but moving to the shedding of innocent blood. Blood is the climactic problem; it is the sum and chief instance of the evil that corrupts the good land. “I am innocent of this woman’s blood!”: on these words the whole story turns. Further, Susanna moves (like *1 Enoch* 6-11 and also like Genesis) from temptation to bloodshed: the blood of the innocent follows upon the elders’ illicit desire. In this it is like both *1 Enoch* 6-11 and Genesis 3-4 (which, we have argued, *1 Enoch* echoes). Though the narrative does not name Cain or even allude to the blood of Abel, nevertheless bloodshed is the problem in paradise. Susanna, that is, seems to read the primordial history with eyes influenced by a logic like *1 Enoch*’s, where Cain’s bloodshed serves, in the retelling of Genesis, as chief and paradigmatic sin. Finally, Susanna moves, in the footsteps of *1 Enoch* and like the blood-flood traditions, from innocent blood to judgement: the threat of devastation, followed by restoration. It is a human story, and so it is the judges who are cast into the chasm to meet their doom, and not rebel angels; it is not flood that threatens or the world’s fate that hangs in the balance but only the well-being of the people in the garden. But the sequence is the same: from blood to threatened destruction.
And though it is “only” the people in the garden whose fate hangs on innocent blood, yet these are “πᾶς ὁ λαός,” the whole people. On Susanna’s fate a larger fate rests, the fate of the people in the land. Susanna’s story is a kind of figure: this is a narrative about good and evil in the lives of human beings that encompasses not only Joachim and Susanna and the people who meet in the garden, but the primordial garden and πᾶς ὁ λαός. It is a narrative that speaks to the fate of the people of God, and it locates the critical moment in the decision for or against bloodshed. It does so against the background of Genesis’ primordial narrative and according to the logic of I Enoch: it places bloodshed and the judgement that follows – destruction for the corrupt leaders and for the people salvation – at the centre of the story.

108 Cf. Deuteronomy 27-30, and the blessings and curses pronounced over the people upon their entrance into the land, to which “all the people” say “Amen!” All the people is, in the LXX, πᾶς ὁ λαός. See further Chapter 8, pp. 298-302.
V. Pseudo-Philo

In Pseudo-Philo’s retelling of the biblical history from Adam to Saul, the rebellion of Korah features prominently.\(^\text{109}\) Pseudo-Philo makes several changes to the biblical story. \textit{L.A.B.} 16 takes the rebellion to be prompted by the adjacent story of the law of the tassels, whereas in Num 16:1-3 Korah objects to Moses’ and Aaron’s authority.\(^\text{110}\) \textit{L.A.B.} omits the episode of the censers and Dathan and Abiram, Korah’s partners in crime, and introduces Korah’s seven sons whose faithfulness provides a contrast to Korah.\(^\text{111}\) And – most notably, for our purposes – it introduces Cain and his bloodshed, and the flood. All the elements of the blood-flood sequence as it appears in \textit{1 Enoch} 6-11 are present in Pseudo-Philo. Cain’s murder of Abel and the earth that swallows Abel’s blood serve as a kind of historical precursor and type of Korah’s rebellion and its consequence, the earth that opens its mouth to swallow Korah: the two episodes are linked, in \textit{L.A.B.’s} telling, in the providence of God. In the time of Cain “the older rose up and killed the younger, and the earth quickly swallowed up his blood”; now in the time of Korah God says, “And now the thoughts of men are very corrupt; behold I command the earth, and it will swallow up body and soul together” (\textit{L.A.B.} 16:2-3).\(^\text{112}\)

\(^{109}\) Korah’s rebellion (Numbers 16) gets its own chapter (\textit{L.A.B.} 16). The entire book of Leviticus, by contrast, is covered in less than one chapter (\textit{L.A.B.} 13:2-10), and we arrive at Numbers 16 after only two chapters covering Numbers 1-15. By chapter 19, we have arrived at Deuteronomy. Pseudo-Philo shows a similar interest in Genesis’ primeval history, to which it refers in Korah’s story. Genesis 1-11 is spread over seven chapters, while the rest of Genesis, including the Joseph story, is telescoped into a single chapter (\textit{L.A.B.} 8:1-14).


\(^{111}\) Korah’s seven sons recall 2 Maccabees 7 and the exemplary faithfulness there of the mother and her seven sons in the face of death. Fred J. Murphy (\textit{Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible} [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 82) argues that \textit{L.A.B.} 16 rewrites Numbers 16 as a trial scene after the pattern of 2 Maccabees 6-7, noting several parallels between \textit{L.A.B.} 16 and 2 Maccabees 6-7. Among them, the words of Korah’s sons (\textit{L.A.B.} 16:5) resemble the mother’s words to her sons in 2 Macc 7:22b-23.

\(^{112}\) Translations of \textit{L.A.B.} follow Harrington; where they differ from Harrington they are my own. I have omitted Harrington’s italics.
The connection *L.A.B.* makes between Korah and Cain is, in the first place, exegetical. *L.A.B.* quotes Numbers to describe Korah’s punishment, the consequence of his rebellion: “And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up them and their households” (*L.A.B.* 16:6, cf. Num 16:32: “The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up [חָלֵב מַעֲשֵׂה הָאָדָם], along with their households…”). This is what Moses has said will happen in Numbers 16:30: “If the Lord creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up (הָאָדָם מַעֲשֵׂה לְפִיכָהּ) with all that belongs to them, and they go alive down to Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the Lord” (Num 16:30). In Num 16:30 “ground” ( Thrones) is used instead of “earth” (سيرא, 16:32) to describe the same event.

This phrase, “the ground opened its mouth,” occurs also in Genesis. There it describes Cain’s sin and its consequence: “And the Lord said, ‘What have you done? Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground! And now cursed are you from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood (הָאָדָם מַעֲשֵׂה לְפִיכָהּ) from your hand” (Gen 4:10-11). Pseudo-Philo finds in these words an anticipation of Korah’s story, the two verses (Num 16:30 and Gen 4:11) linked by the repeated words “ground” and “opens its mouth.” So in its retelling of Cain’s story *L.A.B.* combines the two verses, from Gen (4:11) and Numbers (16:30). Taking Numbers’ “swallow up” (בִּלְבַּלְבָּה) to spell out Genesis’ “opens its mouth to receive,” Pseudo-Philo slightly re-writes Genesis 4:11 so that Korah’s story becomes a direct echo of it: “the earth swallowed up [Abel’s] blood” (terra deglutivit sanguinem eius, *L.A.B.* 16:2; cf. 16:6: “the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up
Pseudo-Philo perceives another exegetical link between the story of Korah in Numbers and the story of Cain in Genesis. In Numbers, the earth’s opening its mouth is an act of creation: “If the Lord creates something new,” Moses says, “and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up…” (Num 16:30). Cain and Abel’s story likewise occurs in the context of creation, as Pseudo-Philo notes: “And God was angry [at Korah’s rebellion against the law of the tassels] and said, “I commanded the earth, and it gave me man, and to him two sons were born first of all, and the older rose up and killed the younger, and the earth quickly swallowed up his blood” (L.A.B. 16:2). Pseudo-Philo proceeds to connect Cain’s story in the creation narrative with Korah’s by repeating the words “command” and “swallow up”: “And now the thoughts of men are very corrupt; behold I command the earth, and it will swallow up body and soul together” (et nunc fortiter contaminate sunt cogitationes hominum. Ecce ego precipio terre, et deglutiet corpus et animam pariter, L.A.B. 16:3). Pseudo-Philo’s narrative spells out the link implied in Num 16:30 between Genesis’ creation story and the destruction of Korah. Korah’s fate is, in the eyes of our author, an act of the Creator God of Genesis, who commanded the earth to give life and commands it now to take life away.

113 Pseudo-Philo is not alone in reading Genesis’ “the earth opened its mouth to receive” as “the earth swallowed up.” In Tg. Yer. I Gen 4:10 the ground also “swallows up” Abel’s blood. See Murphy, Pseudo-Philo, 81 n. 97; Murphy suggests that L.A.B. draws together the stories of Cain and Korah through the idea of swallowing. But in fact the connection is made through the precisely repeated phrase “earth/ground opened its mouth.” L.A.B.’s “swallow up” then interprets Genesis’ “receive.” Howard Jacobson (A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo’s Liber Antiquitatum Bibli-carum: with Latin Text and English Translation [AGJU 31; 2 vols; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996], 1.556) identifies the exegetical link: on L.A.B. 16:2 (deglutivit sanguinem eius) he writes, “Although this is essentially implied at Gen 4:10…, the graphic verb [swallow up] is transferred from the story of Korach (Nu 16:32, 34: Vulgate deglutiat in latter verse).” (Deglutiat occurs also Vulgate Num 16:30 though Jacobson does not mention it). The Hebrew verb מרביע, he adds, is regularly used of absorbing blood in Rabbinic texts. Cain’s story and Korah’s are also linked in rabbinic commentary. Harrington (“Pseudo-Philo,” 324 n. e) notes that “b. Sanh. 37b says that the earth did not open its mouth from when it swallowed Abel’s blood until it swallowed up Korah.” Gen. Rab. on 4:11 associates Gen 4:11 “And now you are cursed” with Num 16:30 (“But if the Lord make a new thing”), though not in this case through the idea of the earth swallowing up blood but as two of three passages in which Scripture spoke in understatement.
In this same verse, Pseudo-Philo calls up the biblical story of the flood. “And now the thoughts of men are very corrupt”: this is an echo of Genesis 6. Immediately after the story of the sons of God and the daughters of men, God sees that the wickedness of humankind is great upon the earth, “and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight,” the story continues (Gen 6:11). Pseudo-Philo combines these two statements to create a single description of corruption upon the earth in a verbal echo of Gen 6:5 and 11: et nunc fortiter contaminate sunt cogitationes hominum (16:3). That Pseudo-Philo finds in the destruction of Korah another kind of flood is clear several lines later: “Their passing will be like that of…the race that I destroyed with the water of the flood” (L.A.B. 16:3). Korah’s rebellion is like the wickedness that corrupted the earth in the time of Noah, and meets the same cataclysmic judgement.

If this logic, the sequence of creation and destruction, is suggested by Num 16:30 where the creator God now commands the earth to destroy, the link between Korah’s end and the flood is new. Though there is an exegetical link with the story of Cain in Korah’s fate – the ground opening its mouth – there is no such link with the flood. The link that does exist is with the Egyptians and the crossing of the Red Sea. For in the Song of Moses, the earth “swallows up” the Egyptians as they pursue the Israelites to kill them (Exod 15:12). Pseudo-Philo notes this link: L.A.B. compares Korah’s death not only to that of the generation of the flood, but to the Egyptians: “their passing will be like that of those tribes of nations of whom I said, ‘I will not remember them,’ that is, the camp of the Egyptians and the race that I destroyed with the water of the flood. And the earth will swallow them up…” (L.A.B. 16:3). The link with the Red Sea is

114 Cf. Jub. 5:2, whose story of the flood also brings together Gen 6:5 and Gen 6:11, in an Enochic context that refers obliquely to the giants’ sin of bloodshed: “and they began to eat one another [1 En. 7:5]. And injustice grew upon the earth and every imagination of the thoughts of all mankind was thus continually evil [Gen 6:5]. And the Lord saw the earth, and behold it was corrupted and all flesh had corrupted its order [Gen 6:11].”
clear.\textsuperscript{115} But why the link with the flood? Is it simply that the Red Sea episode may be imagined as another kind of flood? Pseudo-Philo, however, does not arrive at the flood through the Red Sea episode. It arrives at the flood through the story of Cain: “I drove Cain out and cursed the earth…saying, ‘You will swallow up blood no more’”[Gen 4:11]. And now the thoughts of men are very corrupt [Gen 6:5 and 11]; behold I command the earth, and it will swallow up body and soul together” (\textit{L.A.B.} 16:2-3). The link Pseudo-Philo makes between Korah and the flood comes by way of the story of Cain.

Note that for Pseudo-Philo the primeval history moves directly from Cain to the flood. Cain and his bloodshed, and the earth that has opened its mouth to swallow up the blood of Abel, lead without pause into Genesis 6. This straight line from Cain’s bloodshed to the flood is not found in Genesis, as we have seen. It is, however, found in \textit{1 Enoch}’s reading of Genesis. There the narrative draws the same straight line from the blood that cries out from the earth like the blood of Abel, to the flood (“the whole earth was filled with blood and oppression….And then spoke the Most High….‘The Deluge is about to come upon all the earth’” (\textit{1 En}. 9:9-10:2, trans. Isaac).

In various other ways, Pseudo-Philo’s version of Korah’s rebellion recalls \textit{1 Enoch}. To be “swallowed up,” \textit{L.A.B.} ’s term for Korah’s fate, is also one of \textit{1 Enoch}’s favourite images for the flood. In the description of the flood in the \textit{Animal Apocalypse}, Enoch sees “them sinking, being swallowed up, and perishing in that water” (\textit{1 En}. 89:5), as “darkness” covers the earth (\textit{1 En}. 89:4).\textsuperscript{116} In the vision of cosmic deluge that precedes the \textit{Animal Apocalypse}, the same image

\textsuperscript{115} Cf. Isa 43:15-17 where God as creator and the Red Sea episode are also linked.

\textsuperscript{116} We are, of course, dealing with different languages. The translation “swallowed up” at \textit{1 En}. 89:5 is Isaac’s. Nickelsburg opts for the less literal “being engulfed.” But the image is the same, in Latin and in Ethiopic. For “deglutio” (\textit{L.A.B.} 16:3) as “swallow up” see, e.g., Harrington in his \textit{OTP} translation and M. R. James, \textit{The Biblical Antiquities of Philo: now first translated from the Old Latin version} [New York: Ktav, 1971], 121). Jacques Cazeaux translates, less literally, “absorber”; “absorb,” “engulf” (\textit{Les antiquités bibliques} [SC 229; Paris: Cerf, 1976],
recurs. “I saw the earth being swallowed up into the great abyss” (1 En. 83:4; both Isaac and Nickelsburg use “swallow up”). Again, this image is paired with sinking and with destruction: the world “was sinking into the abyss and being destroyed” (83:7). In the same way in L.A.B. 16:3 the earth swallows up body and soul. The rebels will dwell in “darkness” and “the place of destruction” (et erit habitatio eorum in tenebris et in perditione, 16:3). The overlap of imagery continues. “They will not die but melt away” (et non morientur sed tabescent), L.A.B. 16:3 continues. 1 Enoch 1, in its opening vision of cosmic cataclysm (a vision that finds echoes in the flood and judgement scene of 1 Enoch 10) has the high hills melt like honeycomb as the mountains fall down and everything upon the earth perishes.

More significantly, perhaps, in both 1 Enoch and Pseudo-Philo the destruction of the wicked is a two-stage process that ends in eschatological judgement. The wicked whom the earth swallows up in Pseudo-Philo and 1 Enoch alike go down to a grim abode where they exist in misery until God comes to renew the earth. Korah and his band, sunk in darkness and destruction “will not die but melt away” (L.A.B. 16:3). But this state lasts only “until I remember the world and renew the earth” (quousque rememorabor seculi et ero innovans terram, L.A.B. 16:3). “Then they will die and not live, and their life will be taken away from the number of all men. And hell will no longer spit them back” (L.A.B. 16:3). 118 So, too, in 1 Enoch 10 the flood signals a time of punishment for the rebel angels that begins now and lasts until the final judgement, when they will be destroyed, or finally punished: then “they will burn and die” (1 En. 10:14).

1.145. Since the biblical text underlying L.A.B. here (Gen 4:11; Num 16:30, 32) has the earth graphically “opening its mouth,” “swallow up” seems an appropriate translation.

115 cf. 1 En. 83:4: “hills sinking down upon the hills, and tall trees…sinking into the deep abyss.” Translations in this paragraph are Isaac’s.

118 Cf. Jub. 5:10 in its retelling of the flood story through the lens of 1 Enoch, on the two-stage judgement of the rebel angels: “And subsequently they were bound in the depths of the earth forever, until the day of great judgment in order for judgment to be executed upon all of those who corrupted their ways and their deeds before the Lord.”
Both stories, too, promise renewal as well as judgement. Pseudo-Philo simply includes renewal in the time of God’s final judgement: “until I remember the world and renew the earth” (16:3). In *I Enoch* renewal crowns the time: “every iniquitous deed will end, and the plant of righteousness and truth will appear forever and he will plant joy” (*I En.* 10:16). In both *L.A.B.* and *I Enoch*, Cain’s bloodshed, revisited in the violence of the giants in *I Enoch* 6-11 and in Korah’s rebellion in *L.A.B.* 16, leads to a destroying flood that is not only “now” but also “to come”: both immediate and also cosmic and eschatological. This is not so in Numbers, any more than Genesis 4 provides in itself the logic that links Korah to the flood. That logic, the movement from Cain’s act of bloodshed to the flood, as well as the two-stage process of punishment and the eschatological dimensions of the flood, *L.A.B.* shares with *I Enoch*.

Further, *L.A.B.* 16 reorients the primeval history so as to focus on Cain in its story of sin. Though Pseudo-Philo begins with creation and Adam (“I commanded earth and it gave me man,” 16:2), Adam plays no role except as the father of Cain and Abel. The story moves immediately from Genesis 1-2 to Genesis 4 and Cain’s murder of his brother (“and to him two sons were born first of all, and the older rose up and killed the younger,” 16:2). Genesis 3 falls out. The primal rebellion, that is, belongs not to Adam but to Cain. It is because of Cain and blood that the earth is cursed; it is Cain who having shed blood is driven out. Blood and the earth’s swallowing it becomes the cause of corruption, the problem in Paradise.

Jacobson notes that in the biblical story of Cain and Abel, God does not actually curse the earth.\(^1\) He curses Cain “from the ground” (Gen 4:11-12). It is in Genesis 3 and the story of Adam and Eve that God curses the ground. In *L.A.B.*, however, the cursing of the earth proper to Genesis 3 is transferred to the story of Cain: “But I drove Cain out and cursed the earth” for

---

\(^1\) Jacobson, *A Commentary*, 1.556. He notes that several midrashic sources likewise turn the curse against Cain at 4:11 into a curse of the earth, assigning God’s curse of the earth at 3:17 to the story of Cain. Mekhilta Beshalach [Shira 9] “amazingly actually quotes Gen. 3:17.”
swallowing up blood. Nor (though Jacobson does not note this) does God drive Cain out in Genesis. He decrees that Cain shall be a fugitive and a wanderer (Gen 4:14) and Cain then goes away from the presence of the Lord (Gen 4:16). Adam, in Genesis, is the one God “drives out”: “He drove out the man” (Gen 3:24). *L.A.B.* telescopes the two stories of sin together so that Adam’s sin drops out and its consequences are taken over by Cain. Cain, in *L.A.B.*, takes the place of Adam as primeval sinner on account of whom the earth is cursed.\textsuperscript{120} This again resembles *1 Enoch* 6-11 and its retelling in the Animal Apocalypse (*1 En. 85*:1-10). There, too, it is Cain’s sin that looms large in the primeval history. The blood that cries out with the voice of Abel sums up the corruption that leads to the flood in the Book of Watchers; in the Animal Apocalypse the earth’s slide into violence begins not with Adam and Eve but with the black heifer who gores the red heifer: Cain and Abel. Cain is the problem in Paradise, the type and pattern of the corruption that will issue, finally, in cataclysm. The logic of the primeval history in *L.A.B.* – the starring role played by Cain and bloodshed, the straight line from that bloodshed to the flood, the flood’s eschatological dimensions – is the logic not of Genesis or of Numbers, but of *1 Enoch* and its Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence.

The centrality of Cain in Pseudo-Philo’s story of sin, and indeed Pseudo-Philo’s connection between Cain and the flood, is not unique in *L.A.B.* to the story of Korah. Pseudo-Philo’s creation narrative has already anticipated it. Pseudo-Philo begins, in its re-telling of Genesis, after the manner of Chronicles: with Adam and his descendants. The opening genealogy moves from Cain’s birth (and the birth of Abel, Noah and Seth) through all the generations to the birth of Noah. This is essentially the content of Gen 5:4-32, with the addition of various children, especially daughters, and their names.

\textsuperscript{120} Compare Wisdom 10:1-4, where Wisdom saves Adam from his transgression and Cain, again, becomes the sinner whose corruption leads to the flood.
Before continuing with the story of the flood, however – although the flood follows in Genesis – Pseudo-Philo returns to Gen 4:16ff and the genealogy of Cain. L.A.B. 1 ends with Noah, and a foreshadowing of the flood: Lamech named his son Noah, “saying, “This one will give rest to us and to the earth from those who dwell on it—on account of the wickedness of whose evil deeds the earth will be visited”” (1:20-22). L.A.B. 2 begins immediately with a reference to Cain’s murder of Abel: “Now Cain dwelt in the land trembling, as God had appointed for him after he had killed Abel his brother” (2:1). Cain who “killed Abel his brother” thus follows in the sequence of the text immediately upon “those on account of the wickedness [or “iniquity”] of whose evil deeds the earth will be visited” (in quibus visitabitur propter iniquitatem operum malorum, 1:20). Both lines (2:1b and 1:20c) are additions to the text of Genesis. It is Pseudo-Philo’s principle, as we have seen in its reading of Numbers 15-16 and the Korah story, that adjacent biblical episodes are connected. It seems likely, then, that Pseudo-Philo here connects Cain who murders Abel with those whose wicked deeds will bring on God’s judgement in the form of the flood.

Later in the chapter, L.A.B. confirms the connection. As in Genesis 4, Cain is the founder of the city (seven cities, in L.A.B.). The generations of Cain are also, however (and here L.A.B. goes beyond Genesis 4) the initiators of iniquity upon the earth. “In tempore illo cum iniciassent habitantes terram operari iniqua…” (in that time when those inhabiting the earth began to do evil deeds [literally, “to work iniquity”], L.A.B. 2.8). Iniquity (cf. L.A.B. 1:20) begins with the generations born from Cain. At their iniquity, God is angry (L.A.B. 2:8, indignatus est Deus). The tale of the generations of Cain ends with a frank statement of the corruption of the earth. Lamech’s closing words to his wives, neutral in Genesis as to the moral character of his actions, are in L.A.B. entirely negative: “I have destroyed men [viros corrupi] for my own sake and snatched nursing infants from the breast, so that I might show to my sons and to those who
inhabit the earth how to work iniquity [ut filiiis meis ostenderem *iniqua* operari et habitantibus terram]" (*L.A.B.* 2:10). The story of the flood follows.

In Lamech’s final words, the echo of the other Lamech’s words in *L.A.B.* 1:20 (iniquitatem operum malorum) is clear. The generations of Cain are those who introduce upon the earth the iniquity from which Noah and the flood will give the earth rest. By its re-ordering of Genesis and its additions to the text, Pseudo-Philo thus frames the story of Cain with references to Noah and the flood. Noah and Cain stand back-to-back at the beginning of *L.A.B.* 2, and the evil work of Cain’s line leads into the story of the flood in chapter 3. The connection between Cain and the flood implied by the two-fold juxtaposition is the very connection made in *L.A.B.* 16, and in *1 Enoch’s Book of Watchers*.

It is interesting, then, to note the nature of the evil that Cain’s generation practices. In Pseudo-Philo, Cain’s offspring mate with the wives of other men and defile them (*L.A.B.* 2:8). They learn the art of music (which is associated with sexual corruption) and then metalwork (2:9) and idol-making (2:9). They corrupt the earth (et cepit...corrumpere terram, 2:8). Their iniquity comes to a head in Lamech, last offspring in the generations of Cain, who kills and teaches killing to all the inhabitants of earth.

Strikingly, the evil Cain’s generation accomplishes looks a great deal like the dastardly deed of *1 Enoch’s* rebel angels. There the sons of God mate with the daughters of men and are defiled (*1 En.* 7:1). They teach the arts of metalwork and adornment and sorcery (*1 En.* 8:1-2),

---

121 Cf. *Jubilees’* similar juxtaposition of Cain and Noah (4:31-33). Here Cain’s murder of Abel and the generations of Noah are placed back-to-back, as they are in *L.A.B.* 1:22-2:1. *Jub.* 4:31-33: “At the end of that jubilee Cain was killed one year after [Noah]. And his house fell upon him...and he was killed by its stones because he killed Abel with a stone... And in the twenty-fifth jubilee Noah took a wife for himself....And in its third year she bore for him Shem. And in its fifth year she bore for him Ham. And in the first year of the sixth week she bore for him Japheth.” *L.A.B.* 1:22-2:1: “And Noah lived 300 years and became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, Japheth. Now Cain dwelt in the land trembling, as God had appointed for him after he had killed Abel his brother.”
and they corrupt the earth (‘...the earth which the angels have corrupted,’ 1 En 10:7). Their offspring kill and devour, and cover the earth with blood until the earth cries out. Forbidden women and arts of adornment or music to help adultery along; the art of metalwork; violence and the corruption of the earth: these are quite specifically the problem in 1 Enoch 6-11 and Pseudo-Philo 1-2 alike. The art of metalwork in Pseudo-Philo 2 obviously derives from Genesis 4:22. I have argued (above Chapter 4, pp.107-108) that the teaching of metalwork in 1 Enoch 8 likewise is connected to Genesis’ story of Cain. But the dalliance with forbidden women has no source in Genesis 4. Neither does the problem of false worship, associated with the art of metalwork. Nor, above all, is there the statement in Genesis 4 that these arts, this dalliance, this false worship, corrupt the earth. All of this, however, may be found in 1 Enoch, in its reading of Genesis 6 in conjunction with the story of Cain.

In the flood story that follows, Pseudo-Philo maintains the connection with the corruption of the generation of Cain. Having described Lamech’s violence and the evil deeds he has taught all the inhabitants of the earth, Pseudo-Philo inserts into Gen 6:3 (“...their years shall be 120”) the explanation, “For them he set the limits of life, but the crimes done by their hands did not cease” (…et in manibus eorum scelera non extinguebantur, L.A.B. 3:2). The narrative continues, “And God saw that among all those inhabiting the earth wicked deeds had reached their full measure” (3:3). Pseudo-Philo’s depiction of the flood, that is, begins from wicked deeds already in progress: their crimes “did not cease.” These are wicked deeds done by “all the inhabitants of the earth” (habitantibus terram) – recalling 1:20 and 2:8, 9 where “the inhabitants of the earth” (habitantes terram), who are Cain’s descendants, do wicked deeds. Pseudo-Philo in this way forges a link between the flood story and the descendants of Cain. Although Pseudo-Philo introduces the flood story with the story of the sons of God and daughters of men, it is an evil that precedes them that comes to its completion now. It is the evil begun in the generation of
Cain. In its insistence on the link between Cain and the flood, Pseudo-Philo recalls *1 Enoch* 6-11 and the blood-flood traditions.

Indeed, *L.A.B.*’s flood story ends, in chapter 3, in the same way as does *1 Enoch*’s flood story: with the eschatological judgement. God’s promise to Noah in the aftermath of the flood becomes a promise of final judgement and renewal: “And I will bring the dead to life and raise up those who are sleeping from the earth…. And hell will pay back its debt and the place of perdition will return its deposit,” and God will render to all according to their works (*L.A.B.* 3:10). In the same way in *L.A.B.* 16:3 the echo of the flood (“and now the thoughts of men are very corrupt”) and the swallowing up of the wicked by the earth yields immediately to the final judgement, when God will “remember the world and renew the earth.” Then hell and the place of perdition will *not* spit back the dead, and even their destruction will be forgotten. This is the judgement day of *L.A.B.* 3 in reverse, with eternal destruction for the wicked, but also with renewal for the earth. In both chapters, the eschatological judgement and renewal is imagined in association with the flood. This association between flood and eschatological judgement is fundamental to *1 Enoch*. Pseudo-Philo, like *1 Enoch*, goes on in *L.A.B.* 3 to describe the restoration in terms of a renewed earth: though the world will cease, “the earth will not be without progeny or sterile for those inhabiting it, and no one who has been pardoned by me will any longer be tainted” (*L.A.B.* 3:10; cf. *L.A.B.* 16:3). So in *1 Enoch* 10, in the aftermath of the flood, God describes a new earth in which all will become righteous, and the seed will yield fruit 10 and 1000-fold, and the earth will be cleansed from all defilement.

Given these correspondences with *1 Enoch*’s Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence, it is noteworthy that Pseudo-Philo’s retelling of Gen 6:1-4, the story of the “sons of God” and the women itself (*L.A.B.* 3:1-3), shows no signs of the expanded story in *1 Enoch*. There are traces of the corrupting angels later, in *L.A.B.* 34:3 (“because in that time before they were condemned,
magic was revealed by angels and they would have destroyed the age without measure,” but because they transgressed their power is taken away and they are judged). But in Pseudo-Philo’s flood story, the corruption of the earth, though it is described in Enochic terms, is entirely the work of humans. Pseudo-Philo presents a picture of the iniquity that brings on the flood which in contrast to 1 Enoch 6-11 insists on human responsibility for evil. In this difference there is again an indication that the Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence that structures both 1 Enoch and Pseudo-Philo’s narratives involving Cain and the flood is a tradition. Articulated in detail in 1 Enoch, it is not dependent on 1 Enoch for its transmission. Though it occurs in L.A.B. in texts that show other parallels with 1 Enoch, it occurs also where such parallels are lacking. Bloodshed as principle sin and the source of the earth’s corruption, and the link between Cain and the flood have together become a standard way of seeing. From Cain’s bloodshed to the flood: this is now the story Genesis tells, for Pseudo-Philo as well as for 1 Enoch.

In its story of Korah and in its primordial history, Pseudo-Philo thus reads Genesis 1-6 after the manner of 1 Enoch and the blood-flood tradition, connecting Cain to the corruption of the earth and to the flood, and seeing in the flood the forerunner and pattern of eschatological judgement and of the birth of a new and fruitful earth. L.A.B. 16 highlights Cain’s bloodshed; Pseudo-Philo’s interest in L.A.B. 3 is in Cain and the iniquity he introduces into the earth rather than in Cain’s bloodshed in particular. Blood and violence in L.A.B. 3 are one of a number of “evil deeds,” if the culminating instance. Pseudo-Philo’s particular reading of Genesis, its focus on Cain and the connection it makes between Cain and the flood, thus reveals another version of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement logic evident in 1 Enoch’s story of the Watchers and the women.

---

122 Cf. Wis 10:3-4 (Appendix 2) where the Cain-flood sequence exists independently of the story of the Watchers and the women, even though it is clear from Wisdom 14 that Wisdom knows the story.
In Pseudo-Philo we are once again brought face to face with Cain and his bloodshed and the flood standing at the centre of a history that runs from the beginning of things to their end.
VI. Jude

The Letter of Jude famously cites Enoch as authoritative prophet of end-time judgement, quoting 1 Enoch 1:9: "Indeed, Enoch seventh from Adam prophesied even about these saying, ‘Behold the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgement on all and to convict everyone of all the deeds of their ungodliness’" (Jude 14-15). 1 Enoch, commentators agree, plays a major role in the letter, underlying v. 6 as well as vv. 4, 12-13 and 16 and shaping Jude's theology. Donelson states, ""The basic theology of 1 Enoch is the basic theology of Jude. Jude does not simply cite 1 Enoch as authoritative; Jude sees the world through the theology of 1 Enoch." The Book of Watchers, and in particular the story of the rebel angels told first in 1 Enoch 6-11 is central in Jude's use of 1 Enoch. The rebel angels themselves appear in Jude 6; commentators demonstrate that their story also underlies Jude's descriptions of the ungodly in Jude 4, 8 and 16, while Jude 12-13 draws upon 1 Enoch more broadly. What commentators have not noted is that in this Enochic context, Jude introduces Cain. In what follows we will trace Jude's use of 1 Enoch's Watchers story in his attack on his opponents in vv. 5-16. We will argue not only (with the commentators) that the rebel angels and 1 Enoch 6-11 play a central part in the progress of Jude's argument, but also (as commentators have not seen) that Jude's reference to Cain is illuminated by the Enochic context. Jude, like 1 Enoch (we will argue), associates the story of Cain with the story of the rebel angels, and connects Cain's sin to the ungodliness of the Watchers and the women. For Jude, as for the other early Jewish texts we have examined, Cain stands at the beginning of the narrative of corruption and end-time judgement. This is true even

123 Lewis R. Donelson, I & II Peter and Jude: A Commentary (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 165. For a list of possible allusions to various parts of 1 Enoch that have been identified in Jude see Richard Bauckham, Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 140. 124 Donelson, I & II Peter and Jude, 179.
though Jude shows no obvious interest in bloodshed. Cain’s sin is described in general terms: to walk in the way of Cain.125

Bauckham has detailed the echoes of *1 Enoch* in Jude 6. Sandwiched between two biblical examples in the brief catalogue of sinners in Jude 5-7 – the Israelites saved from Egypt but "not believing" in the wilderness, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah – stand "the angels." Though the angels too have their root in Genesis (in the "sons of God" in Gen 6:2, rendered "angels" in the LXX, who see and take the beautiful "daughters of men"), Jude's description of them is dependent on the expanded version in *1 Enoch* 6-19.126 Jude's vocabulary echoes the *Book of Watchers*. It is not just that the MT's "sons of God" have become "angels," in accordance with *1 En*. 6:2, for they are angels in the LXX also. Like the rebel angels in *1 En*. 12:4, who “left” (ἀπελθαίπτετε) high, holy heaven (cf. *1 En*. 15:3), Jude’s angels "left" (ἀπολείποντας, Jude 6) their proper dwelling place. They "did not keep their own position of authority" (Jude 6); the angels in *1 En*. 12:4 abandoned "the sanctuary of their eternal station."

Now they are bound in eternal chains in deepest darkness (δεσμωτας ἀδιδοιος ὑπὸ ζό φος, Jude 6). "Bind Asa’el hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness (εἰς τὸ σκότος)," God says to Raphael in *1 En*. 10:4. The Watchers' "chains" are found in *1 En*. 13:1, 14:5, 54:3-5, 56:1-4, 88:1.127 "Eternal" chains, ἀείδιος, "seems...to depend on *1 Enoch* 10:5, where ‘Asa’el is bound "forever"...until the judgment."128 The rebel angels in *1 Enoch* are kept in the darkness "until the great day of judgement" (*1 En*. 10:12, 4Q Aram. En. Fragment).129 So too, in Jude: the angels in

125 This is not to exclude an implicit reference to bloodshed, as we will see. It is simply to say that the point in Jude 11 is not bloodshed, but the errant way (which innocent blood may demonstrate; see below).
126 Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (Waco: Word, 1983), 51: "Jude's reference [to the angels in Jude 6] is directly dependent on *1 Enoch* 6-19…." For the analysis that follows see Bauckham, ibid., 51-53.
127 Bauckham, ibid., 52.
128 Bauckham, ibid., 53.
129 "Great" occurs in 4Q Aramaic Enoch fragment 1:4:11; the Greek of *1 En*. 10:12 has "until the day of their judgement" (μέχρι ἡμέρας κρίσεως συμπόν) (Bauckham, ibid., 52: Bauckham thus believes that Jude is using an original Aramaic version rather than the Greek translation [94-96])). For evidence that Jude knows a version of the
their chains are kept "for the judgement of the great day" (εἰς κρίσιν μεγάλης ἡμέρας, Jude 6). The similarity of expression is noteworthy, for as Bauckham points out, “the precise phrase "great day of judgment" is unusual.”

Jude's picture of the rebel angels corresponds in its various details to *1 Enoch*.

That *1 Enoch* shapes Jude's thought in v. 6 is clear. Recent scholarship finds the influence of the Enochic Watchers story to go beyond v. 6 to its "interpretation" in v. 8, and finds references to *1 Enoch* also in Jude 12-13 and 16, as well as 4. I will argue, however, that the Enochic story of the Watchers introduced in Jude 6 governs what follows not just in vv. 8 and 12-13 and 16 but in vv. 7-16 as a whole (with a secondary reference in v. 9). Thus Jude 11 gains a new logic. Though the sin of Cain, Balaam and Korah is taken by scholars to constitute a second series of examples unconnected to the series in Jude 5-7, by this reading it follows from the example of the rebel angels already introduced in Jude 6. Cain belongs to the story of sin outlined in *1 Enoch*.

The rebel angels who appear in Jude 6 influence the following verse. The angels' sin as it is identified in Jude 6 is their rebellion against the given order of things: they left their heavenly place. But what they left heaven for, their desire for mortal women, governs the next example: Sodom and Gomorrah "in the same way as these" (i.e. as the angels) "go after other flesh" (v. 7): the sexual sin of the angels explains for Jude the (traditional) connection between the Watchers

---


130 Bauckham, ibid., 52.

131 So Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 179-186: Jude 5-19 is structured as a series of four "texts" and their interpretations; "text" 1 = vv. 5-7; its interpretation = vv. 8-10.

132 So Donelson, *I and II Peter and Jude*, 165.

133 On v. 9 as a secondary, elucidating reference see Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 181, 185. Bauckham (ibid., 235-280) attributes it to *Testament of Moses*. Donelson (*I and II Peter and Jude*, 184-185) agreeing that it is a secondary reference, attributes it with early Christian tradition to *Assumption of Moses*. 
and Sodom and Gomorrah. Further, Jude's portrayal of Sodom and Gomorrah, like the description of the angels in v. 6, departs from the biblical text and resembles 1 Enoch. Sodom and Gomorrah "are set forth as an example as they undergo the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7). In Gen 19:24-25, the fire God rains down upon the cities is this-worldly and their destruction immediate; there is no suggestion of an eternal fiery punishment. In 1 Enoch, however, the punishment for "going after other flesh" is both fiery and eternal: the rebel angels are kept in chains in deepest darkness until the time of their eschatological punishment, when they will be dragged away into an un-ending "abyss of fire" (1 En. 10:13).

Jude moves in v. 8 from scriptural examples to the present situation. "These people," (the derogatory "οὗτοι"), behave in the same way as those sinners of old: "The three accusations against "these people" explicitly echo the three exegetical examples in verses 5-7." They

---

134 The three examples given in Jude 5-7 are, Bauckham points out (Jude, 2 Peter, 46-47), based on a traditional list. 1 Enoch's Watchers or giants are paired with Sodom and the wilderness generation or Egypt or the generation of the flood in a wide variety of early Jewish texts, from the Damascus Document to Sirach, 3 Maccabees and m. Sanh. The point here is that the connection Jude sees in these two items of the traditional catalogue derives from 1 Enoch's story of the angels. Others notice that the sexual sin of the angels connects v. 6 to v. 7 here: see, e.g., J. N. D. Kelly, A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1969), 258: "An essential ingredient in the angels' wickedness, over and above treachery to their high responsibilities, was (as later Judaism saw it: e.g. I En. xii. 4) the unbridled sexual passion which motivated it." "In the same way as these" (v. 7) refers to the fallen angels (v. 6). Cf. Donelson, I & II Peter and Jude, 178e: "both angels and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah share a sexual sin" (though Donelson does not develop this point in the commentary, where he identifies the angels' sin as "disorder" and that of Sodom as sexual immorality [ibid., 179-181]).

135 In 1 En. 67:4-13; Origen c. Cels. 5.52 the prison of the rebel angels is associated with Sodom and Gomorrah: it is located underneath the Dead Sea region where, in antiquity, Sodom and Gomorrah were located. See Bauckham, Jude, 2 Peter, 55; A. R. C. Leaney, The Letters of Peter and Jude (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), 89; cf. G. W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. Vanderkam, 1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of Enoch Chapters 37-82 (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 289-290: the spewing waters of 67:8-13 represent the springs of Kallirrhoë, by the northeast shore of the Dead Sea.

136 Donelson, I and II Peter and Jude, 183. Whether v. 8 introduces the series of accusations against the contemporary ἀδελφεῖς (v. 4) that follow (οὗτοι, vv. 8, 10, 12, 16), or whether it is the concluding application of vv. 5-7 is immaterial for our purposes. In both cases, v. 8 takes its structure from the examples in 5-7 and especially from the story of the rebel angels. Thus Donelson (above), who reads v. 8 as introducing the following section. The either/or of scholarly discussion does not in fact capture how the verse works. It is connective and also transitional: it refers back to vv. 5-7, and also forward to the series to follow. In this way it allows vv. 5-7 and the story of the Watchers to inform the discussion of the contemporary situation in 8-16. So I would modify slightly Bauckham's helpful insight as to the structure of text and interpretation that governs the body of the letter. Rather than a series of four "texts" and their interpretations, Jude offers a primary text (vv. 5-7), and an interpretation of the contemporary situation that flows from it (vv. 8-16). By this reading, Bauckham's "text 2" and "text 3" are not distinct and unrelated texts but are suggested by the Enochic theme introduced in vv. 5-7.
"defile the flesh," "reject authority" and "blaspheme the glorious ones." Defiling the flesh is obviously the sin of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah: they engage in sexual immorality (ἐκπορνεύω, Jude 7). But it is connected also to the rebel angels. Sodom and Gomorrah in their sexual sin are compared to the Watchers: "in the same way as these" (the Watchers) they "go after other flesh" (ἀπερχομαι ὁπίσω σαρκὸς ἔτέρας, Jude 7).137 To “defile the flesh” (σάρκα μὲν μιαίνω, Jude 8) is therefore also the sin of the rebel angels. The word Jude uses in v. 8 (μιαίνω) underlines the connection with the Watchers: defile, μιαίνω (Grk [a]), describes the result of the rebel angels' mating with mortal women in 1 En. 7:1 (the angels "began to go in to them and to defile themselves [μιαίνεσθαι] through them"). Μιαίνω occurs again with reference to the rebel angels at 1 En. 9:8, 10:11, 12:4, 15:3, 4; its use in Jude 8, following closely upon Jude 6 and 7 with their references to the rebel angels and their sexual sin, draws the offense of Jude's opponents into the sphere of the rebel angels' sin.

Secondly, "these people" reject authority. Bauckham takes this to mean "the authority of the Lord"; κυριότης may mean, more broadly, the proper (divinely-ordained) structure of authority.138 Bauckham connects this sin to that of the Israelites in the wilderness.139 But especially in its second sense, that of the structure of authority, it suits also the sin of the rebel angels as Jude 6 describes it. Jude 6 stresses the angels' rejection of their own position of authority (as does also 1 En. 12:4): they abandon their proper ἀρχήν, thus rejecting the structure of authority as God has designed it.140

---

137 So Donelson, I and II Peter and Jude, 178.
138 Bauckham, Jude and the Relatives of Jesus, 188; for the options see Donelson, I and II Peter and Jude, 182c.
139 Bauckham, ibid.; Donelson (ibid., 183) says simply that they deny the Lord; "Jude gives no direct comment on exactly how they are denying the Lord."
140 1 En. 12:4: The Watchers of heaven “forsook the highest heaven, the sanctuary of their eternal station.” To reject their God-given place of authority is also, of course, to reject God’s authority. In this sense, even if we take κυριότης to mean "the authority of the Lord," this act of Jude’s opponents corresponds to the angels’ sin of rebellion as well as to the disobedience of the Israelites in the wilderness.
This first series of denunciations comes to a furious climax in two verses (12-13) which use nature imagery to describe the unbridled corruption of "these people." Bauckham has shown that Jude is here inspired by 1 Enoch. Immediately after 1 En. 1:9 (quoted at Jude 14), 1 En. 2:1-5:4 describes law-abiding nature in its cyclical course; nature in its obedience to God-given order provides a contrast to the lawless ones condemned in 1:9 and to the rebel angels in 1 Enoch 6. 1 Enoch's examples of law-abiding nature include the opposite of each of Jude's examples of lawless nature. Jude calls the sinners “waterless clouds” (cf. 1 En. 2:3, clouds giving rain), “trees without fruit” (cf. 1 En. 5:1, trees which bear fruit), “wild waves of the sea” (1 En. 5:3, seas which fulfill their duties) and “wandering stars” (cf. 1 En. 2:1, stars that do not wander from their course).  

Further, 1 Enoch’s meditation on godly nature closes with an echo of the verse that precedes the meditation, 1 En. 1:9. 1 En. 1:9 is the verse that follows the discourse on lawless nature in Jude (14). As nature in its orderly course convicts the ungodly for their rebelliousness in 1 Enoch 1-5, so in Jude nature out-of-joint describes the ungodly who shall be convicted, as 1 Enoch has foretold, for their lawlessness.

Bauckham shows, further, that Jude is also thinking in vv. 12-13 of 1 Enoch 80, which is linked by catch-words to 1 Enoch 2-5. "Jude's reference to the wandering stars...seems to be an actual allusion to I Enoch 80:6 ('many heads of the stars in command will go astray');" two of Jude's other images from nature are also found in 1 Enoch 80. These erring chief stars, who change their courses and functions and cause people to sin, reappear in the Book of Watchers and the Animal Apocalypse as a figure for the rebel angels of 1 Enoch 6-11: "behold, a star fell from heaven....and behold, I saw many stars descend and cast themselves down from heaven...and

---

141 Bauckham, Jude and the Relatives of Jesus, 191.
142 1 En. 5:4, convicting the ungodly of the "great [4QEn (c) 1:1:17] and hard things" they have spoken against God; cf. 1 Enoch 1:9.
143 Bauckham, ibid., 193-94.
they began to mount the cows" (1 En. 86:1-4, cf. 88:1).\textsuperscript{144} In 1 En. 88:1 these star-angels are bound and thrown into the darkness. In 1 Enoch's Book of Watchers, the story of the rebel angels – who end in darkness (τὸ σκότος, 10:10, cf. 10:12) – follows immediately upon the accusation against the lawless ungodly in 1 Enoch 1-5. This accusation forms a rib, a formal indictment (as Hartman has shown) which begins from and returns to the announcement of judgement in 1 En. 1:9.\textsuperscript{145} The rebel angels, that is, pictured later in 1 Enoch as wandering stars, serve as chief and dramatic illustration of the lawlessness loose in the world against which Enoch's judgement is announced in 1:9.

In the same way in Jude, wandering stars (for whom deepest darkness forever is kept, in an echo of 1 En. 88:1 and 10:10-12) cap Jude's indictment of "these people" in vv. 8-13. In the same way too Jude's indictment leads directly into the quotation of 1 En. 1:9. For Jude, that is, the rebel angels stand at beginning and end of his attack on the ungodly, as their sin, their rebellion against the divine structure of things and their "fornication," informs his description of his opponents' impiety. For Jude as for 1 Enoch, the rebel angels stand at the centre of godlessness on earth and its consequence. In his own time, "these people" rebel against God's authority in the same way as 1 Enoch's rebel angels and call down upon themselves a like judgement. 1 Enoch, as Jude sees it, provides a template for the present time, both as to lawlessness and as to judgement. Indeed, 1 Enoch speaks to the present time. As he finds in the rebel angels the example and type of the present lawlessness, Jude claims Enoch's prophecy for his own time. He claims 1 Enoch's vision: the rebellion of "these people," like the rebellion of the Israelites, the angels, and the cities of the plain, has cosmic implications; it brings upon the

\textsuperscript{144} Bauckham, (ibid., 200-201) believes that Jude links the stars of 1 Enoch 80 to the fallen stars of 1 En. 18:15-16 and 1 En. 88:1. (He does not list 1 En. 86:1). He notes also (194) that the Enoch literature itself already associates 1 Enoch 80 and 1 Enoch 2-5 (in 1 Enoch 101:1-3): Jude is perhaps building on an already existing association.

\textsuperscript{145} Lars Hartman, Asking for a Meaning: A Study of 1 Enoch 1-5. See also Bauckham, ibid., 192.
world the final judgement of God. As the angelic rebellion disturbed the order of the cosmos and brought flood and eschatological judgement in its wake, so now the rebellion of these people invites the apocalypse: "Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied τούτοις, to these very people, saying, 'Behold the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgement...’" (Jude 14).

In this Enoch-saturated context, Jude introduces Cain. Scholars take Jude 11 – Cain, Balaam and Korah – to be a second set of examples of ungodliness unrelated to the first set (in Jude 5-7) and its explication in v. 8; unrelated too, therefore, to 1 Enoch and the rebel angels and the judgement that there follows. Bauckham separates vv. 5-7 and v. 11 into two distinct "texts," followed by their interpretation. By his reading, v. 11 introduces a new theme: not the rejection of God’s authority and sexual immorality of vv. 5-7, 8, but false teaching. Jude 11 offers three biblical examples of false teachers who may be compared to the selfish "shepherds" in Jude's community.\(^{146}\) Bauckham suggests that Cain's identity as false teacher, a role not immediately apparent from a reading of the biblical text of Genesis or of Jude, is refracted through haggadic tradition. In Josephus and Philo, Cain is the "great corrupter of humanity."\(^{147}\) In the Targums, Cain becomes the first heretic: he is skeptical about divine justice and final judgement. "If this tradition was familiar to Jude and his readers," Cain stands for the denial of future judgement, and Jude's opponents follow him both in their immorality and in this denial of a judgement in which their immorality might be punished. "Though we are never explicitly told that this was part of their teaching," Bauckham concludes, "it seems a reasonable inference that it was."\(^{148}\)

\(^{146}\) Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, 188-89.

\(^{147}\) Bauckham, ibid. p. 189.

\(^{148}\) Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 80.
Balaam in Jewish tradition is a false prophet who led Israel to its destruction by means of sexual temptation; Korah taught others his rebellion against the law.\textsuperscript{149}

Bauckham’s analysis is ingenious but hampered, as he is aware, by the lack of any corroborating evidence for this description of the sins of Cain, Korah and Balaam in the text. Indeed, if the opponents are antinomians (as Bauckham argues), the Cain of the Targums does not in fact provide a parallel to them. Cain’s argument in the Targums is nihilistic: there is no good or evil, no just Judge and no judgement. The opponents in Jude (in Bauckham’s presentation) argue that we are now free from the constraints of the law. It is not that there is no God and no good or evil, but that "it's all good," at least for them. Theirs is a utopian vision of the times far removed from Cain's atheistic pessimism.

How, then, do we understand the reference to Cain in Jude? Cain, Korah and Balaam appear in a tightly-woven indictment of Jude’s opponents ("these people," vv. 8, 10, 12, 14, 16) that is saturated with the thought-world of \textit{1 Enoch} and refers repeatedly to \textit{1 Enoch}'s rebel angels. It begins in vv. 5-7 with a reference to \textit{1 Enoch}'s rebel angels (as well as the Israelites after Egypt, and Sodom and Gomorrah, the latter example coloured by the immediately preceding reference to the angels) and comes to a climax in vv. 12-13 with an allusion to those angels; it finds in the rebel angels the controlling image for the opponents’ sin, and it finally quotes \textit{1 Enoch} 1:9. The rebel angels’ sin as Jude 6 describes it is to “abandon” their proper dwelling place (ἀπολέιπω, v. 6b; cf. 6a “not keeping their own position of authority”); in the same way, Sodom and Gomorrah “go away” after other flesh (ἐξέρχομαι, v. 7). This is the point: they “leave behind” their proper place,” they “go away” from where they should be or what they should be – they stray, they rebel. Rebellion, wandering from the way (a characterization of the angels’ sin in keeping with their story in \textit{1 Enoch}) sums up for Jude the Enochic angels’ sin.

\textsuperscript{149} Bauckham, \textit{Jude, 2 Peter}, 81; cf. \textit{Jude and the Relatives of Jesus}, 189.
It is noteworthy, then, that when Jude introduces Cain, Korah and Balaam as representative sinners, it is in the same terms: Korah’s sin is rebellion, Balaam’s sin is wandering or error, Cain walks in a way that (the comparison with Balaam and Korah suggests) is neither godly nor good. For both Cain and Balaam, Jude uses the language of walking: πορεύομαι, ὁδός, πλάνη (cf. ἐξέρχομαι, Jude 7). The parallel between Jude’s language of wandering and rebellion in v. 11 and the acts of the rebel angels in v. 6 is surely not coincidental. Cain, Balaam and Korah provide three biblical examples of the same sin committed by the rebel angels: the problem is rebellion, wandering from the way. Jude 11 thus draws Cain, Balaam and Korah (and the opponents who walk in their way) into the narrative of angelic rebellion.

Further, Jude moves from Cain, Korah and Balaam into the description of disordered nature that echoes 1 En. 2-5: the opponents who walk in the way of Cain are waterless clouds, trees without fruit and wild waves of the sea (Jude 12-13); finally they are the wandering stars (for whom deepest darkness is kept forever, Jude 13), Enoch’s rebel angels. On them, as on the rebel angels, Enoch pronounces judgement in the words of 1 En. 1:9 (Jude 14). Cain, Korah and Balaam are caught up in a progression from rebellion to a disordered cosmos and finally to judgement that recalls 1 Enoch 1-11 and ends with a reference to 1 Enoch’s “wandering stars” and the Enochic declaration of judgement. They belong not only to the narrative of angelic rebellion but to its movement toward judgement. From Cain to cataclysm: Jude offers, in an Enochic context, the same sequence that characterizes 1 Enoch 6-11.

That Cain heads up the list of biblical rebels in Jude is striking. If the problem is rebellion, would not Adam be a more likely first example? He is, after all, the Bible’s first rebel; he does not (one might say) walk in the way of God but walks in his own way instead. Adam’s

---

150 For a similar characterization of sin as “wandering” or walking in paths of wickedness, see CD 1.13, 14, 15; 2.2-3. Like Jude, CD juxtaposes this straying from the way with the story of the rebel angels (CD 1.12-2.20).
story in fact suits Jude’s argument better than does Cain’s. It contains all the elements Jude here
attacks: faithlessness, rebellion against God’s command, even the suggestion of sexual fallen-
ness. Why, then, Cain? The Enochic context suggests an immediate answer: in 1 Enoch 6-11,
and in a number of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions that we have traced in other early
Jewish texts (beginning with 1 En. 85), it is Cain and not Adam who emerges as chief sinner.
Cain and/or his bloodshed constitute the primordial sin, the wrong turn in the world that leads to
corruption and the cataclysm. In its emphasis on the sin of Cain, Jude again resembles 1 Enoch.

There is this difference, of course. Jude is not interested in bloodshed. Jude speaks only
of “the way of Cain,” and makes Cain’s sin a version of the “going away” or rebellion that
characterized the rebel angels. Jude does not spell out the nature of Cain’s “way” (or of
Balaam’s error or Korah’s rebellion); the text is allusive. It assumes knowledge of the story
behind the name. Bauckham’s appeal to the tradition of interpretation in reading this verse is
helpful. We know that Jude has used the Enochic interpretation of Genesis 6 in v. 6, and as
scholars point out he repeatedly refers to figures and episodes in an allusive way, assuming that
readers will understand why these figures are appropriate. Jude's allusiveness, that is, suggests a
context of ongoing communal reflection on scriptural passages: a tradition of interpretation. Thus
it is enough, in the case of Cain, Korah and Balaam, merely to name them (let the reader
understand): the readers will know what their offenses are and why they are listed together.

That their offenses are traditional; that, moreover, they are traditionally grouped as
sinners, is suggested by their appearance in another text. In L.A.B. 16, Cain and Korah appear
together, Cain serving as primordial instance of the sin of Korah. Indeed, they appear in a

151 Nor does Jude’s sequence from Cain to judgement go by way of the flood. The absence of the flood is not sur-
prising: Jude does not retell the primordial narrative; he simply lists the outstanding biblical examples of sin as he
warns the present generation that judgement is imminent. We are in the eschatological age. Compare Jude 6 and 7:
the stories of the rebel angels and of Sodom and Gomorrah are eschatological in focus. In the case of the rebel an-
gels, the flood drops out and they are left waiting in deep darkness for eschatological punishment. Sodom and Go-
omrah likewise point to eschatological punishment: they stand as an example “of eternal fire.”
narrative that is shaped by *1 Enoch* 6-11. The earth opening its mouth to swallow Korah is a cataclysm like the flood that follows in *1 Enoch* – but not in Genesis – from the blood shed by Cain. Indeed, the image of Korah descending into the earth's maw recalls *1 Enoch* 10 and Asael bound hand and foot and cast into a pit in the earth. Pseudo-Philo, that is, represents a tradition which associates Cain and Korah in a (brief) narrative arc that imitates the narrative logic of the *Book of Watchers*. Further, Pseudo-Philo’s next major story (5 vv. later) is that of Balaam – who ends by being not the biblical hero, but the villain known to Jude. Here is a text that contains the same elements as Jude 11. It associates the sin of Cain (identified in *L.A.B.* as bloodshed) with the sin of Korah (his rebellion against the Law), and appends the story of Balaam (who leads the people into sexual sin with disastrous consequences). Further, it does so in a narrative that in a variety of ways calls up *1 Enoch*: in its focus on bloodshed and the earth in a story about rebellion against God, in its movement from Cain's bloodshed to eschatological flood and the casting of the rebels into the earth.

There is thus precedent for Jude’s association of Cain, Korah and Balaam as sinners in an Enochic context and in a narrative that leads to cosmic disorder and eschatological judgement. In

---

152 CD 2 may also associate Korah with the story of the Watchers (and with the bloodshed which stands as the heading under which the story of the Watchers unfolds [CD 2:8]). Like Jude (though in much more detail), CD 2-3 offers a catalogue of sinners to which the Watchers are central. In introducing the Watchers and their arrogance CD quotes Numbers 15:39 ("following a guilty inclination and lascivious eyes," in García Martínez's translation [CD 2:16]), a description of sin which in Numbers immediately precedes the story of Korah's rebellion (Num 16:1) and which is associated with Korah’s rebellion in *L.A.B.* 16: Korah rebels in *L.A.B.*, though not in Numbers, because of the “law of the tassels,” Num 15:37-41. For CD, Num 15:39 describes the Watchers and their “wandering” from the godly path. Does CD, by this use of a biblical text linked by proximity to the story of Korah (a link seen also in Pseudo-Philo), associate Korah and the Watchers? If so, the conjunction occurs in a narrative of anti-heroes that begins with the problem of blood (CD 2:9 "God abominated the generations on account of blood"), and lists eating blood as the final sin of Israel in the wilderness. The pieces are the same as those found in Jude: the Watchers, Korah, and the disobedience of the wilderness generation, in a context influenced by *1 Enoch* 6-11. Jude names Cain and omits blood; CD omits Cain and includes blood.

153 *L.A.B.* 18:13-14: "And then Balaam said to him, "Come and let us plan what you should do to them [i.e. Israel]. Pick out the beautiful women...and station them naked and adorned with gold....And when they see them and lie with them, they will sin against their Lord and fall into your hands...."

L. A. B. 16, however, blood is the problem: Cain’s murder of Abel serves as the pattern for Korah’s rebellion, even though Korah’s story has nothing to do with blood. In Jude, blood drops out, and only Cain is left. In this difference (as perhaps also in the omission of the flood)\textsuperscript{155} we see the signs not merely of dependence on \textit{I Enoch} 6-11 but of an interpretive tradition.\textsuperscript{156} Jude’s choice of Cain as chief sinner, his progression from Cain’s sin to the eschatological judgement (in the context of the Watchers’ story) follows the logic of \textit{I Enoch} but is also independent of it: Jude’s logic has its own shape, in which Cain but not bloodshed is important. It may be that the specific sin of Cain – shedding blood – is less important in Jude than Cain’s status as archetypal sinner, the one who brings the cataclysm in his wake.\textsuperscript{157} Yet it may be, too, that the bloodshed that marks the way of Cain lies beneath the surface in Jude as well. For the last of the characteristics of "these people" in Jude 16 is "showing partiality." This innocuous English phrase translates a Hebrew idiom that is rather more sinister (תַּנְתָּא דָּרִין), rendered directly in Greek as θαυμάζω (or λαμβάνω) πρόσωπον.\textsuperscript{158} Θαυμάζω πρόσωπον, when used negatively in the LXX, "usually means to show partiality in the administration of justice, and is often linked with perverting justice by taking bribes."\textsuperscript{159} And taking bribes is, in the Hebrew Scriptures, associated with innocent blood. "Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood" (Deut 27:25; cf. Exod 7:23.)\textsuperscript{160} This term, θαυμάζω πρόσωπον, raises by its scriptural associations the spectre of innocent blood. Cain’s murderous rage and the hidden violence of judicial murder "for the sake of gain" (Jude 16) perhaps come together in Jude.

\textsuperscript{155} As we have seen, however (n. 151), the literary context also explains the absence of flood.
\textsuperscript{156} Compare Wis 10:3-4, Appendix 2.
\textsuperscript{157} Cf. A. R. C. Leaney, \textit{The Letters of Peter and Jude}, 91: the “way of Cain” is the way of murderers, but also of all wickedness (so Philo).
\textsuperscript{158} Bauckham, \textit{Jude, 2 Peter}, 99.
\textsuperscript{160} On innocent blood as a legal problem, often signaled by the language of bribery, see above Chapter 3, pp. 75-78.
In the context of God's judgement, the Enochic eschatological context that
governs Jude, the problem of justice and the miscarriage of justice, the shedding of innocent
blood, is apropos. The letter, in fact (like 1 Enoch 1-5, 6-11) begins and ends with the divine
judgement and an appeal to the mercy characteristic of the divine judge (at least for the beloved).
"Mercy be with you" (ελεος ὑμῖν, Jude 2); "look forward to the mercy (ελεος) of our Lord Jesus
Christ for eternal life" (Jude 21). Likewise 1 Enoch promises mercy (ελεος, Grk [a]) to God's
"chosen righteous" at the time of the judgement (1 En. 1:8). Jude offers the readers themselves a
share in practicing the mercy of God, in an appeal whose vision of mercy on the one hand and
fiery judgement on the other is reminiscent again of 1 Enoch: "have mercy on some who are
wavering; save others by snatching them out of the fire" (Jude 22).

Jude ends, as 1 Enoch begins, with the eschatological judgement and the mercy of
God. And in the middle of the narrative thus conformed to the shape of 1 Enoch we find the
familiar complex: rebel angels and the way of Cain, sin leading to cosmic disorder and the final
judgement and mercy of God. Jude presents a particular version of the Enochic sequence, in
which Cain but not his bloodshed witnesses to the way of sin. Yet even though Cain’s bloodshed
is not mentioned, it is still with Cain that Jude’s tale of sin and cataclysm begins. This is perhaps
to indicate the influence of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement logic in the world of early Jewish
and Christian texts: the way of seeing that highlights Cain’s sin and links it to cataclysm is
pervasive enough, particularly in association with 1 Enoch, to shape Jude’s thought even where
bloodshed is not immediately at issue. That bloodshed does not appear in Jude 11 is to suggest,
too, the fluidity of the theme. Jude can follow the logic of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement
traditions, highlight Cain and move from Cain to judgement without mention of Cain’s
bloodshed per se, focusing instead simply on “waywardness.” Bloodshed is not, of course,
excluded from the term “the way of Cain”; it is just possible that innocent blood enters the letter
later and implicitly, in the reference to unjust judicial process. Nevertheless, Jude witnesses to a variation on the Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence even as he passes on the Enochic association of Cain with the sin that brings cataclysm, the final judgement of the world.
VII. Summary

1 Enoch 6-11 articulates a sequence that constitutes an interpretation of Genesis’ primordial narrative: moving from the blood that has been poured out upon the earth to the flood and final judgement, it finds in Cain’s bloodshed the primordial sin and in the flood (which is also eschatological cataclysm) that sin’s consequence. The blood of Abel is in this reading both actual and paradigmatic: the blood of all the perishing people speaks in the time of the flood with the voice of Abel. An interpretive pattern emerges: from Cain and bloodshed to the flood and judgement: Cain/blood-flood/judgement. Even within the corpus of 1 Enoch, this interpretive sequence becomes an interpretive tradition. 1 Enoch 85-90 tells the primordial history with the same emphasis on Cain’s bloodshed; together with the fall of the Watchers and the ensuing violence, Cain’s bloodshed is the only sin mentioned (Genesis 3 falls out) in the corruption of the earth that culminates in the flood.

The basic logic of this sequence – the focus on bloodshed as the primordial sin par excellence, the connection between bloodshed (or simply Cain) and the flood (or simply judgement) – reappears in a number of diverse texts from Jubilees to Pseudo-Philo and Jude. It occurs consistently in narrative contexts that show awareness of 1 Enoch 6-11. In this shared logic we see the signs of an interpretive tradition; in the shared awareness of 1 Enoch signs perhaps of a shared literary context in which such a tradition might have developed and been passed down. Yet the “tradition” is not fixed or static. Rather, the basic logic appears in a variety of versions, some (like Pseudo-Philo) including all elements of the Enochic sequence, others including all but one; some (Jude for instance, or Susanna) showing explicitly only two of its elements (Cain and judgement or innocent blood and judgement respectively). We have, that is, not a single static “Tradition,” but more fluid “traditions,” a set of inter-related but distinct versions of the Enochic interpretive pattern.
So, for instance, in *Jubilees*’ flood stories and in CD 1-3 blood, identified as innocent blood in CD 1, plays a major role but Cain falls out, his place taken in *Jubilees* 5 and 7 by the giants. In Jude, conversely, blood falls out (at least explicitly) and only “the way of Cain” is left. In *Jubilees* 5 and 7 and in CD, bloodshed leads to the flood which is in *Jubilees* also eschatological judgement; in Jude again the flood falls out and only the eschatological judgement is left.161 *Jubilees* 7 thus presents a sequence “giants/blood-flood/judgement.” CD’s sequence is “innocent blood-flood/judgement” (the flood resembling the eschatological cataclysm).162 Jude’s sequence, by contrast, is “Cain [and possibly innocent blood]-judgement.”163 L.A.B. 16 shows all elements of the sequence: Cain/blood-flood/judgement.164 In every case, these traditions appear in a text that shows some influence from *1 Enoch* 6-11.

The logic that moves from Cain and/or innocent blood to flood and/or eschatological judgement thus finds voice in a living and cumulative tradition. It takes a variety of forms according to the interests and subject matter of each text; now Cain is central, now innocent blood, now both; in one text the consequence of bloodshed or Cain’s sin is flood, in another judgement; most often it is both. The initial sequence constituted by *1 Enoch*’s reading of Genesis provides a starting point for subsequent readings of Genesis (or of the eschatological moment) in new texts and different situations.

It is noteworthy, however, that even in their real differences the texts that display these various sequences often incorporate in some way the missing elements of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence. Although Cain plays no role in *Jubilees* 5 and 7, Cain’s murder of Abel is told in *Jubilees* 4 in words reminiscent of *1 Enoch* 9, with an emphasis on the blood that

161 See Appendix 1 for a complete account of elements occurring in each text and shared between texts.
162 Cf. Susanna: innocent blood-judgement.
163 Cf. Wis 10:3-4: Cain-flood (with elements of innocent blood and flood that is judgement in book as a whole).
makes accusation to heaven, and the chapter returns at its end to the murder of Abel, thence to
Noah and the flood. Thus in its sequence *Jubilees* 4-5 juxtaposes Cain’s bloodshed with the flood.
Susanna does not mention Cain but moves from a scene recalling Genesis 3 and Eve to the threat of bloodshed, thus recalling the sequence of Genesis 3-4, from Adam and Eve to Cain and Abel.
So in Susanna innocent blood becomes (as in the Enochic sequence) the climactic problem in Paradise. In every case except CD, shades of the Cain and Abel story can be discerned in the narrative, in the logic that moves from blood to flood or judgement, even when Cain is not explicitly mentioned.\(^{165}\)

Similarly, Jude does not name Cain’s bloodshed, but neither does “the way of Cain” exclude it, and the letter may later charge the opponents with the kind of corrupt judicial process that is in the Hebrew scriptures paradigmatic of innocent blood.\(^ {166}\) Again, though only Cain is named, nevertheless the association between Cain and innocent blood that is typical of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence may stand in the background.

There is, thus, a certain consistency that marks the various “Cain and/or innocent blood-flood and/or judgement” traditions, even in their differences. Even where one or another element of the Enochic interpretive tradition has fallen out, the missing element often lurks in the background of the narrative. The texts show signs of the logic of the sequence as a whole – from Cain and the blood of Abel to the flood that is judgement – even where the version at hand does not include all the elements. From Cain’s bloodshed to judgement that is like the flood: there is

\(^{165}\) Similarly, although Wisdom 10 (see Appendix 2) speaks only of Cain and not of blood in its Cain-flood sequence, innocent blood is a critical issue in the larger narrative. Sin takes the form in Wisdom’s primordial narrative of Cain’s brother-killing and in the present day of the “shameful death” of the righteous at the hands of their unrighteous brethren: that is, innocent blood. Further, the narrative describes the death of the innocent and righteous in the context of the promise of vindication in the final judgement of God.

\(^{166}\) And it is perhaps significant in terms of the allusive meaning of “the way of Cain” that in Pseudo-Philo, where Cain, Korah and Balaam also occur together as representative sinners, Cain’s bloodshed is clearly at issue.
here a way of seeing that is deep-seated and pervasive, shaping the narratives of primordial history and providing a paradigm for the present time.
Chapter 6
The Blood of Zechariah in Early Jewish Interpretive Tradition

If Cain’s bloodshed fascinates early Jewish interpreters between the Exile and the first century C.E., the blood of Zechariah steps into the interpretive spotlight in the first century and stays there. In a wide selection of early rabbinic literature – *Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael*, the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud, the *Midrash Rabbah* series on Lamentations and Ecclesiastes, *Pesiqta de Rab Kahana*, the *Targum of Esther* – the blood of Zechariah seethes catastrophically from the stones on which it was poured out, as the armies of Babylon enter Jerusalem.

The tradition is early and persistent. It forms the basis for a legend attributed to “an old man from Jerusalem” (*b. Git. 57b*) at the beginning of the second century.\(^1\) The legend has much earlier roots, traceable at least to the first quarter of the first century C.E., and it persists throughout the rabbinic literature and down to modern times. The legend and its use show some interesting broad commonalities with the tradition that we have traced with respect to Abel’s blood. In the Zechariah tradition, too, blood is the fantastic key to the story. In its larger outlines, it reveals the same concern with pollution and purgation that animates the focus on Cain’s bloodshed. In particular, it occurs in conjunction with Jewish and Christian reflection on the great tragedy of the first century, the destruction of Jerusalem. The fate of Israel, in the story of Zechariah’s blood as often in that of Abel’s, is the question that underlies the tale.

In examining the rabbinic traditions about the blood of Zechariah we are not, of course, proposing influence. Richard Bauckham notes the need for caution in drawing parallels between

---

New Testament literature and extracanonical Jewish literature from the time of the New Testament and later. Yet he also argues that study even of rabbinic texts is useful for understanding the New Testament, in part because these texts may preserve old traditions, but also because they show the use of interpretive approaches shared in common with the New Testament period. “A later Jewish writing may therefore be able to illuminate the way in which a Jewish exegete is likely to have read a particular OT text.” In the case of the Zechariah traditions, both points appear to be true. Continuity between Lives of the Prophets and the rabbinic legends (with Matthew falling somewhere in between) points to an old common tradition. And the commonalities between the three sets of sources in their interpretation of 2 Chronicles suggest a common exegetical approach and shared way of seeing. Since (as Bauckham also observes) the influence of Christian literature on rabbinic texts is “not, in [the case of a striking parallel], usually plausible,” points of contact between the rabbinic tradition and Matthew such as we see in their common appeal to the blood of Zechariah are of interest. The argument in the case of the Zechariah traditions must be more tentative than in the case of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions (which largely precede Matthew’s Gospel). Even so, the details shared by Lives of the Prophets 23, Matthew 23:35-36 and the rabbinic legend of Zechariah provide evidence of a pattern of reading the death of Zechariah as an instance of the shedding of innocent blood intertwined with the fate of Israel.

3 Bauckham, ibid., 72. Since the “thoroughly Jewish character of the NT literature has been constantly demonstrated by the intensive study of this literature in relation to relevant Jewish literature,” a NT exegete is a Jewish exegete (ibid., 66).
4 ibid.
I. The Legend of Zechariah’s Blood

Sheldon Blank, in an article published in 1937 on the death of Zechariah, traces the legend of Zechariah’s blood in rabbinic literature.⁵ It is a colourful story, starting from the brief mention of the death of Zechariah in 2 Chron 24:20-22, but going far beyond it. The setting is the fall of Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan, captain of the Babylonian guard, descends upon the city, leaving devastation in his wake. In the temple, he sees the blood of Zechariah seething and asks what it is. At first the people tell him that it is the blood of sacrifices; he promptly slaughters animals but the blood still seethes. In a rage, Nebuzaradan hangs some of them – or, in the Babylonian version, threatens to tear their flesh with iron combs – and so they confess: “[This] is the blood of a priest and prophet and judge who prophesied to us all that you are doing to us and we arose against him and slew him.” In response Nebuzaradan slaughters the people upon the altar: in the Jerusalem Talmud, 80,000 young priests; in the Babylonian version, 940,000 men, women and children – “and still the blood boiled. Thereupon Nebuzaradan became angry with Zechariah. He said to him: ‘What do you want? Should we kill your whole people for your sake?’ Thereupon the Lord was filled with compassion and said: ‘If this man, who is but flesh and blood and is cruel, is filled with such compassion for My children….how much the more should I be so.’ Accordingly he made a sign to the blood and it subsided into its place” (y. Tan. 69ab).⁶

The legend is remarkably persistent. It runs through the rabbinic literature, as Blank notes; references to the blood of Zechariah staining the temple stones appear also in Christian literature,

---

⁵ Blank, “Death of Zechariah,” 327-46.
⁶ The translation is that of Blank in “Death of Zechariah,” 338. For the Babylonian versions, see b. Sanh. 96b. The details are essentially the same in b. Sanh. 96b. The legend reappears in the Midrash Rabbah series on Lamentations (Proem V, 2.2.4, 4.13.16, on Ecclesiastes 3.16.1, 10.4.1, in the Pesiqta de-Rab Kahana 15.7 (Lamentation for Jerusalem), and in the Targum of Esther (1.2.12); it is referred to in b. Yoma 38b and midr. r. Lam 1.16.51 and 2.20.23, Targum to Lam 2.20 and probably midr. r. Lev 4:1 (which cites Eccles 3:16 together with the explanation for “wickedness” given in Eccles. Rab. 3.16.1, ending with the statement “there they slew Zechariah and Uriah.” In Eccles. Rab. these words introduce the legend of Zechariah’s blood). We will discuss these occurrences below. See also the discussion of Matt 23:35 in Str-B 1.940-43; Louis Ginzberg harmonizes the various versions and tells the story in detail (Legends of the Jews [trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003] 2.1038, 1075, and relevant notes).
in Tertullian and Jerome, in the writings of the pilgrim from Bordeaux (333 C.E.) and persist to the beginning of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{7} What it is crucial to note, for our purposes, is that the main emphases of the legend’s interpretation of Zechariah’s death can be traced back to the early first century C.E. \textit{Lives of the Prophets} 23 already includes, in its retelling of Zechariah’s death, details that became characteristic of the legend but do not appear in 2 Chronicles. \textit{Lives of the Prophets} has been dated to the first century, before 70 C.E.\textsuperscript{8} Hare places it in the first quarter of

\textsuperscript{7} For Tertullian, see \textit{Scorp}. 8: \textit{Zacharias inter alterae et aedem trucidatus perennes cruoris sui maculas silicibus assignans} (“Zechariah, slaughtered between the altar and the sanctuary, leaving on the stones his mark, the perpetual stains of his blood.” See John Chapman, “Zacharias, Slain between the Temple and the Altar,” \textit{JTS} 13 (1912): 398-410, here 409 n. 3. According to Jerome, “simpler folk” point out the red stones in the temple, believing they are stained \textit{(putant esse polluta)} by the blood of Zechariah (\textit{Comm. Matt.} 23:35-36 [PL 26. 181A (1884)], quoted by Blank, “Death of Zechariah,” 338 n. 16). So also the pilgrim from Bordeaux: “in the building itself where stood the temple which Solomon built they say that the blood of Zacharias which was shed upon the stone pavement before the altar remains to this day” (Zev Vilnay, \textit{Legends of Palestine} [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1932], 110, cited in Blank, ibid., 338 n. 16. Vilnay translates from \textit{Itinerarium Burdigalense} [ed. P. Geyer; \textit{Itineraria Hierosolymitana}; CSEL 39; Leipzig, 1898], 22). In 1624, the Jewish traveler Gershon ben Eliezer Halevi refers to the legend in an account of his travels, mentioning “the blood of the prophet Zechariah” on the stone where they slaughtered him in the temple in Jerusalem (Blank, “Death of Zechariah,” 339-40 n. 22). An Ethiopian author who lived in Jerusalem 1890-1920 tells, in his commentary on Ezekiel, a version of the legend glossed by the Jewish sources (Roger W. Cowley, “The ‘Blood of Zechariah’ (Mt. 23.35) in Ethiopian Exegetical Tradition,” in \textit{Papers on the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies. Oxford}, 1983 [ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone; 4 vols.; Studia Patristica 18; Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1985]. 1.293-302, here 295-96). Confused versions of the legend appear in the Ethiopic tradition (Cowley, “The ‘Blood of Zechariah’”) and in the \textit{Protevangelium of James}, where Zechariah is identified as the father of John the Baptist. Like the Zechariah of the legends, however, he is murdered in the temple, where his blood hardens beside the altar and a voice announces that it will remain until he is avenged (Ronald F. Hock, \textit{The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas} [Scholars Bible 2; Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1995], 74-75).

\textsuperscript{8} For the dating, see Douglas R. A. Hare, introduction to “The Lives of Prophets,” \textit{OTP}, 2.380-81 and Anna Maria Schwemer, \textit{Studien zu den frühjüdischen Prophetenlegenden} Vitae Prophetarum (2 vols.; J.C.B. Mohr (Siebeck): Tübingen, 1995), 1.68-69; 2.301. The consensus is that \textit{LivPro} is a Jewish work. David Satran (\textit{Biblical Prophets in Byzantine Palestine: Reassessing the Lives of the Prophets} [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995]) has argued for a much later date and a Christian context. He suggests that the \textit{Lives}’ interest in the prophets and in their burial sites in particular belongs within a fourth century “nexus” comprising the literary genre of \textit{loca sancta}, pilgrimage to holy sites, interest in the “holy man” and fascination with the land of Palestine. He notes, however, that “certain traditions in the \textit{vita} are likely to be early and Jewish” (ibid., 62), and posits an early Jewish provenance for the \textit{Life of Zechariah} (\textit{LivPro} 23): “Of the six prophets martyred, only the legends regarding Isaiah and Zechariah b. Jehoiada can be demonstrated with assurance to have a pre-Christian context” (ibid., 53). He goes on to claim that the accounts of these prophets in the \textit{Lives} are lacking the elements distinctive of the early Jewish legends – in particular the focus on Zechariah’s blood. But it is, as we here show, precisely in its distinctive elements, including its focus on Zechariah’s blood, that the account of Zechariah’s death in \textit{LivPro} 23 resembles the rabbinic legends.
the first century C.E.; Anna Maria Schwemer argues convincingly that it must precede the
destruction of the temple in 70 C.E.⁹

Already in this first-century Jewish text signs of interpretation of the story of Zechariah’s
death in 2 Chronicles appear. In 2 Chron 20-22 Zechariah son of Jehoiada is killed simply “in the
court of the house of the Lord.” In Lives of the Prophets Zechariah is killed “near the altar”
(LivPro 23.1). His death in 2 Chronicles is by stoning; there is no mention of stoning in Lives of
the Prophets 23. Rather, “the house of David,” LivPro reports, “poured out his blood”: ἐκχέω
σώμα (= Ἐκ τοῦ ἱπποῦ) (23.1). There is no blood in the immediate account of Zechariah’s death in 2
Chronicles (2 Chron 24:20-22): his blood comes in only later, in connection with the death of
King Joash (2 Chron 24:25). In LivPro 23, the blood of Zechariah poured out by the House of
David leads directly to a hint of ominous consequences for the temple. “From that time visible
portents occurred in the Temple, and the priests were not able to see a vision of angels of God or
to give oracles…” (23.2). These are “punishments,” Hare asserts; the blood of Zechariah has an
impact, in LivPro’s vision, on the life of the temple.¹⁰

Indeed, with its reference to portents Lives of the Prophets 23 seems to point toward the
end of the temple; even perhaps the end-time. Josephus, for instance, tells of fantastic portents in
the temple immediately before the war, foreshadowing its fall: “on the 8th of Xanthicos at 3 a.m.
so bright a light shone round the Altar and the Sanctuary that it might have been midday…. [A] cow…gave birth to a lamb in the middle of the Temple courts, while at midnight it was observed

⁹ Schwemer, Studien, 1.68. LivPro 23, she notes, ties the end of the temple inseparably to the end of the world, in
contrast to post-70 apocalypses like 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, which intercalate an indeterminate, if short, time in-
between. A direct reaction to the catastrophe of the temple’s destruction is not evident in LivPro 23.
¹⁰ Hare, “Lives of the Prophets,” 398 n. e. I have used Hare’s translation; occasionally I have adapted it on the basis
of Torrey’s Greek text (Charles Cutler Torrey, The Lives of the Prophets: Greek Text and Translation [JBL Mon-
ograph Series 1; Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1946]).
that the East Gate of the inner court had opened of its own accord – a gate made of bronze and so solid that every evening twenty strong men were required to shut it” (BJ vi. 301).  

Interestingly, the portents and the loss of oracles that follow upon the blood of Zechariah in Lives of the Prophets end the book. Zechariah’s death stands last in the series of the prophets.  

“And other prophets became hidden,” Lives of the Prophets (rather mysteriously) concludes. The silence of the temple in the wake of Zechariah’s blood seems to augur a larger silence; an end, of prophecy perhaps; perhaps of temple too. Hare downplays the significance of the silence with which the Life of Zechariah, and the whole collection, ends.  

Schwemer suggests, however, that the silence at the end of LivPro is significant. She notes that LivPro 23 draws attention to Zechariah’s blood. Only here, in Lives of the Prophets as a whole, is the word σίμα used together with the death of a prophet. Further, LivPro 23:1 specifies that it is not only the king but the House of David that is responsible for Zechariah’s blood. The ruling house of Israel, that is, is marked by blood: there is an emphasis on collective guilt. Schwemer sees in these emphases a concern with innocent blood: in the Hebrew Scriptures, she observes, “innocent blood presses heavily upon the place where it is shed” and makes it unclean. What happens to the House that has blood upon it? In the wake of the blood poured out near the altar

---

11 Josephus, The Jewish War (trans. G. A. Williamson; rev. with a new introduction, notes and appendixes by E. Mary Smallwood; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 361. Cf. Joel 2:30-31, where portents (typically, for the prophetic literature) point to the last days: “I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.”

12 See Schwemer, Studien, 1.28-33 for the order of the prophets in LivPro. Though there is a good deal of variation in the various versions, the majority, including An1, which seems likely to have preserved the original form of the Lives (ibid., 1.31), conclude with the life of Zechariah ben Jehoiada.

13 He suggests (“Lives of the Prophets,” 399 n. 24a) that “other prophets became hidden” “may mean simply that… the collection here assembled exhausts the list of prophets whose graves are known.”

14 Schwemer, Studien, 2.301.

15 Hare (“Lives of the Prophets,” 398 n. c) reads “house of David” as a circumlocution for “the king,” used here in an instance of poetic parallelism. But as Schwemer notes (Studien, 2.302) both “Joash the king” and “house of David” are significant in terms of meaning: bloodguilt is a problem in the Hebrew Scriptures not only for the king himself, but for his whole house and ultimately for the people.

16 So too Schwemer, Studien, 2.289.

17 Schwemer, Studien, 2.302.
by the king, indeed by the House of David, *LivPro* 23 announces portents of doom and the silence of the temple.

In 2 Chronicles, by contrast, though the Syrian army arrives immediately after Zechariah’s death, hard on the heels of his cry for vengeance (“As he was dying, he said, “May the Lord see and avenge!”” 2 Chron 24:22), there is no link between Zechariah’s *blood* and Jerusalem’s defeat, and no mention of the temple. Nor does the defeat of Jerusalem have anything more than immediate significance: the Syrians conquer, leaving Joash sorely wounded, and depart. Joash’s death follows, and his son Amaziah succeeds him. History goes on. By contrast, Zechariah’s blood in *Lives of the Prophets* brings the history, and the temple oracles, to a full stop. In these various details, *Lives of the Prophets* 23 sounds not like 2 Chronicles, but like the Jewish legend of Zechariah.

In the legends, as in *Lives of the Prophets*, Zechariah’s blood is the seething centre of the story. There is no mention of stoning; rather we see Zechariah’s blood “poured out,” boiling and bubbling over the temple stones. In the Jerusalem Talmud: “when Nebuzaradan came here he saw the blood bubbling up,” so he slaughtered bullocks, rams and sheep but “still the blood was bubbling up;” he slaughtered 80,000 priests; “still the blood bubbled up.”18 Again as in *Lives of the Prophets*, and not in 2 Chronicles, the rabbis specify the place of death: “it was in the Court

---

18 y. Ta’an 69ab, trans. Neusner (*The Talmud of the Land of Israel: A Preliminary Translation and Explanation. Volume 18: Besah and Taanit*) [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987], 281-82. In Lam. Rab. 4.13.16 Nebuzaradan sees the blood of Zechariah as soon as he comes up against Israel: “When Nebuzaradan came up against Israel, he saw the blood of Zechariah seething….” (trans. A. Cohen, *Midrash Rabbah* [ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon; 10 vols; London: Soncino, 1939], 7.226-27). Cf. *Pesiqta de Rab Kahana* 15.7: “when Nebuzaradan came in, the blood began to drip….He forthwith sent and brought oxen, rams, and sheep and slaughtered them in his presence, but the blood continued to drip….Forthwith he took eighty thousand young priests and killed them on his account, until the blood laped the grave of Zechariah….Still the blood seethed” (trans. Jacob Neusner, *Pesiqta deRab Kahana: An Analytical Translation* [2 vols.; BJS 123; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987], 2.10). In Eccles. Rab. 3.16.1, the blood seethes for 250 years: “when Nebuzaradan came up to destroy Jerusalem, the Holy One, blessed be He, hinted to that blood that it should seethe and bubble for two hundred and fifty-two years from the reign of Joash to that of Zedekiah. What did they do? They scraped quantities of dust to throw on it and made heaps and heaps over it, but it did not become still, and the blood kept seething and foaming” (trans. A. Cohen, *Midrash Rabbah* [ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon], 8.101).
of the Priests.’” And in the legends, the ominous silence of the temple oracles in the wake of Zechariah’s blood in LivPro 23 has become full-fledged desolation, the destruction of temple and city alike. In all versions of the legend, Zechariah’s blood is linked to the defeat of Jerusalem.

Schwemer notes the numerous parallels between LivPro 23 and the rabbinic tales of the blood of Zechariah; in each case, she argues, LivPro’s story of Zechariah’s death presents an older and less developed form of many of the legends’ peculiar features. In particular in the interest in blood “one can recognize a meaningful correlation between our Life and the later rabbinic and Christian blood-legends.” In this respect, Schwemer points out, what is in the Lives of the Prophets already intimated – namely that the blood of Zechariah works itself out in the temple’s fate – now is painted in broad strokes.

Thus in the legends as in LivPro 23 the death of Zechariah has become a story about blood poured out and its consequences. The explanations that the legends give for the city’s fall have to do not with Zechariah’s prophetic status but with his uncovered blood. “Woe to the bloody city,” the rabbis cry; “her blood is in the midst of her.” In the midrashim, the legends conclude with Gen 9:6: “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed.” It is a story with far-reaching implications for the temple and for the history of the people, and it has a kind of finality. The blood of Zechariah in the rabbinic legend augurs the end of the temple and in Lives of the Prophets it brings an end to the story.

---

19 Lam. Rab. 2.2.4; so also Lam. Rab. Proem V and 4.13.16; Eccles. Rab. 3.16.1, 10.3; Pesiqta de Rab Kahana 15.7
20 Schwemer, Studien, 2.302.
21 Schwemer, Studien, 2.301. LivPro 23 constitutes, the evidence suggests, a stage on the way to the later Jewish and Christian development of the blood-legend.
22 Schwemer, Studien, 2.302. It is important to note, she adds, that in this respect LivPro 23 shows itself to be older than the rabbinic and Christian form of the material. LivPro23 reveals (with respect particularly to the effect of Zechariah’s death on the temple) “eine frühe Zwischenstufe der erst später voll ausgeprägten Legende” (ibid., 2.302).
23 Lamentations Rabbah, Ecclesiastes Rabbah (Midrash Rabbah 7. 163, 164, 264)
II. Innocent Blood: The Problem of Pollution and the Fate of the Land

In this emphasis on blood and its relation to the fate of the temple, the midrashim place the death of Zechariah within the same complex of ideas that informs the story of Cain and Abel in Jewish interpretive tradition at least from the time of Lamentations, a complex that has to do with pollution and expiation, the sanctity and danger of blood, and the defilement of the land. That the problem with Zechariah’s blood as with Abel’s is defilement, that what is at risk in the shedding of innocent blood is the whole life of the people in the land, is clear in the way the rabbis frame the story. Before they tell the legend, they make several explanatory remarks:

“Where did the Israelites slay Zechariah?” they ask; “In the Court of Israel or in the Court of the Women?”

“In neither of them,” comes the reply, “but it was in the Court of the Priests.”

This is, as we have noted, a specification missing from 2 Chronicles 24, which places Zechariah’s death simply “in the court of the house of the Lord.” The effect of the rabbis’ comment is to place the murder at the heart of the temple. Not in its outer courts, but in the place of the temple’s greatest holiness, there innocent blood is shed. Indeed, the rabbis imply, it is shed by the people especially consecrated to holiness, by the priests, who alone can enter the Court of the Priests. In the disjunction between the holiness of the priestly inner sanctum and the innocent blood there shed, the rabbis raise the problem of pollution.

They then expand upon it.

24 Lam. Rab. 2.2.4 (trans. Cohen). Cf 4.13.16; Proem V; Eccles Rab. 3.16.1, 10.4.1; y. Ta’an. 69a; Pesiqta de Rab Kahana 15.7.
25 This is a problem raised already by Lam 4:13-15 itself (see above Chapter 3). So, for instance, Robin A. Parry, Lamentations (Two Horizons OT Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 139-140, citation 139: “By shedding blood, those who were intended to be the most pure have become impure and have polluted the land.” A rich process of mutual influence is evident in the interaction between the text of Lamentations and the legend of Zechariah’s blood. The story of Zechariah influences the rabbis’ reading of Lamentations (see esp. Lam. Rab. 1.16.51 and 2.20.23, where they hear in the second part of Lam 2:20 God’s voice responding to the plaint of the people with His plaint: the blood of Zechariah). In its turn (as we will see) Lam 4:13-15 influences the story of Zechariah: his blood now is shed by the priests, in the Court of the Priests.
“Nor,” they continue, “did they treat his blood as was done with the blood of a hind or ram; for in connection with the blood of these animals it is written...he shall pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust (Lev. xvii, 13), but in this instance it is written, For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the bare rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust... (Ezek. xxiv, 7).”

Zechariah’s blood lies on the temple stones. Here the rabbis cite Lev 17:13. They set the death of Zechariah, that is, within the framework of the Holiness Code, within the paradigm of purity and pollution and the problem of the defilement of the land. “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for by all these practices the nations I am casting out before you have defiled themselves. Thus the land became defiled” (Lev 18:24-25). The rabbis point specifically to the problem of blood, which heads up the Holiness Code (Lev 17:13-14). The blood of the creature – animal or human being – is its life, and is of consequence for the holiness of the land. To treat even animal blood improperly, still more to pour out the blood of a human being in murder, is to risk the contamination of the land and its consequence: exile. Milgrom notes: “it is axiomatic for all sources, including the oldest, that heinous sins such as murder (Gen 4:5, 1 Sam 1:21-22; 21:1-14) contaminate the land.” “[I]f, however, the entire community is guilty of moral [as opposed to ritual] impurity, the irrevocable result is the pollution of the land ([Lev] 18:25; Num 34:33-34) and the exile of its inhabitants ([Lev] 18:28, 26:14-38).”

---

26 Lam. Rab. 4.13.16 (trans. Cohen); see also Lam. Rab. 2.2.4 and 4.13.16; Eccles. Rab. 3.16.1; 10.4.1.
27 I have discussed blood and purity in the Holiness Code with regard to Lamentations. To review briefly: the problem of blood heads up the Holiness Code. “For the life of every creature – its blood is its life; therefore I have said to the people of Israel: You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off” (Lev 17:14). The blood of an animal is its life and it must be returned to the earth: anyone who hunts down an animal or bird that may be eaten shall pour out its blood and cover it with earth (Lev 17:13). To do this is to recognize the sanctity of life, even of the animal’s life, and to return it to its creator. Cf. Jacob Milgrom (“A Prolegomenon to Leviticus 17:11,” JBL 90 [1971]: 149-56, here 156); “All men must eschew the life-blood of the animal by draining it, thereby returning it to its creator (Gen 9:3-4; Lev 17:13-14).” Milgrom argues that Leviticus 17 views unauthorized animal slaughter as murder: to offer the blood of the slaughtered animal upon the altar, as Lev 17 prescribes for the Israelites, is thus an act of expiation for the life of the one who slaughtered it. Otherwise the people become liable for the consequences of murder: the contamination of the land, and exile.
The problem with Zechariah’s death is the blood that stains the priests and the holy place. It is the blood that rouses the wrath of God: “And for what purpose was all this? That it might cause fury to come up, that vengeance might be taken, I have set her blood upon the bare rock…” (Ezek. 24:8; Lam. Rab. 2.2.4; cf. 4.13.16; Eccles Rab. 3.16.1, 10.4.1). Zechariah’s blood lies on the bare rock, and the city is defiled. The rabbis name the sins that Israel committed in killing Zechariah:

Seven sins did the Israelites commit on that day.
They killed priest, prophet and judge.
They spilled innocent blood.
They contaminated the courtyard.
And it was a Sabbath that coincided with the Day of Atonement as well.

(y. Ta’an. 69ab, trans. Neusner; cf. Lam. Rab. 2.2.4; 4.13.16; Eccles. Rab. 3.16.1, 10.4.1; Pesiqta de Rab Kahana 15.7)

The sin that brought down Babylon upon Israel may be summed up in terms of pollution – of the temple, of the Sabbath, even of the Day of Atonement. “They spilled innocent blood.” Jerusalem is contaminated in every possible way, and so Nebuzaradan arrives.

The Jerusalem Talmud is in this respect typical: repeatedly in the rabbinic literature, defilement is the issue in the discussion of Zechariah’s death, and the destruction of Jerusalem is the result. The rabbis invoke, in their retelling of the legend, biblical texts that highlight the theme of defilement. In eight distinct occurrences of the legend, the rabbis cite Ezek 24:7 and/or 24:8 (a total of 16 times, + 24:6 twice). The problem in Ezekiel 24 is blood, uncovered blood,

29 For Ezek 24:7
For the blood she shed is inside it [i.e. the city];
She placed it on a bare rock;
She did not pour it out on the ground
To cover it with earth:
y. Ta’an. 69ab
Pesiqta de Rab Kahana 15.8
Lam. Rab. Proem V (2x)
Lam. Rab. Proem XXIII (2x)
Lam. Rab. 2.2.4
Lam. Rab. 4.13.16

For Ezek 24:8
To rouse my wrath, to take vengeance
I have placed the blood she shed
on a bare rock,
so that it may not be covered:
y. Ta’an. 69ab
b. Git. 57ab
Pesiqta de Rab Kahana 15.6
Lam. Rab. Proem V
Lam. Rab. Proem XXIII
Lam. Rab. 2.2.4
blood in the midst of the city. “Her blood is in the midst of her” (Ezek 24:7); “I have set on the bare rock the blood she has shed” (24:8). Y. Ta’an., Pisqa 15, Lamentations and Ecclesiastes Rabbah all pair Ezekiel 24:7 (“she did not pour it on the ground to cover it with earth”) with Lev 17:13, “cover the blood,” making explicit Ezekiel’s own allusion to the Holiness Code. To shed blood unjustly is incompatible with the holiness of God. “Unclean,” מכל, as Lam 4:13 puts it: by Ezekiel’s account (as also in Lamentations), the blood of the righteous shed in the midst of the city renders the people unclean.30 The rabbis concur. Zechariah’s uncovered blood is the problem: his blood poured out on the temple stones “contaminates” the land (y. Ta’an. 69ab) and drives the people out.31

In Ezekiel 24, in fact, the blood in the midst of Jerusalem explains the arrival of the king of Babylon: “Mortal, write down the name of this day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day (24:2).” “Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Woe to the bloody city…For the blood she shed is inside it…” (24:6-7). The Babylonian Talmud (Gittin), Pesiqta de Rab Kahana, and Lamentations Rabbah bring Ezekiel 24 together with Hos 4:2: “Blood(shed) follows blood(shed).”32 Blood in Hosea 4 forms the climax of God’s indictment against Israel: “Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed

---

30 Cf. Jacob Milgrom, Leviticus 17-22, 1371: The Holiness Code “declares tāmē’ ‘impure’ to be the incompatible antithesis of a quality of YHWH expressed by the term qādōš ‘holy’, a quality that should be emulated by all of Israel.” See further above, Chapter 3, esp. pp. 68-70.
31 This emphasis on defilement in connection with the blood of Zechariah is still prominent in the relatively late Targum of Esther, Targum Sheni, which makes of the word “defiled” a refrain: Babylon is the “defiled people.” “Parnatos” slaughters a swine and defiles the temple so that it opens its gates; “wicked, defiled Nebuchadnezzar” enters and sees Zechariah’s blood “moving upon the ground.” Zechariah’s blood thus comes as the climax of a tale of defilement that reaches into the heart of the temple (Tg. Sheni 1.2.12, trans. Bernard Grossfeld, The Two Targums of Esther [The Aramaic Bible 18; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991], 119.
32 The plural in Hos 4:2 (דםdb) is probably significant for the rabbis: the word blood in 2 Chronicles 24 (when it finally appears in verse 25) is also plural (constr): דםdb. In the identical word they may have discerned a connection, so that Hosea speaks to and illuminates the problem of Zechariah’s “bloods.”
follows bloodshed” (Hos 4:2). Therefore, Hos 4:3 continues, “the land mourns, and all who live in it languish.” Like Ezekiel 24, Hosea 4 ties bloodshed to the desolation of the land: the land defiled by blood shall be barren.\(^{33}\)

The *Pesiqta* and *Ecclesiastes* and *Leviticus Rabbah* also invoke Isaiah 1:21: the city “that was full of justice, righteousness lodged in her – but now murderers!” (Isa 1:21). Therefore, says the Lord of Hosts, “I will turn my hand against you” (Isa 1:25). This is the city, Isaiah says, whose hands are full of blood (1:15); whose sins are like scarlet...red like crimson (1:18), whose country lies desolate: “In your very presence aliens devour your land; it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners” (1:7). Like Hosea and Ezekiel, Isaiah 1 links Israel’s iniquity to its desolation, and sets innocent blood at the heart of it all. The rabbis link Zechariah’s blood to Jerusalem’s defeat at alien hands and find in Isaiah, and Hosea and Ezekiel, both precedent and prophecy. The blood that has been poured out leads to the desolation of the land; from the blood of Zechariah there is a straight line to Babylon, and Jerusalem’s defeat.

In every case, indeed, the story of Zechariah’s blood is attached to a statement of the Mishnah or a biblical verse that has to do with (or is read as speaking to) Israel’s defeat. In y. *Ta’an*. 69ab, the story of Zechariah’s blood occurs in commentary on Mishnah tractate *Ta’anit* 4:6, which names five events marking the destruction of the temple and the loss of the land commemorated on the ninth of Ab: “On the ninth of Ab (1) the decree was made against our forefathers that they should not enter the land, (2) the first Temple and (3) the second [Temple] were destroyed, (4) Betar was taken, and (5) the city was ploughed up [after the war of Hadrian].”\(^{34}\) The legend of Zechariah serves to explicate “Betar was taken.” In the Babylonian Talmud the legend occurs in commentary on Mishnah tractate *Gittin* 5:6; the legend illustrates

\(^{33}\) For the barrenness of the blood-contaminated land see Chapter 3, pp. 79-82, and Raphael Patai, “The ‘Egla ‘Arufa or the Expiation of the Polluted Land,” *JQR* 30 (1939): 59-69, here 61-62.

the Mishnah’s reference to “the slaughter of war.”35 The story of Zechariah occurs in *Pisqa* 15 of *Pesiqta deRab Kahana*; *Pisqa* 15 opens with Lam 1:1-2 (“How lonely sits the city that once was full of people!”); its theme is “the standing of Jerusalem and its fate.”36 In *Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael* the story of Zechariah, Joash and the army of Aram as told in 2 Chronicles 24 is attached by analogy (“similar to this:”) to the descent of the Amalekites upon Israel in Exod 17:8. In *Eccles. Rab.*., Zechariah’s murder explains Eccles 3:16: “Wickedness was there in the place of righteousness” – that is, the presence of the princes of Babylon in the gates of Jerusalem.37

Not surprisingly, perhaps, reference to Zechariah occurs most frequently in commentary upon Lamentations, Israel’s great lament over the exile. “How sitteth solitary the city….” (Lam 1:1, *Lam. Rab.* Proem V and Proem XXIII); “For these things I weep…; my children are desolate, for the enemy has prevailed” (Lam 1:16; *Lam. Rab.* 1.16.51); “The Lord hath swallowed up unsparingly all the habitations of Jacob” (Lam 2:2, *Lam. Rab.* 2.2.4); “Shall priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?” (Lam 2:20; *Lam. Rab.* 2.20.23); each of these verses prompts a reminiscence of the blood of Zechariah. The story is attached, too, to Lam 4:13, the verse that seeks to explain the disaster that has come upon Jerusalem. “It was because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed the blood of the righteous in the midst of her” (Lam 4:13; *Lam. Rab.* 4.13.16).38 In the death of Zechariah, the rabbis see the event *par excellence* that underlies this verse. As they tell the story, the blood of Zechariah stands as the culminating instance of the blood of the righteous, the sin that stains the priests and so too the people and the land. Indeed, the bloodshed described in Lam 4:13 illuminates for the rabbis the

35 Mishnah tractate *Gittin* 5:6 has to do with (the rather obscure) “sicaricon”: land rights after Roman appropriation of Jewish property, probably after the Bar Cochba war. *B. Git.* 55b reads “Mishnah. There was no sicaricon in Judea for those killed in war. As from [the termination of] the slaughter of the war there has been sicaricon there…” (trans. M. Simon, in *The Babylonian Talmud* [ed. I. Epstein; 34 vols. in 6 parts + index; London: Soncino, 1935-52]).
36 Neusner, *Pesiqta deRab Kahana*, 2.11.
38 Cf. *Lam. Rab.* 4.14.17, where the blood at issue (“so defiled by blood”) is the blood of Zechariah.
story of Zechariah. The details of their story of Zechariah, details not provided by 2 Chronicles, coincide with Lam 4:13. Second Chronicles is vague as to the identity of the murderers: it says simply, “They stoned him to death.” Who, then, is “they”? The rabbis look to Lam 4:13: “it was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed the blood of the righteous…”: the priests killed Zechariah. Where was Zechariah killed? Second Chronicles says only “in the court of the house of the Lord.” But if it is the case, as Lamentations suggests to the rabbis, that it was the priests who “shed the blood of the righteous,” then Zechariah died, surely, in the Court of the Priests. “Where did the Israelites slay Zechariah?” the midrash asks immediately after quoting Lam 4:13; “in the Court of Israel or the Court of Women?” “In neither,” R. Aha replies, “but it was in the Court of the Priests.”

In this emphasis on the priests and the Court of the Priests, the rabbis take Lamentations’ point. They understand why this verse stands as explanation for Jerusalem’s defeat. Innocent blood has been shed, even by the holy people, at the heart of the land’s most holy place. Blood shed in the temple, in the court of the priests, defiles the priests, the temple and the land. “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways…otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it” (Lev 18:24, 28). Indeed, the rabbis go further than Lamentations. Lamentations 2:20 reads at first glance, and in its context in Lamentations, as a two-fold and agonized plaint:

Look, O Lord, and consider
To whom you have done this!
Should women eat their offspring,
The children they have borne?
Should priest and prophet be killed
in the sanctuary of the Lord.\(^{39}\)

---

\(^{39}\) This translation of the first line follows the rabbinic reading. NRSV renders it as a question: To whom have you done this? NRSV’s is the more common reading now; the older reading agrees with the rabbis. See Bertil Albrektson, Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations: with a Critical Edition of the Peshitta Text (Studia Theologica Lundensia 21; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963), 119-120 for discussion.
Out of the anguish of unimaginable suffering, the poet raises a cry to the Lord: should women eat the fruit of their womb, the children they have borne? Scholars stress the graphic character of the words: “offspring” is “fruit”, יְרֵפָא, a word whose luscious overtones become grotesque in the context.40 The next lines are universally read (today) as another plea to God, another instance of the people’s insupportable suffering, the siege’s terrible reversal of the way things are intended to be. Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? This is, indeed, the plain meaning of the verse. But the rabbis read it differently. They take the second question to be God’s response to the people’s cry. God is not, as contemporary commentators insist he is, silent throughout the book of Lamentations.41 To the people who accuse God – should women eat their offspring? – the Holy Spirit (in the rabbinic reading) now replies, “Shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?” This is a reference, the rabbis explain, to Zechariah.42 No longer simply a lament, the verse becomes a dialogue explicating the justice of God. The death in the temple of Zechariah, “priest and prophet” (as the rabbis name him, perhaps in reflection upon Lam 2:20), brings upon Jerusalem its tragic fate.

The rabbis do not mention Zechariah’s blood in commentary on this verse. Yet innocent blood lies in the background. The rabbis relate a legend in connection to Lamentations’ question:

Should women eat their offspring? It is

the story of Doeg b. Joseph, whom his father left to his mother when he was a young child: Every day his mother would measure him by handbreadths and would give his [extra] weight in gold to the Sanctuary. And when the enemy prevailed she slaughtered him and ate him, and concerning her Jeremiah lamented: Shall the women eat their fruit, their children that are dandled in the hands? [Lam 2:20] Whereupon the Holy Spirit

---

41 On God’s voice in Lamentations, as the rabbis read it, see Philip S. Alexander, The Targum of Lamentations: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus and Notes (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2008), 29 and 34-37, citation p. 35: Lam. R. “hears God’s voice, loud and clear” and more frequently even than Tg. Lam. because it “transfers the bitter lamenting of Zion wholesale to God himself.”
42 Lam. Rab. 1.16.51 and 2.20.23; b. Yoma 38b; on b. Yoma see Epstein, The Babylonian Talmud, 2/5; 179 n. 2.
replied: *Shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the Sanctuary of the Lord?* – See what happened to him!⁴³

The point of the illustration in *b. Yoma* is the name: people do not name their children after the wicked; if they do, “see what happens to them!” The child Doeg’s cruel fate may be attributed to his name. For Doeg the Edomite was the man who betrayed the priests of Nob to King Saul in the days of David’s struggle with the king. Doeg then, at Saul’s command, slaughtered them all: “Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked the priests; on that day he killed 85 who wore the linen ephod” (1 Sam 22:18). Doeg has shed innocent blood. Behind the death of the child Doeg in the siege of Jerusalem lies the blood on the hands of Doeg the Edomite. The innocent blood of the priests of Nob, the innocent blood of Zechariah, works itself out in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Years after Lamentations and *1 Enoch*, then, the rabbis paint a similar picture of the polluting power of innocent blood and its cost. This time the paradigmatic figure is Zechariah and not Abel, but the problem is the same: innocent blood has been poured out, and the result is the devastation of the land. In the *Mekilta*, in the Talmud, in the Midrash, even in the *Targum of Esther*, the innocent blood of Zechariah lies behind Jerusalem’s tragic fate and offers an explanation. The holy people and the holy place are defiled by the blood that has been poured out in their midst. Therefore the land is desolate and the people go into exile. This is the logic implied by *Lives of the Prophets* in connection with Zechariah. “The house of David poured out his blood,” and from that time vision abandons the priests and portents of the end appear in the

---

⁴³ *b. Yoma* 38b, trans Epstein; cf. *Lam. Rab*. 1.16.51; 2.20.23: “It is related that Doeg b. Joseph died and left a young son to his mother, who used to measure him by handbreadths and give his weight in gold to the Temple every year. When, however, the besieging army surrounded Jerusalem, his mother slaughtered him with her own hand and ate him; and Jeremiah lamented before the Omnipresent, saying, *SEE, O LORD, AND CONSIDER, TO WHOM THOU HAST DONE THUS! SHALL THE WOMEN EAT THEIR FRUIT, THE CHILDREN THAT ARE DANCED IN THE HANDS?* But the Holy Spirit retorted, *SHALL THE PRIEST AND THE PROPHET BE SLAIN IN THE SANCTUARY OF THE LORD?* referring to Zechariah the son of Jehoiada” (trans. Cohen). Presumably (because the point of the story is the name, as *b. Yoma* makes clear) the rabbis assume in *Lamentations Rabbah* that the child is named after his father.
temple. In the rabbis that logic is spelled out. The deaths of so many of the people, the defeat of Jerusalem, may be explained by the blood of Zechariah.

And yet the question remains, why so many? If the story points to the logic of pollution, its necessarily devastating consequences for the people and the land, it draws attention also to the pity of it. The blood of Zechariah seethes apparently insatiably. The numbers vary, and also the categories of people slaughtered over the blood of Zechariah, but they are in every case huge: 80,000 dead (*Lam. Rab.*); 84,000 (*y. Ta’an.*); 940,000 (*b. Git.*); the Great Sanhedrin, the Minor Sanhedrin, the priestly novitiates (or young men and women, in *b. Git.*); even school-children, until finally Nebuzaradan himself is dismayed. “He exclaimed, Zechariah! The choicest of your people have I slain; is it your wish that they all perish?” (*Lam. Rab.* 2.2.4; so also all versions of the legend).

Behind the huge numbers of dead lies, surely, the trauma of Jerusalem’s destruction, razed to the ground by Babylon and again by Rome. But behind it lies also the rabbinic reckoning with the seriousness of innocent blood. For the Mishnah, innocent blood cries out for vengeance until the end of time. In a comment on witnesses, *m. Sanh.* 4:5 distinguishes witness in civil suits from witness in capital cases. “In the case of a trial for property cases, a person pays money and achieves atonement for himself. In capital cases [the accused’s] blood and the blood of all those who were destined to be born from him [who was wrongfully convicted] are held against him [who testifies falsely] to the end of time.”

The Mishnah adduces in this connection the story of Cain: “For so we find in the case of Cain who slew his brother, as it is said, *The bloods of your brother cry* (Gen. 4:10). It does not say ‘the blood of your brother,’ but ‘The bloods of your brother’—his blood and the blood of all those who were destined to be born from

---

him” (*m. Sanh. 4:5*, italics original). The logic here is exegetical. In the unexpected plural יְדֵי (bloods, Gen 4:10) the rabbis see a particular point: the long reach of blood unjustly shed. Innocent blood does not stop crying out; it is not only Abel’s blood that raises a clamour from the earth to heaven but that of all who might have been born from him. So, the Mishnah concludes, “Whoever destroys a single Israelite soul is deemed by Scripture as if he had destroyed a whole world” (*m. Sanh. 4:5*).

Is it possible that the rabbis see the same point in the story of Zechariah’s blood? Like Abel’s blood in Genesis, the blood of Zechariah for which retribution comes down upon King Joash in 2 Chronicles is plural: יְדֵי, for the **bloods** of Zechariah Joash is killed. Indeed, the rabbis explicitly link Abel and Zechariah through this word: in the stories of the deaths of Abel, of Zechariah, and of Naboth (they note), it is not just “blood” that is shed, but “bloods:”

R. Judan said, It is not written [in Gen 4:10], ‘Thy brother’s blood’ (*dam*—singular), but ‘Thy brother’s bloods’ (*deme*—plural): i.e. his blood and the blood of his descendants.….The Rabbis said: It is not written, ‘His own servants conspired against him for the blood (*dam*) of the sons of Jehoiada,’ but, . . . ‘For the bloods of (*deme*) the sons of Jehoiada (sic)’ (2 Chron. XXIV, 25), namely, his blood and the blood of his descendants. (*Gen. Rab. 22.9*, italics original).[^47]


[^46]: That the blood is unjustly shed – innocent blood – is the primary point of the plural: so Nahum Sarna, *Genesis = [Be-Reshit] The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 34: “Hebrew damim [Gen 4:10] is plural, a usage that, with rare exceptions, appears in a context of bloodshed or bloodguilt.” The Mishnah assumes this; thus it applies the passage to a discussion of capital cases. Further, it reads the plural as extending the scope of each act of unjust bloodshed. Sarna [ibid.] notes also that the Mishnah and the Targums take the plural to include not only the blood of the victim but all the potential offspring.

The blood of Zechariah, like the blood of Abel (and Naboth) cries out unceasingly for vengeance because in it is comprehended the blood of all his descendants to the end of time. No wonder the blood of Zechariah has, in the legends, become a boiling sea. No wonder no amount of blood shed in recompense can satisfy it. The rabbis quote Gen 9:6 in comment upon the slaughter in Jerusalem: “Whoso sheddeth a human’s blood, by a human shall his blood be shed.”

Recompense is necessary, blood for blood, but the bloods of Zechariah (like the bloods of Abel) exceed the capacity of human justice to render satisfaction. “I will appease it” says Nebuzaradan, in his arrogance, at the sight of Zechariah’s blood. But he cannot. The blood of Zechariah is infinite in extent and therefore it is insatiable. It is beyond expiation.

It is here, however, precisely as they make clear the terrible scope of innocent blood, that the rabbis suddenly offer hope. There is in the insatiability of Zechariah’s blood humour as well as pathos. In the vast numbers of dead, there is a hint of accusation: if even the wicked Nebuzaradan feels pity, why not Israel’s God? As the cruelty of Jerusalem’s suffering in Lamentations becomes a charge of the people against their God (“Shall a woman eat her offspring, the fruit of her womb…?” Lam 2:20), so the blood’s insatiability in the legends becomes in the mouth of the slaughterer himself an accusation: “I have killed the best of them! Shall I slaughter them all?”

Perhaps, the rabbis suggest, the suffering of Jerusalem at the hands of its conquerors is extraordinary. Yet that suffering is not the last word. The last word is the mercy of God, and the ascendancy of Torah. If Nebuzaradan’s cry points to the pathos of the slaughter, it reveals also his own powerlessness. So many have died at the hands of the Babylonian conqueror…yet even Babylon’s power to destroy is finally helpless in the face of Zechariah’s blood. It is not

Nebuzaradan who silences the blood of Zechariah, nor is it the defeat of Jerusalem which in some way makes recompense. Nebuzaradan, indeed, throws up his hands: “Zechariah, I have killed the best of them!” It is, rather – in y. Ta’an. and the midrashim – the mercy of God. “Forthwith the Holy One, Blessed be He, was filled with mercy, and gave a hint to the blood, which was swallowed up in the same spot.”49 Indeed, the blood of Zechariah, which the pagan conqueror thinks he will silence, becomes in some versions the vehicle of the conqueror’s conversion. In view of the vast price exacted for the blood of one man, Nebuzaradan, professional slaughterer, contemplates a rapid repentance: “If such is the penalty for slaying one soul, what will happen to me who have slain such multitudes?” (b. Git. 57b) And so, the Talmud whimsically continues, “he fled away,…and became a convert.” If the blood of Zechariah brings upon Jerusalem its defeat – for the rabbis are clear about this – nevertheless it serves in the end to build up the very people whom Nebuzaradan destroys. The story ends with the repentance of the conqueror (in the midrash) and (in the Babylonian Talmud) the conqueror’s conversion. “Nebuzaradan was a righteous proselyte; descendants of Haman learnt the Torah…” (b. Git. 57b, b. Sanh. 96b). The story ends, that is, not with destruction but with Israel’s continuing life: by the mercy of God the blood that has been poured out upon the land is swallowed up and the pagan conqueror submits to the faith of Israel.50

49 Lam. Rab. 4:13.16; cf. y. Ta’an 69ab and Pesiqta de Rab Kahana 15.7.

50 Nebuzaradan thus provides an interesting later twist on the most common narrative model of “royal transformation,” the “subjugation of an adversary,” identified by Terence Donaldson in Second Temple literature (“Royal Sympathizers in Jewish Narrative,” JSP 16.1 (2006): 41-59). Nebuzaradan, who is, like Heliodorus in 2 Maccabees, Israel’s adversary comes to honour the God of Israel. But in this case (unlike Heliodorus and the Second Temple narrative model) he also destroys the temple and slaughters the people. It is in fact in the destruction of Jerusalem that Nebuzaradan comes to know, and fear, the power (and also the justice) of God. As Donaldson notes for Heliodorus, there is in Nebuzaradan’s conversion a “confirmation of Jewish self-understanding” (ibid., 58) – strikingly placed in the middle of the story of Jerusalem’s destruction. And there is also theological force. It is not the Gentiles who have power to subdue Jerusalem, but only God, and even Jerusalem’s subjugation serves to carry out the (God-given) task of the chosen people in the world: “that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.”
In this, as in the problem of blood and pollution at the heart of it, the legend of Zechariah resembles in a sense the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions. They, too, move through blood and destruction to the new beginning: creation restored in a land that has been washed clean. The blood that stains Jerusalem’s stones finally subsides, in the Zechariah legends – after 250 years – having accomplished the humbling of the pagan. If the temple is destroyed, it is not by the might of Babylon but by the will of God (cf. b. Sanh. 96b). If the temple is no more, nevertheless Torah now draws the whole world to itself; even Nebuzaradan and the descendants of Haman learn it. The end for the people of God, that is, even in the case of a pollution that is beyond expiation, pollution which no amount of blood shed in recompense can satisfy, moves through death and defeat to life. It is, to be sure, not the same life, but a new life centred in Torah. But it is Israel’s life, and it has significance (in the rabbis’ vision) for the life of the wider world as well. If this move, from defilement and destruction to restoration by the act of God, is in part simply useful, a confirmation of rabbinic authority, it is also theologically significant. It insists, centuries after the end of the sacrificial system, on the significance of bloodshed, on the concreteness of sin, on purity and the problem of pollution worked out in stone and bone, in the lives of the people in the land. And it insists too on the persistence of the promise in spite of blood shed, and the persistence of the people – on their existence as a people, not diminished by Jerusalem’s defeat but having power in Torah even among the conquering Gentiles.
Chapter 7

Zechariah and Abel Traditions in Matthew

The blood of Zechariah thus haunts the imagination of the rabbis, as the blood of Abel or innocent blood (tied, in the wake of 1 Enoch, to the cataclysm) plays a major role in the interpretive tradition of early Judaism between the exile and the end of the first century C.E. These various traditions have at their centre the problem of innocent blood, a problem articulated through a particular instance of the shedding of innocent blood – an instance that becomes, in the retelling, paradigmatic. Abel on the one hand and Zechariah on the other (and at the other end of history) tell a story, for their interpreters, of blood staining the earth or the temple stones, bringing desolation in its wake. In both cases, the stories as they are retold or simply allusively recalled often set bloodshed against the background of the purity paradigm and raise the question of pollution and its consequences. Innocent blood becomes an explanatory paradigm, linking the blood of Abel or the blood of Zechariah to the fate of the people and the land. In Lamentations, Cain’s bloodshed stands behind the sin of the priests, the blood of the righteous they have shed, and leads into the exile.\(^1\) In the rabbis, the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Babylon is the cataclysm to which Zechariah’s innocent blood speaks. In the case of 1 Enoch and the traditions stemming from the flood story and Cain and Abel, the scope of innocent blood and its consequences is often cosmic (appropriately perhaps given their genesis in the primordial narrative), embracing not only the fate of Jerusalem (as in Lamentations) but also cataclysm and new creation (as in 1 Enoch), the fate of the whole earth. Flood points forward to the

---

\(^1\) Cf. CD 2-3. Here the wandering ways of the wicked, which include innocent blood and which are finally summed up in the words “on account of blood,” lead into the story of the Watchers and the flood/cataclysm; this story serves as paradigm for the history of Israel whose transgression again involves blood, this time eating blood. Israel’s history of transgression culminates in the defeat of Jerusalem. In Susanna the setting is exile and it is the well-being of the people in the garden that is threatened by innocent blood.
eschatological judgement. The compass of Zechariah’s blood is for the rabbis more narrowly historical: it speaks directly to the fall of Jerusalem in the time of Babylon and also in the time of Rome, and to the question of Israel’s continuing existence in the aftermath of the Temple. In either case, innocent blood, Cain’s bloodshed or the blood of Zechariah, is centrally important: the story of innocent blood provides the hinge on which history, and the fate of the people, turns.

When, then, Jesus appeals to the blood of Abel and the blood of Zechariah in Matthew’s Gospel at the climax of his indictment of the Jewish leaders, the reader takes note. Here is an appeal to innocent blood through the figures of Abel and Zechariah that shows a number of immediate congruences with the Cain/blood-flood/judgement and blood of Zechariah traditions: the blood of Abel and Zechariah in Matt 23:35 is “innocent” (or “righteous”) (πάν ὁμοία δίκαιον); it is connected to the fate of the whole people (Matt 23:36); it leads into a warning about the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt 23:37-39), and thence into the eschatological discourse (Matt 24:2-44). Matthew’s larger narrative reveals a number of further correspondences with each of the innocent blood traditions, suggesting that these traditions inform Matthew 23:35-39 and indeed the Matthean tale of innocent blood to which this passage is connected. Is there perhaps more in Jesus’ words at 23:35 – “from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah” – than a clever summary of the biblical history of persecution (martyrs of the Hebrew Scriptures from A to Z, as David Garland has put it)?

Is there, behind Jesus’ words, a whole thought-world, a world in which the problem of blood poured out on the land is central and the stories of Abel and of Zechariah are paradigmatic? In these figures in the early Jewish literature we have examined, the history of Israel and even, in some cases, of the world is told: from

---

2 See not only 1 Enoch 10-11, but also Jubilees 5, CD 2, Sib. Or. 3, Wisdom (where the Exodus is another flood, and promises final deliverance for all victims of oppression); L.A.B. 3, where the flood in the time of Noah shades into the time of judgement and restoration at the end of history. Jude sets Cain, and perhaps by implication innocent blood, in the context of the eschatological judgement. Only Susanna omits the eschatological aspect of the story of innocent blood.

3 Garland, Intention of Matthew 23 (NovTSup 42; Leiden: Brill, 1979), 182-83.
bloodshed to cataclysm by flood or by exile, a cataclysm which, like the flood, is not without promise of new beginning. In what follows we will trace commonalities between Matthew and the Cain/blood-flood/judgement and Zechariah traditions to argue that we can discern here a shared background by which Matthew’s history of Jesus may be illuminated.

I. The Blood of Zechariah

To begin with Zechariah:

Sheldon Blank sees no connection between the legend of Zechariah’s blood and Matthew’s climactic reference to the blood of Zechariah in 23:35. Yet the correspondences, I suggest, are clear. In the first place, Matthew’s reference to Zechariah recalls the description of Zechariah’s death in Lives of the Prophets 23. Hare notes the parallel to LivPro 23 in Jesus’ statement in Matthew that Zechariah died “between the sanctuary and the altar” (Matt 23:35; cf. Luke 11:51): the assertion “shows contact with the tradition transmitted by LivPro.” In fact, the parallels in Matthew (though not in Luke) with Lives of the Prophets and the Zechariah legend are extensive. The details of Matthew’s brief reference to Zechariah go far beyond the account of Zechariah’s death in 2 Chron 24:20-22. In Matthew, there is no mention of stoning. Instead there is, as in LivPro 23, an emphasis on blood poured out. The word “blood” occurs three times in Matt 23:35 alone and never in 2 Chron 24:20-22. Matthew, like Lives of the Prophets, uses the word “poured out” (ἐκχυσάμενον, Matt 23:35, cf. ἐκχύσαν, LivPro 23.1), rendering (like LivPro 23) in the phrase αἵμα ἐκχύσα the Hebrew מַגַּה מָלְתָּ, used in the Hebrew Scriptures for murder. Again like

---

4 Hare, “Lives of the Prophets,” OTP 2.398 n. 23a. It is possible that this statement in LivPro has, in some versions, been influenced by the gospel formulation of the tradition. See Anna Maria Schwemer, Studien zu den frühjüdischen Propheten legenden Vitae Prophetarum (2 vols.; TSAJ 50; Mohr [Siebeck]: Tübingen, 1995), 2.298, 300-301: the confusion in the text-tradition of An2 (Coisl. 205) and Ep1 regarding the place of Zechariah’s death can be understood through the intrusion of the NT Zechariah legend reflected in Matt 23:35 and Luke 11:52.

5 Matthew’s word ἐκχύσαμο is a later variant of the standard word for “poured out,” ἐκχύσα, used by Lives of the Prophets (see Liddell and Scott, ἐκχύσα). On מַגַּה מָלְתָּ see Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 710.
Lives of the Prophets, Matthew locates the death of Zechariah close to the altar. And as LivPro 23 moves from Zechariah’s blood poured out to end-time portents and the silence of the temple, Matthew places the death of Zechariah in close conjunction with the temple’s end, and the end-time. Jesus’ warning that “all the innocent blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah”6 will come upon this generation is followed immediately by the prophecy of Jerusalem’s devastation: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, city that kills the prophets….See, your house is left to you, desolate”(23:37-38).7 Two verses later, Jesus says of the temple: “Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down” (24:2). These words introduce Matthew’s eschatological discourse: the end of the temple is prelude to the last days.

With the rabbinic legends, Matthew’s account shows a similar, and even greater, correspondence.8 Matthew, like Lives of the Prophets, places the death of Zechariah near the altar: “Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar” (23:35). This is the only detail the verse gives us about Zechariah’s death; it is, therefore, emphatic. See where they murdered him! It is also traditional; the same statement of location occurs in Luke/Q 11:51.9 Matt 23:35 differs in a number of ways from Luke 11:51: Zechariah

7 With Gundry (Matthew: A Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution [2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 473), I take ἐρώμενος (“desolate”) to be original to Matthew. The manuscript evidence for its inclusion is strong (Bruce Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament [2nd ed., Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994], 51) calls it “preponderant”), and it suits both Matthew’s fondness for OT allusions (especially Jeremiah) and the similar description of the temple as ruined in the Zechariah legends with which this passage has, as we will see, such an affinity.
8 For the relevance of the rabbinic texts to the interpretation of Matthew’s Gospel see above, Chapter 6, pp. 219-220. I am not proposing influence (in either direction). Rather, the commonalities – especially given the probable lack of literary influence – reveal a shared thought-world, indeed, shared interpretive traditions, in which the blood of Zechariah and the problem of pollution are central and explanatory.
becomes “son of Barachiah;” the passive participle “killed” becomes 2nd person active – “whom you killed” – so that the Pharisees whom Jesus addresses are charged with Zechariah’s blood, and the order of sanctuary and altar is reversed. Clearly Matthew feels free to rewrite the tradition. Yet he preserves its emphasis on the location of Zechariah’s death. The precise location of the murder, though it is lacking in 2 Chronicles, is in Matthew’s estimation (as in the tradition) significant. The rabbis, like LivPro 23 and Q and Matthew, likewise emphasize the location of Zechariah’s death. They introduce the account of Zechariah’s blood by asking where exactly Zechariah died. “Where did they slay Zechariah…? …It was in the Court of the Priests.”

Zechariah’s blood was shed in the centre of the temple. Indeed, it was shed by the priests, for they alone can enter the court of the priests.

Further, while there is already in LivPro 23 a shift from stoning to blood shed in the description of Zechariah’s death, in Matthew and in the rabbis Zechariah’s blood becomes the centre of the story. In Matt 23:35, the word “blood” sounds repeatedly, yielding a verse, and a vision of the earth, filled with blood: “…all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zechariah….” Blood fills the earth. In the legends, blood in the same way multiplies. Blood fills Jerusalem, as the blood of Zechariah seethes in the city and the blood of the thousands slain by Nebuzaradan runs to meet it.

“Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard killed two hundred and eleven myriads, and in Jerusalem he killed ninety-four myriads on one stone, until their blood went and joined that of Zechariah, to
fulfil the words, *Blood toucheth blood,*” the rabbis say (quoting Hos 4:2). The city is a river of blood.

There is in both Matthew and the rabbis, further, not only a focus on blood that is missing from 2 Chronicles, but a sense that the blood itself is the problem. Blood in its concreteness gives voice to the gravity of all the sins of people and of leaders, and their real consequences. In Matthew blood comes at the end of a long list of woes naming the Pharisees’ hypocrisy and corruption, and it is specifically the blood they and their fathers before them have shed that “comes upon” the Jewish leaders. It is, too, the blood that has been shed that comes upon the people: “all the innocent blood … will come upon you,” Jesus says at the end of the woes against the Pharisees, and continues immediately, “truly I tell you, all this will come upon this generation” (23:35-36). Bloodshed gathers up all sins into itself, as it were, and the devastation of Jerusalem follows from the blood that has been shed (23:36-37). In the legends, Zechariah’s dying cry for vengeance – “May the Lord see and avenge!” (2 Chron 24:22) – has become the demand of the blood itself for recompense. “I will appease the blood,” Nebuzaradan says in the legends (Lam. Rab. 2.2.4, 4.13.16; Eccles. Rab. 10.4.1; b. Git. 57b): the blood of Zechariah will not rest, and the people recognize in its seething the demand for requital raised by Zechariah’s unjust death.

In their focus on the blood itself, the rabbinic legends and Matthew are different from Luke. While Luke 11:51 also issues a warning of recompense against “this generation,” it does not envision the consequence that comes upon the people in terms of blood. In Luke, Jesus

---

12 Q has the same emphasis on blood: “the blood of all the prophets that has been poured out from the foundation of the world…from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah…” (Luke 11:50-51). Again, we see signs of a tradition. Note, however, that it is Matthew who calls the blood “innocent” – as do the rabbis.
13 “Truly I say to you, all this will come upon this generation. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to it,…behold your house is left to you, desolate” (23:36-38).
14 “What kind of blood is this?” Nebuzaradan asks, and the people finally confess, “We had a prophet-priest who reproved us in the name of Heaven….We rose against him and killed him” (*Lam. Rab. 2.2.4*).
says, “...it will be charged against this generation” (ἐκζητηθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης, Luke 11:51), thus echoing Zechariah’s dying cry in 2 Chron 24:22. Luke appeals to Zechariah’s story in 2 Chronicles. Matthew is closer to the Zechariah legend and the rabbis: it is the blood itself that comes upon the people.

In this warning that concludes Zechariah’s story, though it is the religious authorities who are in the first instance responsible for Zechariah’s blood, it is the people as a whole who suffer the consequences. “All this,” Jesus says, “will come upon this generation.” “His blood be upon us,” the people say (stirred into bloodlust by the priests), “and upon our children” (Matt 27:25). A whole generation suffers the consequences of innocent blood. So, too, in the rabbis: the city as a whole answers for the blood that has been shed in the midst of it. Both Matthew, that is, and the rabbis are aware of the long reach of innocent blood. Similarly, in the matter of retribution both Matthew and the rabbis telescope time. In Matthew it is the present generation that is responsible for the death of Zechariah and the present generation who will pay the penalty (“Zechariah…whom you murdered”; “upon you may come all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth,” 23:35). In the legends, the people tell Nebuzaradan that they themselves killed the prophet-priest whose blood has seethed for 250 years, and they themselves are killed in retribution. There is, too, in Matthew, the hint of a vast retribution. “All the innocent blood poured out upon the earth” [from the beginning of the biblical history to its end] will come upon you, “all this will come upon this generation” (23:35-36). We are reminded of the 80,000 dead in the Jerusalem Talmud and the midrashim, 940,000 dead in the Babylonian Talmud – a mighty extrapolation from Zechariah’s dying cry in 2 Chron 24:22, “May the Lord see and avenge.” The blood of Zechariah still cries out; in Matthew it encompasses the blood of all the innocent.

15 Cf. Luke/Q 11:51: ἐκζητηθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης; “requital will be sought from this generation” (NRSV: “it will be charged against this generation”).
dead from the very first; that is, from Abel. In all these ways innocent blood, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, becomes in both Matthew and the rabbis something that spans the generations and involves a whole people.

Again, though there is here a basic correlation between Matthew and Luke, the differences between Matthew and Luke are instructive. That it is the generation as a whole that pays the penalty for Zechariah’s blood Luke also is aware. But Matthew emphasizes it in a way Luke does not. Matthew returns to the innocent blood that will come upon this generation in the people’s cry at the climax of Jesus’ trial. “All this will come upon this generation” finds an echo in “his blood be upon us and upon our children.” That is, for Matthew as for the rabbis the blood of Zechariah is at the centre of the story of this generation and its fate. Luke reports the tradition, and then it vanishes from view. Luke also does not collapse together this generation and the generation that killed Zechariah. This generation (or at least the lawyers) kills and persecutes its own prophets and apostles, and therefore it will be charged with the blood of all the prophets from Abel to Zechariah. But Luke never suggests that this generation shared in the killing of Zechariah. Zechariah who “was killed,” Luke says. Zechariah “whom you murdered,” Matthew says. “There was a prophet among us who used to reprove us…and we rose up against him and killed him…” the people say to Nebuzaradan, in the rabbinic versions. 16 Again, Matthew moves in a thought-world that resembles the rabbis’ in the matter of Zechariah’s blood, whereas Luke does not.

Perhaps the most significant correspondence between Matthew’s reference to Zechariah and the rabbinic legend is the last. Matthew, like the legends, links Zechariah’s blood to the blood poured out in Jerusalem at the time of its defeat. Matthew’s promise that “all the innocent

---

16 b. Git. 57b. It is the same in y. Ta’an, Lam. Rab. 2.2.4, 4.13.16; Eccles. Rab. 3.16.1, 10.4.1; b. Sanh. 96b alone has “they.”
blood shed on earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zechariah” will come upon this generation is followed immediately by the prophecy of Jerusalem’s devastation:

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, city that kills the prophets….See, your house is left to you, desolate” (23:37-38). Two verses later, Jesus says of the temple: “Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.”17 Zechariah’s blood thus mingles with the blood of Jerusalem; his death is tied directly to the destruction of city and temple.18

So, too, in the legends. All the versions tie Zechariah’s blood to the defeat of Jerusalem: the story is, in one way or another, a meditation on the reasons for that defeat. “Woe to the bloody city!” Lamentations Rabbah and tractate Ta’anit of the Jerusalem Talmud exclaim:

Jerusalem is defeated because her blood is in the midst of her. The proof? The boiling blood of Zechariah. Leviticus Rabbah and Ecclesiastes Rabbah tie the story to the text, “I saw…in the place of justice, that wickedness was there” (Eccles 3:16; Eccles. Rab. 3.16.1, Lev. Rab. 4.1).

This wickedness is secondarily the princes of Babylon, who now sit in the place where the Sanhedrin sat, but first of all it is Israel’s murder of Zechariah and Uriah in the temple. Babylon conquers the people of God because the people have blood on their hands. The story of Zechariah’s blood, and the blood of the Jerusalemites, follows. In Luke, by contrast, there is no connection between Zechariah’s blood and the destruction of Jerusalem: the lament over Jerusalem that follows immediately in Matthew occurs in Luke/Q two chapters later (Luke

17 Davies and Allison (Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.322) note that this verse encourages the reader to take “house” in 23:38 to refer to the temple; “[b]ut we must add that Jewish texts—such as Ezra and 2 Baruch—do not always distinguish between the temple and the capital. Quite often the one implies the other and there are indiscriminate transitions from temple to city or vice versa, so that one may often speak of their identification.” This is the case here, as Matthew moves from the lament over Jerusalem to the house left desolate to the temple thrown down.

18 David Garland (Intention of Matthew 23, 204), among others, sees in these verses a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem: “By adding the word ἐρήμησις to v. 38, Matthew highlighted the fact that God’s abandonment of the city and Temple may now be confirmed by the devastation executed by the armies of Rome.” So also Michael Knowles, Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel: the Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction (JSNTSup 68; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 146: “So it is difficult to escape the conclusion that here [23:37-39], as in 22.7 (and possibly 23.35), Matthew makes reference to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 ce as a divine response to Israel’s rejection of the prophets, both past and present.” Cf. Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3. 321-23.
The logic linking innocent blood – Zechariah’s blood – and the city’s devastation is missing.

In all these respects, Matthew’s reference to the blood of Zechariah in 23:35 shows, in its details as well as in its broad outlines, a remarkable concinnity with the rabbinic treatment of the legend of Zechariah. Indeed, even Matthew’s “mistake,” the identification of this Zechariah, whose death so clearly belongs to the story in 2 Chronicles 24, with the later Zechariah of the prophetic book, points to a relationship between Matthew and the rabbinic legends of Zechariah. Matthew goes to some trouble to make this mistake, for the words “son of Barachiah” are not present in Luke 11:51/Q. The addition is thus all the more puzzling. The answer is to be found, however, in the context of early Jewish reflection on the blood of Zechariah. For the mistake that Matthew makes is a traditional one. It occurs also in the Targum of Lamentations, in commentary on Lam 2:20. Here the context is, precisely as in Matthew, the legend of Zechariah’s blood. That is, the fusion of the Zechariah of 2 Chronicles with Zechariah the prophet occurs, in the rabbinic tradition, in reflection on the problem of innocent blood and the destruction of Jerusalem, and in connection with the legend of Zechariah’s blood. This is, McNamara argues, an old, even pre-Christian conflation. And it explains an error which is otherwise surprising, for Matthew elsewhere in the gospel shows a precise knowledge of the texts of the OT in several languages and versions. In Matthew above all, this kind of slip seems anomalous. The misidentification here thus argues that Matthew’s reference to the blood of

---

19 See James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, ed., The Critical Edition of Q (Hermeneia Supp.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 288: “son of Barachiah” is Matthew’s addition. Cf. I. Howard Marshall, The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 506: since there is considerable evidence of Matthean redaction in this section, the phrase is more likely a Matthean addition not found in Q. Allison (Intertextual Jesus, 84 n. 43), as I have noted, raises a question about Lukan/Matthean priority in this verse without arguing the point.

20 Martin McNamara (The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch [AnBib 27; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966], 162-163, citation 163) argues that the Targum in thus attaching “the name of the post-exilic prophet to the person killed in the Temple at an earlier period” retains an older and probably pre-Christian tradition.
Zechariah in 23:35 is not *de novo*, but arises out of a tradition of reflection on the story of Zechariah which finds the centre of the story in his blood, an interest evident *in nuce* in *Lives of the Prophets* and exploding into fascination in the rabbis.

The elements Matthew shares with the rabbinic treatments of Zechariah’s blood thus have at their centre an insistence on blood and its consequences that is essential to the rabbinic legend but absent from 2 Chronicles and far less marked in Luke. The death of Zechariah in Matthew as in the rabbis has become the blood of Zechariah, blood that grows exponentially, that frames history, blood that comes upon the whole people, blood that points to the devastation of the city. Significantly, both Matthew and the rabbis name the blood of Zechariah “innocent blood.” The blood that the Pharisees have shed, the blood that will come upon this generation, Jesus says in Matthew, is “innocent blood” (ὁμοιός δίκαιον, 23:35).21 “Seven transgressions were committed by Israel on that day,” the rabbis declare. “They killed a priest, a prophet, and a judge, they shed innocent blood…” (Gam. 18).22 This term is again not present in Q: it is Matthew’s own. “The blood of all the prophets from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah will be charged against them,” Jesus says in Luke 11:50-51. “All the innocent blood from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah will come upon them,” Matthew’s Jesus says.

There is in these two statements a world – literally – of difference. In Matthew it is not the death of the prophets that is at issue, but innocent blood.23 It is not “charged against” the people, but “comes upon” them, like a curse, like a miasma. Innocent blood, as we have seen, opens onto a whole world, the world of purity and pollution, the problem of blood unjustly shed

21 = קדושה וּנְטִיָּה, which is parallel to קדושה וּנְטִיָּה (“innocent blood”) in the Hebrew Scriptures. See above, Chapter 2, p. 38 n. 1.
22 Lam. Rab. 2.2.4; 4.13.16; cf. y. Ta’an. 69ab; Eccles. Rab. 3.16.1, 10.4.1; Pesiqta de Rab Kahana 15.7.
23 Or, perhaps more accurately, the death of the prophets (or the righteous) is in Matthew’s view properly described as “innocent blood.” It is the blood of the innocent and righteous, rather than the persecution of the prophet per se, that is the primary point. See further below.
and the defilement that such “innocent blood” causes. It is a world parsed in the rabbis by references to Ezekiel 24 and Hos 4:2 as well as to Leviticus 17: blood poured out defiles the land; the city whose blood is in the midst of her is contaminated like a rusted pot, and like a rusted pot it must be burnt in order to be made clean. In Matthew, too, defilement is the issue. The reference to the blood of Abel and Zechariah follows hard upon images of defilement. Blood is, in 23:35, closely tied to tombs and the uncleanness of dead bones. The innocent blood that the Pharisees shed as they “kill and crucify and flog” God’s messengers (Matt 23:34) is only the contemporary expression of a long history of violence to which the tombs of the prophets bear witness, tombs which the Pharisees build and adorn even as they deny complicity in the prophets’ death (23:29-30). Indeed, the Pharisees themselves are painted tombs, beautiful on the outside but on the inside full of “bones of the dead and every kind of uncleanness” (23:27-28). From the bones of the dead to the blood of the innocent: the Pharisees deal in uncleanness and the blood they shed is part of a contamination that envelops their lives.

II. Innocent Blood and the Problem of Pollution

The rabbis and Matthew thus set the blood of Zechariah within the purity paradigm. The blood of Zechariah seething insatiably in the city raises the problem of pollution and purgation, the necessary (and impossible) expiation. “Zechariah, Zechariah, I have slain the best of them; do you want me to destroy them all?” It is a problem that leads directly, in Matthew and in the rabbis – but not in Q/Luke – to the question of Jerusalem, her fate and her future, the well-being of the people in the land. The death of Zechariah is tied to the suffering that comes upon the holy city.

Matthew’s attention to innocent blood thus raises a question about the now standard interpretation of Matt 23:35 in terms of the theme of the persecution of the prophets. Since the work of Odil Hannes Steck, scholars have seen in early Jewish and Christian literature a common
pattern of reflection on Jerusalem’s fate: the tradition of the disobedience of Israel and the killing of the prophets. Israel’s rejection of God’s messengers is part of a history of obduracy that brings down upon it the divine judgement. This “Deuteronomistic” view of Israel’s history develops after the Babylonian exile and “is to be encountered in almost all writings that have survived from Palestinian Judaism between 200 BCE and 100 CE.”

It informs Q and lies behind Matt 23:29-36, with its charge of murdering the prophets, as well as the larger story of Jesus’ death in Matthew. In this reading, Matthew’s reference to Zechariah, like Luke’s, speaks to the theme of killing the prophets: Zechariah’s death sums up the long history of Israel’s persecution of God’s messengers. Because of the (paradigmatic) murder of Zechariah the prophet, retribution descends upon Jerusalem.

Certainly Luke sees the problem in these terms: it is the death of the prophets that is at issue, and the persecution of the prophets that will be, in a reminiscence of 2 Chron 24:22, charged against the people. It is true that the theme of the killing of the prophets runs through a great deal of Second Temple Jewish Literature and plays a significant part in Jewish and Christian reflection on the destruction of Jerusalem. It plays its part, too, in the Zechariah legend as it is seen in Lives of the Prophets and the rabbis. Zechariah is, after all, identified in rabbinic literature as a prophet (among other things); one of the sevens sins Israel is said to have committed in killing him is that of killing a prophet. Yet, although it is a partial explanation of the Zechariah legend, it is not a sufficient one. It does not adequately explain the legend’s peculiar contours. One might ask, for instance, why Zechariah? If vaticide is the theme, would not Uriah be a better choice? Unlike Zechariah, he is actually identified in the OT as a prophet

---


25 So, for example, Knowles, Jeremiah, 97-161.

26 “Seven transgressions were committed by Israel on that day: they killed a priest, a prophet and a judge” (Lam. Rab. 4.13.16; cf. 2.2.4; y. Ta’an. 69ab; Eccles. Rab. 3.16.1, 10.4.1; Pesiqta de Rab Kahana 15.7).
Zechariah, though he speaks by the spirit of JHWH, is a priest, the son of Jehoiada the priest. This identification persists in the rabbinic legends. Zechariah is usually called “priest-prophet,” “prophet and priest,” or “prophet, priest and judge.” There does not seem to be any particular emphasis on the persecution of the prophet per se. The focus instead is on Zechariah’s blood.

In Matthew’s reference to Zechariah there is the same ambivalence and the same emphasis on blood. On the one hand, the context for the statement about Zechariah in Matt 23:35 is Israel’s persecution of the prophets (23:29-34; 23:37), and Matthew (unlike Q and Luke) ties Zechariah to the prophets by making him the son of Barachiah, hence identifying him with the book of the prophet. But it is not “the blood of the prophets” which will come upon the people, but “all the innocent blood” (πᾶν ἄμα δίκαιον, 23:35). And Zechariah’s counterpart, his companion martyr, is not a prophet at all but “Abel the righteous.” In later tradition, Jewish and Christian, Abel is the type of the pious or righteous person, and in Testament of Abraham the Judge of the end-times. Again, the interest is not in Abel as a persecuted prophet. What connects Abel and Zechariah, for Matthew, is not prophecy but the ending of their stories, the blood that cries out to the Lord, the murder that cries out for vengeance. God says to Cain,

---

27 Eccles. Rab. 3.16.1 seems to recognize the oddity: it adds “and Uriah” to its reference to Zechariah: “…the Holy Spirit cried, IN THE PLACE OF JUSTICE, THAT WICKEDNESS WAS THERE. It is a place of which it is said, Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers (Isa. I, 21). There were murders committed; there they slew Zechariah and Uriah” (trans. Cohen). The midrash continues with the legend of Zechariah’s blood. It is the blood poured out that sums up, for the rabbis, the problem; therefore Zechariah’s story illustrates.

28 For “righteous Abel” see for instance Apostolic Constitutions 8.12.21: “And while indeed from Abel, as from a righteous man, you received a sacrifice with favor…” (Hellenistic Synagogal Prayer); Testament of Issachar 5:4: “Thus the Lord will bless you with the first fruits, as he has blessed all the saints, from Abel until the present”; Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah 9:8, 28: “And there I saw the holy Abel and all the righteous…And Adam and Abel and Seth and all the righteous approached.” Cf. Heb11:4 and 12:24, and of course Matt 23:35. In Test. Abr. 13:2 Abel appears as judge: “[Abel] sits here to judge the entire creation, examining both righteous and sinners.” Examples from James L. Kugel, Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 151-52. The interest for the tradition does not lie in Abel as prophet in particular.

when he pretends ignorance of Abel’s murder, “Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!” (Gen 4:10). As Zechariah dies, he cries out, “Lord, see and avenge!” (2 Chron 24:22). In the legends, this becomes the seething of Zechariah’s unquiet blood. With this tradition about Zechariah’s blood, a tradition whose shape is suggested already in LivPro 23, a link is forged between Abel and Zechariah. Unavenged blood – “innocent blood,” as the Hebrew Scriptures and Matthew put it – is the problem that Zechariah and Abel now share in common. Innocent blood provides a link between Zechariah and Abel and informs Jesus’ grim warning to the present generation in Matthew 23. Between the original charge of prophet-killing and its consequence, by means of an interpretive tradition, the focus has shifted: now the theme is innocent blood, and the killing of the prophets becomes one aspect of the innocent blood that haunts the generations.

Matthew’s text underlines the shift. For Q’s “blood of the prophets” (Luke 11:50) Matthew has “all the innocent blood” (πᾶν σίμα δίκαιον); for “shed since the foundation of the world” he has “shed upon the earth” (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, Matt 23:35). Innocent blood poured out on the land is the paradigm within which the killing of the prophets is understood. So, too, in the legends it is the blood of Zechariah that is the subject of the story: seething blood, boiling blood, blood that will not rest, blood that cannot be hidden, blood that stains the temple stones red. The restless blood drives the story: it is the blood that requires the deaths of the people and the blood

30 On the verb קָרָמָה, “cry out,” in this verse Nahum Sarna (Genesis [JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 34) writes, “The Hebrew stem τ-‘-k has a legal setting. It connotes a plea for help or redress on the part of the victim of some great injustice.” Abel’s blood makes wordlessly the same appeal for justice that Zechariah makes explicitly.

31 David Garland (like Kloppenborg and also Blank) sees innocent blood as the “key to the original conjunction” of Abel and Zechariah. See David Garland, Intention of Matthew 23, 183; cf. Blank, “The Death of Zechariah in Rabbinic Literature,” HUCA 12-13 (1937-38): 327-46, here 337-38). Garland is right that innocent blood is in Matthew the key to the conjunction of Abel and Zechariah. It is important to note, however, that this is an interpretive development based on a careful reading of the two biblical texts. Blood does not figure in the narrative of Zechariah’s death itself. It must be imported from the adjacent account of Joash’s death. Only here, in 2 Chron 24:25, does blood make its appearance. “The blood of Zechariah” is a phrase that points to an interpretive tradition.
that is well-nigh unappeasable. The problem that lies behind the destruction of Jerusalem in the Zechariah legends is the shedding of Zechariah’s blood. And like Matthew the rabbis call it “innocent blood.” The explanations that the legends give for the city’s fall have to do not with Zechariah’s prophetic status but with his uncovered blood. “Woe to the bloody city,” the rabbis cry; “her blood is in the midst of her.” In the midrashim, the legends conclude with Gen 9:6: “Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed.”

Matthew, then, is doing something different. Whereas Luke/Q 11:49-50 stresses the persecution of the prophets, even their death, Matt 23:35 speaks instead of “innocent blood.” The word “prophet” never appears in this verse. Luke, conversely, does not use “innocent blood.” Nor does Jesus in Luke 11:51 call Abel “innocent” or “righteous” (δίκαιος). Luke is concerned with the killing of the prophets. Matthew is concerned with innocent blood. That Matthew insists on innocent blood in 23:35, though the term is not in Luke/Q, is all the more noteworthy given the verse’s context, for Matthew, like Luke/Q, has been talking about the persecution of the prophets. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the graves of the righteous…and you say, ‘We would not have had a share in the blood of the prophets’….You are sons of those who murdered the prophets….Therefore I send you prophets and sages and scribes…”(23:29-34). There are hints already in these verses of Matthew’s focus on innocent blood: he adds “graves of the righteous” (δίκαιος) to Q’s “tombs of the prophets” (Matt 23:29, cf. Luke 11:47); he speaks of “the blood of the prophets” whereas Q has simply “they killed them” (Matt 23:30, cf. Luke 11:47, 48), and it is not only the prophets whose blood is shed but also the righteous and sages and scribes (Matt 23:29, 34; cf. Luke 11:47-48 [prophets only], 49 [prophets and apostles; “prophets” here is the category-heading

---

32 Lam. Rab. 2.2.4; 4.13.16; Eccles. Rab. 10.4.1.
under which apostles also belong). Still, the context inherited from Q\textsuperscript{33} clearly focuses on the killing of the prophets. Yet Matthew sums up “all this” in terms of innocent blood: “so that all the innocent blood that has been poured out upon the earth from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah may come upon you.” The killing of the prophets is for Matthew a problem of innocent blood.\textsuperscript{34}

Matthew’s insistence on innocent blood in the climax of his woes against the Pharisees finds a parallel in his insistence on innocent blood in the Passion Narrative. In Matthew 27, Jesus is twice called “innocent,” both times in close association with his death. The PN uses for Jesus both of the words (ἀθέως [27:4] and δίκαιος [27:19]) that denote the problem of innocent blood in the LXX, as well as the term “innocent blood” itself (27:4). At the moment when the Jewish authorities decide that Jesus must be put to death Judas tries to return the 30 pieces of silver – now blood money – to the priests. “I have sinned,” he says, “in betraying innocent blood” (ἀίμα ἁθέων, 27:4). When Jesus stands before Pilate, Pilate’s wife says “Have nothing to do with that innocent man” (ὁ δίκαιος ἐκεῖνος, 27:19).\textsuperscript{35} Matthew’s narrative juxtaposes in each case innocence and condemnation to death by legal process. The Jewish authorities decide “to put Jesus to death” by delivering him to Pilate’s judgement (27:1); Judas immediately declares that Jesus is ἁθέως, innocent (and his death therefore a matter of innocent blood [27:4]). Pilate sits “on the judgement seat” when Pilate’s wife comes to him with the dream-vision that Jesus is


\textsuperscript{34} That Matthew’s context has more in common with Q 11:51a than does Luke’s may raise a question about the original order of Q. There is no consensus, as Davies and Allison note (Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.312), on that order. Kloppenborg (The Formation of Q, 145-46) notes a shift, in “Q,” from “prophets” to “blood”: “Thus, while [Q] vv. 49-50 concern the sending and rejection of the prophets, v. 51a shifts the emphasis to the shedding of innocent blood.” It is Matthew, however, not Luke, who uses the term “innocent blood.” In this Matthew is evidently closer to the emphasis of Q 11:51a than Luke. If Q 11:51a does reflect an interest in innocent blood (as Kloppenborg suggests), while the larger passage Luke 11:47-52 shows no corresponding interest, is it the case that Matthew 23:35-39 reflects Q’s order? By the logic of the innocent blood tradition (that is evidently reflected in Q 11:51a), the destruction of Jerusalem follows from the blood of Zechariah.

\textsuperscript{35} NRSV translates “innocent” in both cases.
δίκαιος, “in the right.” “You shall not kill the innocent and those in the right” (Exod 23:7). The issue, Matthew’s juxtapositions make clear, is judicial murder; that is, innocent blood.

In fact, Judas’ story in 27:4-10 (a Matthean addition to the PN) enacts in all its details the commandment against judicial murder given in Exodus 23.

Keep far from a false charge (Exod 23:7 commands), and do not kill the innocent [δικαίος LXX] and those in the right [δικαίος], for I will not acquit the guilty. You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right [δικαίος].

Judas has taken a bribe in order to hand Jesus over to a false charge (the chief priests seek “false witness” against Jesus in order to put him to death, Matthew tells us [26:59]). Jesus (who is, as Judas finally avers [27:4], innocent) is subsequently condemned to be killed (26:66; 27:1). Judas’ suicide then enacts the divine sanction against shedding innocent blood. “Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood,” Deut 27:25 declares. Judas hangs himself, and Deut 21:23 sounds in the background: “Anyone who hangs upon a tree is under God’s curse.” Judas’ fate and the dream of Pilate’s wife (in which Jesus is declared righteous, that is, in the right) both serve to establish the nature of Jesus’ death: it is the wrongful condemnation of an innocent man; it expressly violates commandments against judicial murder. Like the story of Zechariah, stoned to death “in the court of the priests” by decree of the king, this is a story about innocent blood. “The Israelites committed seven transgressions on that day:…they shed innocent blood,” the rabbis say of Zechariah. Of Jesus, Judas says, “I have sinned in betraying innocent blood.”

Matthew, in fact, connects Jesus’ innocent blood with the blood of Zechariah. When the people (and Pilate) condemn Jesus to death they say, “His blood be upon us and upon our children” (27:25). These words echo (as we have seen [above, Chapter 2]) Matt 23:35-36: “all the innocent blood that has been shed from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of
Zechariah will come upon you….All this will come upon this generation.” Indeed – so that the parallel might be perfectly clear – Matthew adds crucifixion to the list of ways in which this generation will persecute God’s messengers (23:34: “I send you prophets and sages and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify”).

Jesus’s condemnation to death is a matter of innocent blood, and the blood of Zechariah, with all its implications, comes to vivid life in him.

The problem of innocent blood thus underlies in a fundamental way Matthew 23:35 and the story of the blood of Jesus that follows from it. We have seen that Matthew’s narrative of innocent blood follows in significant ways the contours of traditions about Zechariah’s blood in the rabbis and in Lives of the Prophets 23. The Zechariah traditions do not, however, exhaust the meaning of Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus’ death as a matter of innocent blood. To do justice to Matthew’s narrative of Jesus’ death it is necessary to turn also to the other innocent blood traditions, to the stories of Cain and Abel, blood and flood. Matt 23:35 appeals not only to the blood of Zechariah but also to the blood of Abel. As the details of the passage go beyond the story of Zechariah in 2 Chronicles to evoke the legends of Zechariah’s blood, so the passage calls up not only the death of Abel in Genesis 4, but the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions. This is true with respect to specific words as well as the narrative shape of the larger passage (23:35-24:2ff).

III. The Blood of Abel and the Cain/Blood-Flood/Judgement Traditions

The problem of innocent blood is something both traditions (blood of Abel and blood of Zechariah) share; hence there is considerable overlap in the echoes of each that Jesus’ words in 23:35 summon up. Both have to do with the blood of the innocent unjustly shed; with authorities or powers (priests, giants, nations) who violently slaughter the righteous; with the blood that

36 Contrast Luke/Q 11:49: “I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute….”
demands recompense and with that blood’s capacity to defile; with the fate of the city that has innocent blood in the midst of her. The “blood of Abel” traditions, however, have two central emphases that are lacking (or only hinted at) in the Zechariah traditions but appear in Matthew; in Matthew indeed they are essential to the story. One is the land: ἡ γῆ (a term that indicates also the earth, the ground). The other is the cosmic, even eschatological scope of innocent blood.

i. The blood of Abel and the land

When Cain murders Abel in Genesis, God says, “What have you done? Listen; your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground!” (נָא יִשַׁם בּ נַפְסָךְ; יֶקְם תָּנָה gobierno [Gen 4:10]). This becomes, in 1 Enoch in particular but also elsewhere in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, an emphasis on blood on the earth. In 1 Enoch 6-11 it is the earth that is affected by the blood that is shed. The giants in 1 En. 7:4-5 devour everything in their path and eat even each other’s flesh and drink the blood, and “the earth [ἡ γῆ, Grk [a]] brought accusation against the lawless ones” (1 En. 7:6). The angels look down from heaven and see “much blood being poured out upon the earth” (ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, 1 En. 9:1). It is (in an echo of Gen 4:10) the voice of those crying out “upon the earth” (ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, 9:2) that goes up to heaven. “The whole earth [ὁλὴν ἡ γῆ] is filled with blood and oppression,” the angels say to God, and people are not able to get out “from the face of the lawless deeds done upon the earth [ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἔργα]” (1 En. 9:9, 10, Grk [a]). Five times in three chapters, in its story of the giants whose violence echoes the violence of Cain, 1 Enoch uses the word “earth.”37 It is the earth that is affected by the blood poured out upon it and the earth that raises a cry to heaven.

In the same way, it is the earth that suffers the consequences of the blood shed, and the earth that is finally healed. God hears the angels’ prayer and announces to Noah, “…the whole

---

37 “Earth” occurs twice more in 1 Enoch 9 to describe the corruption brought upon the world by Asael’s teaching (9:6) and Shemihazah’s mingling with “the daughters of the men of earth” (9:8).
earth is destroyed, and a flood is going to come upon the whole earth” (ἡ γῆ ἀπόλλυται πᾶσα, καὶ κατακλυσμὸς μέλλει γίνεσθαι πᾶσης τῆς γῆς, 1 En. 10:2 Grk [a], cf. [syn]; cf. 10:8: “the whole earth was made desolate” [ἡρμώθη πᾶσα ἡ γῆ] by Asael’s teaching).\(^{38}\) In the wake of cataclysm, in the day of “the great judgement,” it is the earth that in the first place receives restoration: “And the earth [ἡ γῆ] will be healed, which the angels corrupted, and show the healing of the earth [τῆς γῆς]” (1 En. 10:7). The chapter ends with a vision of an earth cleansed and filled with fruitfulness, in which even the trees are glad: “then the whole earth [πᾶσα ἡ γῆ] will be worked in righteousness and a tree will be planted in it, and it will be filled with blessing. And all the trees of the earth [δένδρα τῆς γῆς] will be glad” (1 En. 10:18-19; cf. 10:20, 22: “cleanse the earth from all uncleanness and violence”; “and the whole earth will be cleansed”).

From the blood of Abel that cries “from the earth” in Genesis there emerges in 1 Enoch a vision of the earth corrupted and destroyed by blood, crying out from the blood that has been shed upon it for deliverance. Blood covers the earth, “the whole earth is filled with blood and oppression,” and the whole earth, therefore, is destroyed. The blood of the one man Abel has become a flood, “much blood poured out upon the earth,” that renders the land unclean and that must be cleansed.

This conviction that it is the earth that suffers from the blood poured out upon it, that is in fact destroyed by blood, and the earth that must therefore be cleansed, is explicit also in Jubilees, Sib. Or. 3 and Pseudo-Philo, and implicit elsewhere in the blood-flood traditions. Even where there is no mention of the earth and the blood poured out on it, in every case flood or cataclysm (that is, the destruction and cleansing of the earth) follows from Cain, or the blood that has been shed. “And they poured out much blood upon the earth,” Jub. 7:24 reports, citing 1 En. 9:1, in

\(^{38}\) I follow here Grk [a] for comparison with Matthew. There is evidence that Matthew knew the version of 1 Enoch preserved in Codex Panopolitanus (see below, pp. 280-286).
its recapitulation of *1 Enoch’s* story of the giants. This phrase, “blood poured out upon the earth,” recurs four times more in the same passage (7:27; 30, 33 [2x]). Noah fears for his sons that “you will pour out the blood of men upon the earth” (7:27); he warns them to cover the sacrificial blood “which will be poured out upon the surface of the earth” (7:30) and finally quotes Num 35:33. *Jub. 7:33* changes Num 35:33, however, to emphasize the earth and the blood poured out upon it. Where Numbers (in the MT) reads “and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it,” *Jub. 7:33* has instead, “For the land will not be cleansed of the blood which is poured out upon it, because by the blood of one who poured it out will the land be cleansed in all of its generations.” *Jubilees* brings “land” to the fore and repeats the word, insisting also on the blood that is poured out not “in” but “upon” the land. *Jubilees*, that is, speaks in the language of *1 Enoch*, and sees in the “blood poured out upon the land” (*1 En. 9:1*) the earth’s corruption (the land must be “cleansed”; another change to Numbers 35) and the cause both of flood and (in *Jubilees* 5-6) final cataclysm.39

This focus on the land and its corruption by the blood poured out on the ground is clearest in *Jubilees*, but the question of the land surfaces in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement tradition in virtually every other text also.40 In CD 2:8-9, God abominates the generations on account of blood “and hid his face from the country” (in García Martinez’ translation; the word is יָּרָה).” Similarly in *Sib. Or.* 3:304-322 it is the land (this time of the Gentiles) that is destroyed (by a flood-like destruction) because of the innocent blood that has been poured out; it is the earth that “drinks black blood” (322).

---

39 Cf. *Jub. 21:19* where the same focus on the earth and pollution and the need for cleansing in relation to blood appears in Abraham’s testament, again with reference to Num 35:33: “it is blood which is poured out to cause sin for the earth. And the earth is not able to be purified of human blood except by blood of one who shed it.”

40 Jude is the exception. Though the echoes of *1 Enoch* are clear, the reference to Cain is connected to final judgement rather than the fate of the land. There is no emphasis on the earth *per se*, though of course it is the fate of the whole earth that is at issue.
“At some time a rushing destruction will come upon the whole land of sinners and a tumult will destroy the entire land of mortals…”
Then you will be filled with blood, as you yourself formerly
Poured out the blood of good men and righteous men,
Whose blood even now cries out to high heaven. (Sib. Or. 3:304-313).

In Pseudo-Philo *the earth* swallows up Korah as it swallowed up Abel’s blood long ago. The passage repeats the word “earth” four times in quick succession and comes back to the earth at the story’s end (“And the earth will swallow them up,” *L.A.B.* 16:3). In Susanna the whole point is the life *in the garden*, and the threat that innocent blood presents to it.

This focus on the earth is (as we have seen) part of a logic that sees in the blood of the innocent, typified by Abel, the land’s defilement and therefore its destruction. Already in Lamentations, this is the problem: the blood of the righteous stains the priests and people and leads to their exile, in a re-enactment of Cain’s bloodshed and consequent exile.

Blindly they wandered through the streets,
so defiled with blood
that no one was able
to touch their garments.

“Away! Unclean!” people shouted at them;
“Away! Away! Do not touch!”
So they became fugitives and wanderers….” (Lam 4:14-15)

In *1 Enoch*, the problem of defilement by blood and violence and by false teaching is basic to the movement of the plot: From blood to flood, so that the earth’s corruption may be wiped out; so that the earth may be both cleansed and healed. Like the emphasis on the earth (and connected to it in the logic of purity and pollution), this movement from blood to flood (or flood-like

41 The passage is fascinated by the effect of Abel’s blood on the earth: the earth is cursed for swallowing Abel’s blood and becomes parched and finally is commanded to swallow up blood once more, as it did in the days of the flood (*L.A.B.* 16:2-3).
cataclysm) occurs throughout the literature indebted to the story of Abel’s blood. It is the association between Cain’s bloodshed or innocent blood and flood that is characteristic of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement tradition. Cain’s bloodshed is connected to the flood by an exegesis of Genesis that is original to the tradition: the earth cries out from the innocent blood that has been poured out upon it and the flood is God’s response. The earth has been defiled by the blood that has been poured out upon it, and must be cleansed: the connection between Cain’s murder of Abel (or innocent blood) and the flood runs so deep that even where the logic of purity and pollution is not obvious (as in Wis10:3-4 [see Appendix 2]) the sequence is preserved.

The connection between innocent blood and defilement and the consequent devastation of the land is constant across the innocent blood traditions, whether they have Zechariah or Abel at their centre. With 1 Enoch and the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, however, it is a question not only of Jerusalem but of “the whole earth”; not only of a historical destruction but of cataclysm. In 1 Enoch the flood becomes the eschatological cataclysm, and the same multi-valence (flood that is cataclysm; cataclysm that is flood-like) is evident elsewhere in the blood-flood traditions. Thus, while both the Zechariah traditions and the Abel traditions see defilement and destruction in the blood poured out, the Abel traditions, interpreting Genesis, give to that defilement and its consequences a cosmic and eschatological dimension. It is not only Jerusalem now that is filled with blood, but the earth; and the consequence is not only Jerusalem’s destruction but flood and cosmic catastrophe, the swallowing-up of the earth.

Matthew’s introduction to the blood of Abel and blood of Zechariah saying is, then, striking. For he begins with blood poured out precisely upon the earth: “so that all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood

---

42 Susanna, which (as we have seen) historicizes again the cosmic myth of bloodthirsty powers and innocent blood and flood, is of course the exception.
of Zechariah…may come upon you” (23:35). “Upon the earth” is Matthew’s wording; Luke/Q 11:50 has instead “since the foundation of the world” (ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου). With these words Matthew summons up that vision of the earth defiled by blood that is proper to the logic of innocent blood in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, even as he names the problem one of innocent blood (ἀθιμὰ δίκαιον, a difference from Luke/Q we have already noted). While the Zechariah legends also understand the problem with blood to be defilement, they do not use the language of “blood poured out upon the earth.” That language is characteristic of the traditions associated with the blood of Abel.

ii. From the blood of Abel to the eschatological cataclysm

Further, Matthew moves directly from blood poured out upon the earth to destruction, in keeping with the pattern of both the Zechariah and the Cain/Abel traditions. In the first place this is, as in the legend of Zechariah, the destruction of Jerusalem (23:37-38). But the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 23-24 shades immediately into the eschatological cataclysm: the two events are linked in the logic of the narrative, though (as chapter 24 makes clear) not in time.

“Behold your house is left to you, desolate,” Jesus says (23:38). He then quotes Psalm 118: “You will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord’” (23:39). This is in the context an eschatological statement; Jesus continues with the eschatological discourse. As Chrysostom puts it, “he here speaks of the future day of his second coming.”

In this movement from Jerusalem’s destruction to eschatological cataclysm,

43 In the context “house” calls up first of all the temple: Ps 118:26 is cited in the next verse (118:26 describes the festal procession “up to the horns of the altar”) and a reference to the temple’s destruction follows in 24:2. But Jesus here speaks of Jerusalem and the temple in one breath. Further, the fate of the temple is intertwined with the fate of Israel: if the temple is desolate, then the presence of God has fled from the people. “House” thus represents not only the temple building but the people (cf. Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.322).

44 Chrysostom on Matt 23:39, Homilies on Matthew 73.4, cited in Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.323.
Matthew departs from the Zechariah legends: here the narrative resembles the Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence.

The opening verses of the eschatological discourse again bring together the temple’s destruction and the eschaton.

Then he asked them, “You see all these [buildings of the temple], do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.” When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matt 24:2-3)

The eschatological discourse follows. Jesus is at pains to make it clear to his disciples that the last things will not immediately be accomplished: “You are going to hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet” (24:6).

“Concerning that day and hour no one knows” (24:36); “This is but the beginning of the birth pangs” (24:8). It is, however, their beginning: the temple’s destruction, logically if not temporally, augurs the last days and its cataclysm. Immediately after the suffering of those days

the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from heaven,
and the powers of heaven will be shaken.

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven…. (Matt 24:29-30)

Matthew here holds together and in tension the present time – the destruction of Jerusalem – and “that day,” the time of the judgement that is coming. The one implies the other, is indeed the sign of it and its beginning; with the end of the temple we enter the horizon of parousia, of God’s coming. “Your house is left to you, desolate. Truly I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord’ ” (Matt 23:38-39). “They will
see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” [Matt 24:30, cf. Deut 33:2 and 1 En. 1:3-4, 9]). The temple’s end contains already the cataclysm.45

This is like the vision of 1 Enoch, which moves from flood to the last days in such a way that the two cannot be neatly distinguished. Show Noah, God says, “the coming end, for the whole earth is destroyed, and the Deluge [or “cataclysm”; Greek κατακλυσμός] is about to come upon the whole earth” (1 En. 10:2). This “cataclysm” is in the first place the flood, from which Noah is saved so that his seed will remain (1 En. 10:2-3). But the flood is continuous with the “day of the great judgement.” “Bind Asael feet and hands,” God says at the time of the flood, “and cast him into the darkness….And on the day of the great judgement he will be led away to the burning conflagration” (10:4-6).46 This two-fold action, binding in the day of the flood and being led away into “the pit of fire” (1 En. 10:13) in the day of judgement is repeated for Shemihazah and the rest of the rebels (10:12-13): the two times, of flood and of final judgement, have the same shape. In the same way, as Noah’s seed will remain in the time of the flood so in the last days “all the righteous will escape, and they will live” (10:17). And in both cases the earth is healed.47 By the end of the passage, in fact, flood and judgement, time present and time to come, not only repeat each other but merge into one another: “Destroy all the souls of the bastards and the sons of the Watchers,” God commands the angels in the time of Noah, “and

45 Cf. Matt 27:51-53, and further below, Chapter 8. This reading is perhaps closest to Davies and Allison’s “fourth approach” to the question of chapter 24’s reference: is it to the destruction of Jerusalem; is it purely eschatological; does it refer to both past historical event and future parousia in “close chronological sequence” (3.330); does it hold both together not in chronological sequence but as “a single prophecy with two fulfillments” (3.331)? This last approach is evident already in Ephrem the Syrian: Jesus “was speaking of the punishment in Jerusalem and at the same time referring to the end of this world” (Comm. Diat. 18.14, cited in Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.331). Davies and Allison see in Matthew 24 “the entire post-Easter period”; the temple’s destruction is part of the tribulation of the last days (331). Yes, but not only part. It is the sign in history of the parousia that has begun and that is, nevertheless, still to come. Matthew’s vision here is at once figural and historical, and it finds a parallel in 1 Enoch’s flood-and-judgement pattern.

46 Trans. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108 (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), adapted: “feet and hands” is a literal rendering of Grk [a].

47 “And heal the earth, which the watchers have desolated; and announce the healing of the earth” (1 En. 10:7); “And all the earth will be cleansed….Then I shall open the storehouses of blessing that are in heaven” (10:22-11:1).
destroy all oppression from the face of the earth...and let the plant of righteousness (and truth) appear forever; with joy it shall be planted. And now,” the passage continues, “all the righteous will escape....Then the whole earth shall be worked in righteousness...and all the trees of the earth shall be glad” (10:15-17, 18, 19 [Grk [a], my translation]). This is the eschatological conclusion to the flood narrative. The cataclysm that comes in response to the angels’ prayer, in response to the blood that has been poured out upon the earth, is both flood and eschatological judgement and restoration. Matthew sees with the same eyes: the temple’s destruction, like the flood in 1 Enoch, merges into the cataclysm of the last days.

Note that in this pattern, flood and the destruction of the temple are both events in which are located cataclysm “now” and sign and beginning of cataclysm “then.” The parallel (between 1 Enoch’s vision and Matthew’s) is between these events – the destruction of the temple and the earth’s destruction in the flood – and not, for instance, between the destruction of Jerusalem and the rebel angels who are punished. The movement of the narrative in both cases is from the earth made desolate by blood to the cataclysm, for destruction and also, in 1 Enoch, for restoration. Indeed, as the flood comes upon the whole earth for destruction and for healing in 1 Enoch, Matthew allows Jerusalem in chapters 23-24 to stand for the whole earth. It is for all the innocent blood poured out “upon the earth” that Jerusalem and its temple stand desolate (23:35-38), and the desolation of the temple serves as sign and beginning of the cataclysm to come upon the earth (24:2-4). This is, after all, the point in the paradigm of innocent blood. It is the earth

---

48 Cf. Nickelsburg (ibid., 215-216): “Destroy all the spirits of the half-breeds and the sons of the watchers....Destroy all perversity from the face of the earth ...and let the plant of righteousness (and truth) appear, ...(and) the deeds of righteousness (and truth) will be planted forever with joy. And now all the righteous will escape....Then all the earth will be tilled in righteousness,...and all the trees of joy will be planted on it” (10:15-19).
49 Cf. the use of γη in Matt 5:5 (the meek will inherit the earth) and in 27:51-52: the earth (ἡ γῆ) is shaken as by cataclysm as the temple veil is torn. I am grateful to George J. Brooke and Terry Donaldson for drawing my attention in conversation to these occurrences of γη in relation to 1 Enoch, or Matthew’s, interest in the land.
that is corrupted by blood that cries out with the voice of Abel and it is the earth that must be cleansed. Jerusalem stands at the centre of a drama that embraces the whole world.

This – the cosmic reach of innocent blood and of Jerusalem’s involvement in it – is an Enochic perspective. Bloodshed here is seen through a primordial lens, through the blood first poured out upon the earth by Cain, through the flood that therefore followed. Therefore the scope of the story, of blood’s defilement and of the destruction and restoration that follows, is cosmic. Therefore it is “the earth” that is at issue. At the same time, it involves Israel intimately. This is true not only in Matthew, but also in 1 Enoch and elsewhere in the blood-flood tradition.

While the story in 1 Enoch 6-11 is mythic and universal, in 1 Enoch 85-90 it serves as the foundational narrative for the history of Israel. From the time of Cain and Abel, bloodshed has dogged the earth (85:3-6); in the first days of the world it culminated in the flood; in the history of Israel it leads repeatedly to Jerusalem’s destruction and finally to the eschatological cataclysm. The wild animals (and sometimes even the sheep themselves [89:51-53], and their shepherds [89:59-68]) “eat” and slay the sheep as the giants devoured human beings (in a figure for bloodshed) in the time of the Watchers, until the people of Israel are destroyed: “I saw until those sheep were devoured by the dogs and by the eagles and by the kites. And they left them neither flesh nor skin nor sinew, until only their bones remained; and their bones fell on the earth, and the sheep became few” (1 En. 90:4). Then, in the time of this desolation the ram rises up and cries for God’s help and “the Lord of the sheep came to them and took in his hand the staff of his wrath and struck the earth, and the earth was split” (90:18). Judgement and the final restoration of the earth follow. In 1 Enoch 85-90 the history that begins with Cain and the blood of Abel, with the stars and their biting and goring, and moves to the flood repeats itself in the life
of Israel: Israel’s history enacts the history of the world, culminating in desolation and the cataclysm that is both judgement and restoration.\textsuperscript{50}

The same cosmic scope, and the representative role of Israel in the story of blood poured out on the earth and cataclysm, characterizes the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions outside of \textit{1 Enoch} as well. In CD 1 the sins of Israel – a straying from the path which is described specifically in terms of shedding innocent blood – lead into its destruction, and then the eschatological judgement: “For they...acquitted the guilty and sentenced the just, violated the covenant, broke the precept, colluded together against the life of the just man....And kindled was the wrath of God against his congregation, laying waste all its great number” (CD1:18-2:1). The eschatological visitation follows: pardon for those who repent, but “strength and power and a great anger with flames of fire by the <hand> of all the angels of destruction against persons turning aside from the path” (2:5-6). Again, Israel’s fate is tied, in the matter of blood and judgement, to that of the whole earth. The text continues with destruction for the land – that is, Israel (if the conjectural reading is correct) – because of blood; this leads into the story of the Watchers and the cataclysm that comes upon the whole earth. The judgement that comes upon Israel is intertwined with judgement that is both cosmic (in the story of the Watchers, CD 2:18-20) and eschatological (2:5-6).

Examples of the cosmic reach of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions and the way that flood becomes final judgement could be multiplied. In \textit{Jubilees} 5, the Watchers’ story and the violence on earth (with a reference to the giants’ bloodshed)\textsuperscript{51} culminates in the immediate punishment of the rebel angels and a description of the final judgement. This two-fold

\textsuperscript{50} It is, too, a restoration that begins with Israel and encompasses the whole earth. First “that ancient house” is transformed and “all the sheep were within it” (1 En. 90:28-29). Then “All those which have been destroyed and dispersed, and all the beasts of the field and the birds of the sky were gathered together in that house...” (90:33, trans. Isaac). Cf. Donaldson, \textit{Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)} (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007), 87-90 and above, Chapter 4, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{51} “And they all corrupted their way and their ordinances, and they began to eat one another,” \textit{Jub.} 5:2.
judgement (5:6-19) is framed by the story of the flood (5:3-5; 20-32). In Sib. Or. 3 the blood poured out upon the earth leads directly to the cataclysm, described as a kind of flood (“a rushing destruction upon the whole land of sinners”) that is final judgement.\(^{52}\) In L.A.B. 16 the earth swallows up Korah as it swallowed up the blood of Abel; this points toward the eschatological judgement, which is likened to the flood.\(^{53}\) Though there is no flood in Jude, reference to the way of Cain leads directly into 1 En. 1:9 and the eschatological judgement of the earth. Even in Susanna, resolutely this-worldly, the echo of eschatological judgement in the wake of innocent blood is heard in the fate of the elders, bound (in the OG) like the Watchers of old, and led away and thrown into a chasm; “then the angel of the Lord cast fire into their midst” (Sus OG 62).

In each case, too, (leaving aside Jude, and the question of whether the people addressed may, in the view of the letter, be conceived of as Israel), the movement from bloodshed to cataclysm and eschatological judgement involves Israel. Though Jubilees 3-7 traces Genesis’ primordial history, it finds in that history repeatedly the seed or reflection of the laws of Israel; thus Noah in Jubilees 7 cites Numbers and Leviticus in his own strictures against bloodshed.\(^{54}\) In CD 1-3, Israel’s history frames the story of the Watchers and the cataclysm so that the mythic history serves as precursor and pattern of its own. Cain’s bloodshed and the flood undergird Korah’s story, part of Israel’s history in Pseudo-Philo, and Susanna, with its echoes of 1 Enoch and the blood shed there by giants, tells in the vignette of the girl in the garden – this “daughter of Israel” – a story in which innocent blood is of consequence for “ἐναπόφησεν ὁ ἀδών,” Jacob (OG 63); the people Israel. Sib. Or. 3 presents an exception to this pattern: in this case it is the Gentile

\(^{52}\) Cf. Wisdom of Solomon: the flood that is judgement upon Cain’s murder of Abel in Wisdom 10 returns in eschatological guise to describe the Exodus at the book’s end. See e.g. Wis 19:6 (cf. 19:18-21): “For the whole creation in its nature was fashioned anew.”

\(^{53}\) Cf. L.A.B. 2-3, where the flood (preceded by the history of Cain and Abel) culminates in eschatological judgement and renewal.

\(^{54}\) Cf. Jub. 4:5, where Cain’s fate is linked to Deut 27:24 (“And therefore it is written in the heavenly tablets, “Cursed is one who strikes his fellow with malice”).
nations who are visited by destruction as they have themselves poured out the blood of “good
men and righteous men.” But Israel is still at issue: Israel is the land of “good and righteous”
people whose blood has been poured out, and the woes that come upon the nations are requital
for their destruction of Israel’s temple. Sib. Or. 3, however, creates a dichotomy between those
who are destroyed in the cataclysm and Israel which has suffered destruction (Sib. Or. 3:273-290;
302-333). In this dichotomy it is different from other instances of the blood-flood tradition.
These traditions characteristically bind together Israel’s history and the story of bloodshed and
flood and the eschatological judgement and restoration that comes upon the earth.

iii. The eschatological cataclysm as flood

In the same way Matthew moves from the blood of Abel (and Zechariah) poured out
upon the earth to the desolation of Jerusalem and then the eschatological cataclysm. It is, then,
interesting that Matthew’s description of the cataclysm concludes with a reference to the flood.

For as were the days of Noah, so will be the parousia of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood (κατακλυσμὸς) they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when
Noah went into the ark, and knew nothing until the deluge came and carried them all away, so will be the parousia of the Son of Man. (Matt 24:37-39)

Matthew makes his own point with the reference to the flood: the cataclysm comes at “a day and
hour no one knows” (Matt 24:36). He also makes it clear, however, that the eschatological
cataclysm is another flood: “they knew nothing until the flood came and carried them all away;
so will be the parousia of the Son of Man.” Davies and Allison separate 24:36-50 from the rest
of chapter 24, making the flood vignette the first in a series illustrating the unpredictable
character of the end-time and the need to be prepared.55 Yet verbal clues suggest that the flood

55 Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 374. So, too, Ulrich Luz, Matthew 21-28: A Commentary
(trans. J.G. Crouch; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 212. Gundry (Matthew, 481-497), differently, groups
24:36-44 together with 24:15-31, 32-35 and 34-51 as passages relating to the eschatological coming of the son of
vignette (24:36-41) belongs with the eschatological discourse (24:1-36), even as it leads into the section illustrating the unknown character of the hour. The flood story concludes with a refrain that ties the passage to the eschatological discourse that precedes it: “So will be the coming of the Son of Man” (24:39). Several verses earlier, in the midst of the eschatological discourse, the same words appear: “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (24:27). In this earlier passage the text continues with a description of end-time events: “Then (τότε) the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven… and [his angels] will gather his elect…” (24:30-31). In the same way the flood passage continues with τότε and the idea of eschatological gathering: “Then (τότε) two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left” (24:40). This passage, that is, shares the concerns of the rest of the eschatological discourse that precedes it.

Indeed, 24:36 (“But about that day and hour no one knows”), a verse tied to the flood passage by the theme of “not knowing” (οὐδείς οἶδεν, 24:36; οὐκ ἔγνωσεν, 24:39), sums up a major concern of the eschatological discourse to this point. “When will this be?” the disciples ask (24:3). Jesus does not tell them; he responds instead with a long series of events that might be mistaken for the parousia, but are not that event. “Be sure that no one leads you astray”; “see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet” (24:3-6). No one in fact knows the time of his coming: “So, if they say to you, ‘Look! He is in the wilderness,’ do not go out” (24:26). “They knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away” is an apt summary of the state of the world in the time leading up to the cataclysm. At its end as at its

---

man (and distinct from 24:1-14 which describes “noneschatological characteristics of the church age” [ibid., 475]). Gundry’s analysis of 24:36-44 as belonging to the eschatological discourse is consonant with my own (though, with the consensus, I see that discourse beginning in 24:3).

56 So Davies and Allison, ibid., 374: 24:36 introduces 24:37 ff. In the theme of “eschatological ignorance,” however, they see the beginning of a new section. I would suggest that the passage 24:36-41 or 44 acts as a bridge: it concludes the eschatological discourse, and its theme of “not knowing” leads into the parables about how to live in the present time (24:45-25:30).
beginning, the eschatological discourse makes the point that “about that day and hour no one knows.” The flood passage belongs to the eschatological discourse.

Like many of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, then, Matthew moves from the blood of Abel poured out upon the earth to the cataclysm, and pictures that cataclysm as a flood. The flood serves, indeed, as the climactic image in the eschatological discourse. That the eschatological discourse culminates here in the flood is apparently Matthew’s choice; he adds the Noah passage to Mark’s apocalypse. The logic of Matthew’s narrative again resembles the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions. The days of Noah, like the days of Cain and Abel in chapter 23, become paradigmatic: as in 1 Enoch and the blood-flood traditions, Noah’s flood is a precursor of the judgement that is to come, in the wake of innocent blood. Indeed, Matthew’s (and Q’s) description of the time of the flood hints not only at Genesis 6, but at the tradition of reading Gen 6:1-4 through the lens of the Watchers story that is evident in 1 Enoch 6-11. They were “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” until the day Noah entered the ark. “[H]ow could ‘marrying and giving in marriage’…, when used of Noah’s generation,” (Davies and Allison ask), “not have brought to mind the many legends surrounding the giants of Gen 6.4?” How could it, more specifically, not summon up the illicit marriage of the Watchers and the women for which (together with the violence of their giant offspring) the flood is judgement, in 1 Enoch? Given that in Matthew the context is the last days, that the flood appears here as precursor and paradigm of the final cataclysm, and that the cataclysm follows upon bloodshed, the logic of 1 Enoch itself (and not just any legend about the giants) seems to undergird the

---

57 Luke places the Noah reference, part of Q’s little apocalypse, in a different setting (Luke 17:26-35, after the Pharisees ask when the kingdom of God is coming).
58 Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.380 n. 46.
passage. Nickelsburg agrees: Enochic traditions underlie the reference to the days of Noah in Matt 24:37-39.59

*Jubilees* offers support for the hypothesis of an Enochic background for Matthew’s (and Q’s) connection between marriage and the flood. The same connection is found in *Jubilees* 7, in a retelling of 1 Enoch’s flood story. Noah himself in *Jubilees* 7 describes the time before the flood as a time when there was first improper marriage and then violence. It was “due to fornication that the Watchers had illicit intercourse, apart from the mandate of their authority, with women. When they married whomever they chose they committed the first [acts] of impurity” (7:21).60 The birth of the giants, their bloodshed and the flood follow. Already in *Jubilees*, improper marriage is one of the problems that leads to the flood, and it is 1 Enoch’s story of the Watchers that grounds *Jubilees*’ reading.

Taken together with “marrying and giving in marriage” as precursor to the flood, the reference to “eating and drinking” takes on also an Enochic colouring. As it is the sin of the Watchers and women to marry illicitly, it is the sin of their offspring, the violent giants, to “devour” human flesh and “drink the blood.” Improper and violent “eating and drinking,” “marrying and giving in marriage” are precisely the sins that characterize the world in the time before the flood in 1 Enoch 6-11.61 Further, Matthew’s pairing of marriage and eating and drinking as the characteristic activities in the time before the flood also occurs in *Jubilees*, in its

---

59 Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 83-84.

60 Translation as in Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 92. Cf. *Jub.* 8:5, where (as Reed notes, ibid., p. 93) Shem’s “corruption by the Watchers’ teachings is tied to a propensity for exogamy, akin to the paradigmatic ‘intermarriage’ between the ‘sons of God’ and ‘daughters of men.’”

61 Peter S. Perry also makes this point: “Disputing Enoch: Reading Matt 24:36-44 with Enochic Judaism,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37.6 (Dec. 2010): 451-459. Perry reads Matt 24:37-39 through the lens of Enochic traditions and notes the echo, in an Enochic context, not only of the Watchers and women but of the giants and their “violent and abominable” eating and drinking (ibid., 456). It is perhaps significant in this respect that Matthew uses the word τραχύος here for eating (24:38); it suggests “inelegant…” “munching,” “eating audibly, as Gundry observes (Matthew, 493) and is often used for animals. Luke, by contrast, has ἔφαγεν (17:27). Perhaps Luke here tidies up the tradition, as Gundry suggests; or perhaps inelegance is exactly what Matthew intends to convey – the Enochic inelegance of devouring giants which becomes, in *Jubilees* 5, that of humans too.
retelling of *1 Enoch*’s flood story. *Jubilees* 7 moves directly from the Watchers’ improper marriage to the giants’ violence, which Noah describes precisely as “eating”: the Watchers “took for themselves wives from all whom they chose and made a beginning of impurity. And they begot sons, the Naphidim…. And each one ate his fellow” (trans. Wintermute). That *Jubilees* 7 brings together improper marriage (interpreted in *Jubilees* own terms, as intermarriage) and improper eating in its flood story may thus throw light on Matthew’s reference to the flood.

Matthew’s list of activities in the days before the flood is, after all, rather unexpected. Eating and drinking are logical enough as a depiction of people “[going] about their daily business unawares,” and have an analogue in Eccl 8:15 (cf. Luke 12:19; Wis 2:6-9); but why marriage? Marriage plays no part in the biblical descriptions of people enjoying themselves in Ecclesiastes, Luke or Wisdom. The conjunction of eating and drinking and marriage is not impossible, but it is just odd enough to raise a question. *Jubilees*’ similar conjunction in the context of both flood and *1 Enoch* suggests an answer: Matthew (and Q) here reflect a tradition about the time before the flood in which the limited information in Genesis 6 was read through the lens of *1 Enoch*’s story of the Watchers and the giants. Matthew, that is, describes a world before the flood that is not only unaware but engaged in activities that corrupt. Given (further) that Noah is important to Enochic traditions in connection with the end-time judgement, the

---


63 As it does in fact, in my experience, when this passage comes up in church bible studies!

64 As Perry implies, ibid., 451, 459. I would note further that vv. 40-41 (one will be taken, one left) with their connotation of judgement then follow logically from vv. 37-39. If it is not only ignorance but corruption that is at issue, the concluding division between the chosen and those “left” makes sense. Cf. Matt 22:1-14 and the guest without a wedding garment, another passage with Enochic resonance, which ends in the same way with judgement and the casting out of the unworthy from the eschatological banquet. See below, pp. 280-82.
constellation of ideas in these verses argues for Enochic influence, whether direct or traditional, in this passage.\textsuperscript{65}

If the influence in Matt 24:38 is traditional, however, Matthew seems to set the image deliberately in an Enochic context. The Enochic picture of eating and drinking and marrying in the time before the flood is in Matthew (in contrast to Q/Luke) part of the eschatological discourse. Matthew, that is, like \textit{1 Enoch} and the blood-flood traditions, aligns eschatological judgement with Noah and the flood. Further, it follows in Matthew upon the blood of Abel: we have seen that “all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zechariah” leads in Matthew (though not in Q/Luke) directly to the destruction of Jerusalem and the cataclysm. We have not only signs of an Enochic world-view in the flood passage itself (24:37-41), but in its larger context the movement from Cain’s bloodshed to the flood that shapes \textit{1 Enoch} 6-11, 85-90 and the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions. Matthew’s re-ordering of Q here; his insistence that the flood story belongs in the eschatological discourse; the movement of the Matthean narrative in chapters 23-24 from the blood of Abel to the cataclysm that is a second flood; indeed the cosmic scope of the narrative all point to the logic of \textit{1 Enoch} and the Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence. Matthew inherits this passage from Q, but places it in a context that suits the logic of \textit{1 Enoch} and the blood-flood traditions, as earlier he has ordered his sources to bring together innocent blood, the land left desolate, and the cataclysm. Matthew’s world is coloured by the world of innocent blood, as it is shaped by the logic of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions. Behind Matthew’s brief reference to the blood of Abel and informing it, behind Matthew’s movement from the blood of

\textsuperscript{65} See also Nickelsburg, \textit{Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah} (2\textsuperscript{nd} ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 255: “in Matthew 24:37-44//Luke 17:22-27 the typology between the days of Noah and the days of the Son of Man recalls the frequent Enochic typology of flood and final judgement.”
Abel to the cataclysm, lies the thought-world we have seen in early Jewish literature from *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* to Jude.

**IV. The Influence of *1 Enoch*?**

The reference to marrying and giving in marriage in the days of Noah is, in *Jubilees*, closely associated with *1 Enoch* 6-11 in particular. Is it possible that Matthew too shows here the influence not just of tradition, but of *1 Enoch*? Likewise, in the larger shape of the narrative in chapters 23-24, is Matthew influenced not only by the logic of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions but also by *1 Enoch* itself? How, that is, is the Cain/blood-flood/judgement logic mediated in Matthew?

In two other places in Matthew’s Gospel scholars have found evidence of direct influence from *1 Enoch*. The parable of the wedding feast in Matt 22:1-14 ends with the curious episode of the guest without a wedding garment. Rubinkiewicz, followed by David Sim, has noted that the king’s command to his servants in Matt 22:13a constitutes a precise verbal echo of *1 En*. 10:4a: “Bind him feet and hands and cast him into the outer darkness” (Matt 22:13a; cf. *1 En*. 10:4a “Bind Asael feet and hands and cast him into the darkness”).66 In addition, the structure and content of the verse parallel *1 En*. 10:4a.67 They conclude that “we have to do in the case of Mt 22:13a with a citation of *1 En*. 10:4.”68 Sim argues, further, that Matt 22:11-13 can be attributed to Matthew. These verses are “literally saturated with Mattheanisms”; further, Matthew here follows Codex Panopolitanus: “Matthew had access to the Greek text which is


67 Rubinkiewicz, ibid., 99; Sim, ibid., 5.

68 Rubinkiewicz, 100: “wir es im Falle von Mt 22,13a mit einem Zitat von Hen 10, 4 zu tun haben.”
preserved in the Panopolitanus Codex.” Sim points to Jude 14-15, which cites 1 Enoch 1:9 according to the Panopolitanus Codex, to show that this particular translation was both in existence by the time of Matthew and available in Jewish Christian circles.

Matt 22:11-13 not only cites 1 Enoch 10:4, but shows evidence of a tradition deriving from 1 Enoch and the figure of Asael. In the Apocalypse of Abraham, a text roughly contemporaneous with Matthew, the fallen Azazel (to whom Asael has been assimilated by means of Leviticus 16) loses his heavenly garment, which is given to Abraham; Abraham’s sins are taken from him and placed upon Azazel (Apoc. Ab. 13:15; cf. Rubinkiewicz 101). In the image of the guest without a wedding garment we see again the figure of Asael (now Azazel) stripped of his festal garment and cast out; we are in the realm of Enochic tradition. This is now a standard observation. What has not been noted is that Jude, who also cites 1 Enoch in the context of the eschatological judgement, also introduces a garment – this time soiled – in the context of judgement. Rubinciewicz notes that the heavenly garment denoting worthiness in the judgement in Apoc. Ab. 13 calls up Zech 3:3-5. Here Joshua the high priest receives a festal garment in exchange for his filthy clothes, as in Apoc. Ab. Abraham receives a heavenly garment while his sins are taken away. Apocalypse of Abraham cements the link by quoting Zech 3:2 (God rebuke you, Satan!) substituting Azazel for Satan: “[God] rebuke you, Azazel” (Apoc. Ab. 13:7). Jude’s image of the “garment stained by the flesh” (in a letter in which the impulses of the flesh

---

69 Sim, “Matthew 22.13a,” 7-10; citations 8 and 9.
70 Sim, ibid., 9. (Contrast Bauckham [Jude, 2 Peter (Waco: Word, 1983), 47; 94-96] who argues that Jude knew the Greek version of 1 Enoch, but used the Aramaic in writing his letter). Davies and Allison (Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.206 n. 63) list numerous instances of the influence of 1 Enoch 9-10 on NT literature. They agree with Rubinciewicz and Sim: “Given the possibility that Matthew knew 1 Enoch…and that 1 En. 9-10 was otherwise well known in early Christian circles, we deem literary influence likely” (206).
71 See 4QGiants 7 I and Rubinkiewicz, ibid., 100-101; Sim, ibid., 13-14.
72 So Rubinkiewicz, ibid., Sim, “Matt 22.13a,” 14-15; Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 206.
73 Rubinkiewicz, ibid., 101-102.
constitute sin) likewise calls up Zech 3:4. In all three secondary texts, that is – Matt, Apoc. Ab. and Jude – a garment which fits one for heaven in the eschatological judgement appears in an Enochic context; in Apoc. Ab. it is connected both to Asael and Zech 3:2-5; in Jude to Zech 3:4. Apoc. Ab. as a whole “follows the tradition of 1 Enoch 1-36,” and in Matthew and Jude the garment appears in close proximity to a citation of 1 Enoch 1-11. The evidence of Apoc. Ab. and Jude supports the supposition that in Matt 22:11-13, in the image of the missing wedding garment as well as in the binding and casting out, we have to do with Enochic influence. Matthew cites 1 Enoch in a passage whose thought-world is Enochic.

Scholars have also pointed to Enochic influence in Matt 25:31-46. The Son of Man who comes in glory and for judgement in Matthew 25 appears already in association with glory in Dan 7:14, and reappears in the Similitudes of Enoch. Nickelsburg argues that the Matthean (and NT) depiction of the Son of Man as judge is dependent on the Similitudes. Further, “the judgement scene in Matthew 25:31-46 may well reflect 1 Enoch 62-63.”

In fact Matt 25:31-46 may reflect not only the Similitudes but the judgement scenes of 1 Enoch 1 and 10. At the beginning of this judgement scene in Matthew there is a line that recalls 1 Enoch 1’s depiction of the judgement. In Matt 25:31 the Son of Man comes “in his glory and

74 So Nestle-Aland 27, on Jude 23.
76 Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 420
77 Nickelsburg, Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 255. In Daniel the son of man arrives after the judgement. The Similitudes conflate the Danielic one like a son of man with Isaiah’s exalted righteous one, thus providing the “exegetical steps by which the one like a son of man came to be judge.”
78 Nickelsburg, ibid.: there is in 1 Enoch 62-63 a correspondence or solidarity between the Chosen One and the chosen ones – the former can be seen in the latter – and in Matthew 25 between Jesus and “one of the least of these my brothers” (Matt 25:40). Cf. David R. Catchpole, “The Poor on Earth and the Son of Man in Heaven: A Re-appraisal of Matthew xxv.31-46,” BJRL 61 (1979): 378-83. Nickelsburg (ibid., 255) notes also that Matt 24:37-44 creates a typology between the days of Noah and the days of the Son of Man which recalls the Enochic typology of flood and final judgement, and connects the Son of Man with the judgement.
all the angels with him.” In *1 Enoch* 1, God comes in judgement “with the myriads of his holy ones”; in *1 Enoch* 10 the holy ones who bring God’s judgement are, explicitly, angels. If Nickelsburg is right about Enochic influence in Matthew’s judgement scene (and given the pervasive presence of *1 En.* 1:9 in early Christian literature) we are perhaps right to see in the angels who accompany the Son of Man when he comes in judgement a reflection of *1 En.* 1:9: “Behold, he comes with the myriads of his holy ones, to execute judgement upon all.” Reed notes that God’s role as the coming judge in *1 Enoch* 1 is taken over by Christ in later Christian literature; such a shift is consonant with Jesus coming with “his” angels in Matt 25:31 as God comes with the holy ones in *1 Enoch* 1. Indeed, the Son of Man comes “in his glory” in Matt 25:31 and sits in judgement as “king” (25:34); *1 Enoch* 9:4 depicts God as “king” reigning from “the throne of his glory.” In all these ways, Christ coming in judgement in Matthew resembles God coming in judgement in *1 Enoch* 1 and 10. Commentators tend to find in 25:31 with its “angels” an echo of Zech 14:5. But Matt 25:31 speaks not of holy ones but of angels, and this is a shift shared by *1 En.* 1-10. Since this passage shows the influence of *1 Enoch’s Similitudes* also, and substitutes Christ for God coming in judgement in the manner of other Christian literature influenced by *1 Enoch*, it seems likely that Matthew’s image of Christ coming with his angels in judgement comes by way of *1 Enoch*.

Further, as in *1 Enoch* 1 the judgement has two parts – for the righteous and for the wicked – so too in Matthew, and in the same order. First there is, in *1 Enoch* 1, peace and mercy for the righteous and elect; then the wicked are destroyed. In Matthew the sheep (also an Enochic image [cf. *1 En.* 85-90, which is itself indebted to the *Book of Watchers*]), now called

---

79 Cf. Matt 24:30-31: the Son of Man comes in judgement with his angels who summon the elect from the corners of the earth.
80 Reed, *Fallen Angels*, 150, 156.
81 “Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him”; see e.g. Gundry, *Matthew*, 511; Davies and Allison 3:420; they point also to *1 En.* 1:9.
“blessed,” first inherit the kingdom; then the wicked are cursed and cast into the eternal fire.

This is, indeed, the fire “made ready for the devil and his angels” (25:41). In *1 Enoch* 10, of course, Asael and Shemihazah and the rebel angels are on the great day of judgement cast into fire forever.  

There is a remarkable correspondence of thought, and even (in Matt 25:31) of phrasing, between Matthew’s vision of the Son of Man coming in judgement and *1 Enoch*’s depiction of the judgement day.

The section Matt 23:35-24:41, from the blood of Abel to the judgement (and flood) that follows, is thus framed, in Matthew 22 and 25, by reminiscences and even a verbal echo of *1 Enoch* [(especially *1 Enoch* 1-11, but also 62-63 and 85-90).] It is thus not surprising that there should be an echo of *1 Enoch* in Matt 23:35 itself. If Matthew and *1 Enoch* describe the consequences of innocent blood in broadly the same terms, as both flood and eschatological cataclysm, the most striking correspondence between them in the sequence of innocent blood and cataclysm is a precise verbal echo. Both narratives announce the crisis of innocent blood in virtually the same words. In *1 Enoch* the archangels, looking down from heaven on the havoc wrought upon the earth, see “much blood poured out upon the earth” (ἀίμα πολὺ ἐκχυσάμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, *1 En.* 9:1, Grk [a]).  

In the culmination of his woes against the Pharisees, Jesus sums up the damage the leaders have done on earth in terms of bloodshed: “all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth” (πᾶν ἀίμα δίκαιον ἐκχυσάμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, Matt 23:35).

Five of the seven words in this phrase are the same in Matthew and in *1 Enoch*: ἀίμα ἐκχυσάμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Even the words in which Matthew differs from *1 Enoch* convey *1

---

82 *1 En.* 10:4-6 : « Bind Asael...and cast him into the darkness...and on the day of the great judgment he will be led away to the burning conflagration” (trans. Nickelsburg; cf. Isaac: “in order that he may be sent into the fire on the great day of judgment”); *1 En.* 10:12-13: “bind them ...until the eternal judgement is consummated. Then they will be led away to the fiery abyss, and to the torture, and to the prison where they will be confined forever.”

83 i.e. Codex Panopolitanus. Cf. Syncellus: ἀίμα πολὺ ἐκχυσάμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Syncellus is generally taken to be a later expansion of the text known from Codex Panopolitanus. We are therefore chiefly concerned with Panopolitanus, with which Matthew elsewhere shows familiarity.
Enoch’s meaning. In παν as in πολυ there is an emphasis on the vastness of the blood poured out. In Matthew’s addition of δικαιων there is the crucial point, a point never articulated in 1 Enoch but everywhere implied: this is innocent blood, the blood of people helpless against their oppressors, blood that raises a cry to heaven των áνθρωπων áπολλυμένων, while people are perishing (1 En. 8:4 Grk [a]). The cry that goes up to heaven is a demand for justice: “The souls of humans make suit, saying, ‘Bring in our judgement to the Most High’” (ἐντυγχάνουσιν αἰ ψυχαὶ τῶν ἄνθρωπων λεγόντων Εἰσαγάγετε τὴν κρίσιν ἡμῶν πρὸς τὸν ὑψιστον, 1 En. 9:1). Likewise, in 1 En. 7:6 the earth “makes accusation” (ἐντυγχάνω) against the lawless and in 8:4 the cry of the dying goes up to heaven. The blood that cries out to heaven in 1 Enoch 6-11 is precisely “innocent blood” — wrongful death, murder judicial or otherwise — and therefore it demands redress.

Indeed, Matthew is closer in his phrasing to 1 Enoch than to Luke/Q 11:50-51 in this verse. Luke reads (ἵνα ἐκζητηθῇ) τὸ áμα πάντων τῶν προφητῶν τὸ ἐκκεχυμένον áπό τῆς καταβολῆς κόσμου ([so that] the blood of all the prophets that has been poured out from the foundation of the world [might be required]). Luke has “[blood of] all the prophets” instead of the stark “much blood” (παν/πολυ); the perfect participle instead of the present and áπό καταβολῆς κόσμου instead of the concrete ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. In Luke, as a result, the sense of blood crying out from the ground to demand cleansing and so to invite the cataclysm — that is, the whole significance of innocent blood in Matthew as in 1 Enoch — is missing. Luke also separates this passage from the lament over Jerusalem and the apocalypse, again losing the logic of innocent blood that orders the narrative in both 1 Enoch and Matthew. The tight logic of Matthew’s sequence, from blood poured out on the ground to the destruction of the holy place and the final catastrophe, is absent from Luke. It is a logic central to 1 Enoch. In 1 Enoch as in Matthew, it is a logic that begins from the blood of Abel. Abel is the first instance and Zechariah
the last of the blood that cries out from the earth, blood of prophets, wise ones and scribes, and finally of the crucified. That the blood shed now by the Pharisees, even the blood of Jesus, is linked to the blood of Abel is not self-evident. To make the link requires the kind of exegetical reflection that Matthew does not do here, but that characterizes 1 Enoch 6-11. The blood of the perishing people crying out to heaven in 1 Enoch 6-11 (cf. 22 and 85) is paradigmatically the blood of Abel.

It seems likely, then, that Matthew knows 1 Enoch in its Greek version. Direct textual influence from 1 Enoch, while suggested in chapters 22-25 by similarity in content and approach as well as by two specific verbal echoes, is not, however, essential to our thesis. Whether or not Matthew uses 1 Enoch itself, Enochic influence in chs. 22-25 is clear. In this 1 Enoch-saturated context, Matthew presents his tale of innocent blood – the blood of Abel – poured out ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, upon the earth, leading to the land’s destruction and the cataclysm. This sequence imitates 1 Enoch itself, but it is not limited to 1 Enoch. It is found also in other instances of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions in early Jewish literature from Jubilees to Pseudo-Philo.

Often, the blood-flood traditions occur in this literature, as in Matthew 23-24, in an Enochic context. As Annette Yoshiko Reed notes with regard to the Book of Watchers, “its approach to the fallen angels – like its treatment of Enoch… -- had an influence that rippled beyond those who read, heard, copied, and collected this text.”84 Our study suggests the same thing for the interpretation of the Cain and Abel story and the flood: 1 Enoch’s vision is both formative and widespread, its influence not necessarily textual, affecting the interpretation of Abel’s story and the flood from Jubilees to Matthew. The blood of Abel (or bloodshed like Cain’s) now leads to

84 Annette Yoshiko Reed, Fallen Angels, 121. She notes the influence of Book of Watchers in both early Christianity and early Judaism in the 1st century (though the picture changes for later rabbinic Judaism). She adds (151-52), “Nevertheless, the patterns in our extant evidence suggest that the Enochic myth of angelic descent remained closely linked both to the authority of Enoch himself and to the writings attributed to him, which continued to circulate in a variety of locales (esp. Syrio-Palestine, Egypt, North Africa).”
the flood, which merges into the eschatological cataclysm. This vision of the cosmic consequences of Abel’s blood (or innocent blood, “the blood of good men and righteous,” as Sib. Or. 3 puts it) has become standard, a way of reading Genesis that, like the myth of the fallen angels, appears repeatedly and without exegetical argument in a variety of early Jewish texts and, now, in Matthew. Behind Matthew’s brief reference to the blood of Abel and informing it, behind Matthew’s movement from the blood of Abel to the cataclysm, lies the thought-world we have seen in early Jewish literature from 1 Enoch and Jubilees to Jude.

“The blood of Abel,” like “the blood of Zechariah,” thus opens onto a world. Matthew brings to this passage (and so to the death of Jesus) not just a scriptural text, Gen 4:10 or 2 Chron 24:20-22, but a way of seeing arising from a history of interpreting that text. The blood of Abel, like the blood of Zechariah, summons up not only the death of Abel, but a whole complex of meanings that have come to be associated with that death. Chief among them is the consequence of blood unjustly shed – Abel's blood, in the first place – for the earth. The earth is polluted by the blood that has been shed upon it and must be cleansed. We are in the world of innocent blood, the world of purity and pollution, in which the blood of the innocent or righteous defiles the earth and the earth cries out for justice and for cleansing. From the time of Lamentations, where Cain's bloodshed stands behind the innocent blood shed by prophets and priests and Cain's exile prefigures the exile of Jerusalem, to 1 Enoch where Cain's bloodshed leads to the flood, to Pseudo-Philo and Susanna and even Jude, innocent blood (for which the blood shed by Cain often serves as paradigm) threatens the well-being of the people and of the earth, and flood or cataclysm follow.

Strikingly, given the distance between 1 Enoch or Jubilees and the Talmud (or even the early rabbis), this is the same concern that animates rabbinic reflection on the death of Zechariah. Here too, the blood of the innocent unjustly shed rests upon the city and defiles it. As Cain's
bloodshed provides the pattern for the land's defilement in the time of 1 Enoch, Zechariah's blood defiles the city in the time of the rabbis. The rabbis, too, turn to Lamentations, and find in the blood of Zechariah the reason for Jerusalem's destruction. Cain's bloodshed and exile stand behind Jerusalem's exile for Lamentations itself; for the rabbis, Zechariah's blood serves the same purpose. The paradigmatic figure has shifted from Abel to Zechariah, but the logic is the same: from bloodshed to the city's destruction, because innocent blood renders land and people unclean.85 “‘Away! Unclean!’ people shouted at them, 'Away! Away! Do not touch!' So they became fugitives and wanderers....” Innocent blood, the blood of Abel, the blood of Zechariah, renders the land unclean, and exile is the result.

V. Innocent Blood, Flood and Exile

We have seen, in our study of the Cain and Abel story in Lamentations, that the connection between exile and innocent blood – of which Abel’s blood in Lamentations and Zechariah’s blood in rabbinic commentary on Lamentations is paradigmatic – runs through the prophets and the deuteronomistic history. Innocent blood defiles the house of the kings of Judah and the land, and exile is the consequence. But 1 Enoch and the blood-flood traditions in general speak not of exile but of flood. The problem of defilement arising from innocent blood is expressed in the link with the flood; the line is drawn from Abel’s blood (or innocent blood) to flood and the

-----

85 Why the rabbis discover Zechariah’s blood behind Jerusalem’s fate in Lamentations while Lamentations itself, and a great deal of later Jewish literature from 1 Enoch to Pseudo-Philo, finds Cain and Abel’s story to be paradigmatic is an intriguing question, though it is not our concern here. It is possible that the shift may have to do with the process of differentiation between “Christian” and “Jewish” groups in the 2nd and 3rd centuries: to the extent that the Cain and Abel story features in literature like Matthew and Jude, and as Christian and Jewish groups began to identify themselves over against each other, it was rendered unusable in a later Jewish setting. The Enochic context of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement complex lends support to this theory. Reed (Fallen Angels, 147-59) has traced a similar trajectory for the use of the Enochic fallen angels myth in early Jewish and Christian literature. In the course of the 2nd and 3rd centuries the myth gradually disappears from Jewish literature at the same time that it thrives in Christian literature. Alternatively, the shift may have to do with the birth of the rabbinic movement. Reed (146-47) points to “early Rabbinic efforts to forge a system of Jewish belief and practice that deliberately displaced other visions of Judaism [such as those in which the Enochic writings were important], which were no less rooted in earlier Jewish tradition.”
flood replaces exile as the end of the story. These texts (1 Enoch 6-11 and Jubilees 4-7, CD 1-2, L.A.B. 1-3 and 16:1-2) are, after all, retelling the primordial history. Exile does not form part of the narrative. Yet exile even in these primordial histories is not far from the surface. For the flood serves, in Israel’s reflection on its history, as “the grand cosmic paradigm of the Exile.”

In Genesis, Tikva Frymer-Kensky argues, the flood stands as precursor and type of the exile. Both are stories of pollution and purgation. Genesis retells the ancient Near Eastern flood story in the light of Israel’s ideas about pollution; in Genesis’ version of the story it is violence (םִלֶּחֶת, which Frymer-Kensky connects to bloodshed) which leads to the flood, and murder that is prohibited after it. Without the law, people polluted the earth with violence to such an extent that God brought the flood to erase the pollution. Thus “the flood is not primarily an agency of punishment…but a means of getting rid of a thoroughly polluted world and starting again with a clean, well-washed one.”

In this the flood was a figure for the exile. As in the days before the flood, so in Israel in the time of Manasseh the earth was polluted by the cardinal sins of idolatry, unchastity and (above all) innocent blood. In Genesis Rabbah, these three sins define מַכָּה in the flood story; these three sins in the Mishnah are the reason “that exile enters the world.”

Of these, blood – innocent blood, the blood of those murdered or killed unjustly – was (as Lamentations makes clear) the most serious pollutant, for it contaminated the land. As in the

---

88 In this, Genesis’ flood account is different from the Atrahasis epic and other Mesopotamian flood narratives. In Atrahasis, as Frymer-Kensky points out, the problem is overpopulation. See Frymer-Kensky, “Atrahasis,” esp. 151-54. 1 Enoch’s reading of Genesis confirms Frymer-Kensky’s account, for in it not only violence but bloodshed is explicitly that which prompts the flood; bloodshed for which Abel’s blood serves as first instance and type.
91 “The most serious contaminant of the land [in the Bible] is the blood of those who have been murdered; the concept of “bloodguilt” is well known in Israelite law. Because of the seriousness of the crime of murder, and perhaps
time of the flood, in the time of Manasseh innocent blood defiled the land; like the flood, the exile was seen as a necessary purgation.\textsuperscript{92}

If the narrative of violence and flood serves as paradigm for Israel’s own history seen in terms of pollution and purgation, it provides an image not only of devastation but of hope. After the flood, there was a new creation; after the exile, restoration.\textsuperscript{93} The disaster that comes upon Jerusalem arises, like the flood in Genesis, from the defilement of the land; its purpose, however, is not simply to destroy but to cleanse. The rust, in Ezekiel’s image, is to be consumed so that the city may be clean. Immediately after Isaiah in chapter 59 declares Israel’s defilement from, in particular, innocent blood, Isa 60:1 announces the promise: “Arise, shine, for your light has come.” Israel will be restored, and its restoration will be marked above all by the end of violence, and the return to the land:

\begin{quote}
Violence (קדש) shall no more be heard in your land….
Your people shall all be righteous;
They shall possess the land forever. (Isa 60:18; 21)
\end{quote}

In the wake of Israel’s desolation, Ezekiel describes the new creation: “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the towns to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt….And they will say, “This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden…” (Ezek 36:33-35). In Ezekiel, further, it is innocent blood, together with idolatry, that defiles the land and brings exile upon it; it is because of the stain of blood above all that the land has been devastated and from the stain of blood that the land is cleansed (see, e.g., Ezek 36:17-18 MT).

---

\textsuperscript{92} Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution,” 411. Frymer-Kensky adds (411-12), “The misdeeds of the people [including bloodshed] polluted Israel, and God had to exile the people. The land had to rest; after the purgation (evacuation of the land) it needed time to recuperate…[T]ime can eliminate the impurity of the land.”

\textsuperscript{93} So Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution,” 411: Like the flood, the exile was a necessary purgation, but it was not an ultimate and permanent destruction.
Exile, however, leads to new creation; in God’s act of cleansing the days of the first creation are restored.

Ezekiel does not draw an explicit parallel between the flood and this image of the land cleansed of its defilement through exile to become again like Eden. 1 Enoch 6-11, however, does. In the aftermath of its flood, when the giants have been destroyed and the rebel angels have been cast into the fiery pit and the earth has been cleansed from the violence and sorcery that has been done upon it, 1 En. 10 describes the new creation in words that call up both Isaiah 60 and Ezekiel 36. 94 "Then all the earth will be tilled in righteousness, and all of it will be planted with trees and filled with blessing….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…Cleanse the earth from all impurity and from all wrong" 95 (1 En. 10:18-20). “I will save you from all your uncleannesses, and I will summon the grain and make it abundant….I will make the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field abundant…” (Ezek 36:29-30): the imagery is the same, in Ezekiel and in 1 Enoch. The righteous in 1 Enoch 10 will become many (10:17); in Ezekiel God will “increase their population like a flock…so shall the ruined towns be filled with flocks of people” (36:37-38). The nations shall see it and worship God: “Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places…” (Ezek 36:36); “all nations shall worship and bless me” (1 En. 10:21, trans. Isaac). For 1 Enoch 10, that is, the time after the flood, after the final cataclysm, is the time of Ezekiel’s promise spoken to the people in exile. 96 The flood (and final cataclysm) is

94 For the echoes of Isaiah in 1 En. 10 see Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 226.
95 “wrong”: The Greek ἀδικία = also “oppression” or “violence”; see 1 En. 9:9; LXX Gen 6:11.
96 Note also that in Codex Panopolitanus, 1 En. 10:18 (“all the earth will be worked in righteousness, and a tree will be planted in it”), like Ezek 36:35, describes a new Eden. The parallels with Ezek 36-37 are perhaps even clearer in 1 En. 90: the dry bones that are all that is left of the people (1 En. 90:4); the new temple in the time after destruction, when all the sheep which had been destroyed and dispersed are gathered in the house as well as all the beasts and birds (i.e. the nations), and the sheep are so many that the house cannot contain them all (90:30-36).
aligned with the exile. Both serve to cleanse the land from the defilement that has come upon it, above all from the stain of blood. Both end in restoration.

This movement from flood (or exile in the prophets, cf. 1 En. 85-90) to restoration is typical of the various Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions. In each case, the flood (or the eschatological destruction) leads finally, as we have seen, to some degree of restoration, or even new creation. In Jubilees the flood story (preceded by violence described in terms of “eating one another” [5:2]) leads not only into judgement (a harbinger of eschatological judgement) for the giants and rebel angels, but a new nature for all the world: “And he made for all his works a new and righteous nature so that they might not sin in all their nature forever, and so that they might be righteous, each in his kind, always” (Jub. 5:12). In CD 3 the destruction of Israel by the sword (in the wake, again, of “eating blood”) is followed by God’s gift to the remnant of a sure house in Israel, the new people set aside for God. Although Sib. Or. 3 describes the destruction of Israel’s oppressors for the innocent blood they have shed, even here “rest” follows upon eschatological devastation, at least for Egypt.

In Pseudo-Philo the flood story, connected as we have seen to Cain’s bloodshed, becomes an eschatological judgement yielding a new creation. Jude promises, after the impending eschatological judgement, “eternal life” for those who walk not in the way of Cain (or Korah or Balaam) but in mercy and peace and love. The movement from Cain and/or blood to flood – like the movement into exile for the prophets – is a movement not only to destruction but into a new beginning.

Even in the Zechariah legends, set in the midst of the destruction of Jerusalem, the story of blood and destruction does not end without hope. The point of the slaughter of the people of Jerusalem is to silence and to swallow up the blood of Zechariah, and the result is the conversion

---

97 Though Susanna’s story is this-worldly rather than eschatological, here too the garden and the life of the people in it is restored.
of the pagan conqueror. Jerusalem’s destruction in the Zechariah legends, like the flood in *I Enoch* and the blood-flood traditions, like the exile in Ezekiel, is finally about purgation: not only devastation following upon the stain of innocent blood, but also restoration.

The problem of innocent blood as it is described in the prophets and in the deuteronomistic history, as well as in the blood of Zechariah and blood-flood traditions, is one of defilement beyond ritual purification. It leads in the primordial history to the flood and in Israel’s history to exile. The two stand parallel. But exile, like the flood, is finally cleansing. Pollution, innocent blood, in the literature of early Judaism raises the question precisely of purgation: not just devastation, but a new beginning.

The innocent blood traditions of early Judaism thus lead to this question. Do we find in Matthew, shaped in such significant ways by the logic of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, sharing the logic of the legends of Zechariah’s blood, a similar concern with both poles of the paradigm: defilement and destruction on the one hand, and cleansing and new beginning on the other? Is exile, the fate of the land, at issue in the story of Jesus’ death? And what about restoration?
Chapter 8
The Meaning of Innocent Blood in Matthew: Pollution and Purgation, Exile and Restoration

Against the background of innocent blood and exile, in the ambit of traditions about Cain’s bloodshed and the blood of Zechariah, Matthew’s Passion Narrative unfolds in key ways as a saga of innocent blood. In this saga, pollution is central and Israel, γῆ Ἰσραήλ, γῆ Ἰουδα, stands at the heart of the story; for innocent blood means defilement, and raises the question of the fate of the people in the land. In this chapter we will examine the ways in which Matthew writes the account of Jesus’ death as a narrative of innocent blood, with attention not only to its literary shape but also to Matthew’s use of scripture. It is an account that will take us from the innocent blood passages to others that echo the theme of innocent blood in the birth narrative and, finally, in the crucifixion and resurrection narratives. We have noted already commonalities with the Cain/blood-flood/judgement and Zechariah traditions, and suggested the influence of 1 Enoch; although we will note several further signs of Enochic influence in the crucifixion and resurrection narratives, we turn now to the composition-critical level, tracing the history Matthew relates, including the allusions through which he tells it.\(^1\) We will ask also about its meaning, and this in two respects. First, what is the meaning of Jesus’ death as a matter of innocent blood in Matthew’s perspective? To this question the answer Matthew gives, we will find, has much in common with the logic of the innocent blood traditions. It is an answer both

\(^1\) Insofar as the question of meaning arising from our reading of Matthew’s narrative is both narrative and theological, it places our reading in the realm of composition-criticism, rather than narrative criticism *tout court*. Though the two are similar, composition criticism asks theological questions from which narrative criticism may prescind. See the helpful discussion in Joel Willetts, *Matthew’s Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of ‘The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel’* (BZNW 147; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 37-39.
theological, having to do with the purpose and work of God, and Israel-centred – for as a problem of innocent blood, the purpose and work of God in Christ cannot be separated from the history and future of Israel. Matthew’s theological vision will, finally, bring us full circle, back to the question with which we began. This is the pressing question brought to a point in the people’s cry at 27:25: what of the Jewish people, for Matthew? What kind of attitude toward contemporary Israel, toward Judaism, does Matthew’s Gospel reveal in its treatment of Jesus’ death as a matter of innocent blood, after the pattern of the logic of traditions about Cain’s bloodshed and the blood of Zechariah?

I. The Death of Jesus in Matthew as a Saga of Innocent Blood

In many ways, as we have seen, Matthew structures the narrative of Jesus’ death as a drama of innocent blood. A brief recapitulation at this point may be helpful. Matthew begins by connecting the innocent blood of Abel and Zechariah (23:35) with the blood of Jesus in the people’s cry in 27:25. The innocent blood that will come upon them, of which Abel is the first and Zechariah the scriptures’ climactic example, is the blood of Jesus. Matthew, as we have seen, twice describes Jesus as “innocent” in the Passion Narrative. His blood “poured out” (26:28) on

---

2 The interweaving of theology and history is characteristic of the Gospel and essential to note. The shape of Israel’s history is in the first place a theological question: it has to do, for Matthew (and I would suggest for the biblical texts more broadly) with the nature and purpose of God and with the outworking of God’s purpose (cf. Richard Hays, “Can the Gospels Teach Us How to Read the Old Testament?” Pro Ecclesia 11 (2002): 402-418, here 403 n. 2: theological questions are “questions that focus on God’s action and purpose”). The problem of innocent blood, however, highlights the concreteness of that question in the perspective of the Gospel. It is a matter of the land and the life of the people in that land; the relation to God that is at the heart of the question of Israel’s thriving has at its centre the question of holiness. How will the holy God dwell in the midst of his people? This is a question that is worked out “on the ground,” in the concrete holiness of the people and the place in which they dwell. The nature and purpose of God are known in the event, in blood poured out (for destruction and also, as it turns out, for cleansing), in exile and in restoration – and in event that has to do, always, with Israel. God’s purpose and act, even God’s nature, are revealed in the life of a particular people, Israel (and then in the life of Israel’s Messiah). There is no “closed world” of the text (contrary to David Rhoads on narrative criticism [“Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark,” JAAK 50 (1982): 411-34]): the text refers always outward, to God and to history. Or, perhaps better, the text draws in and encompasses the world (as in the traditions of interpretation we have traced) so that history (real history; exile and return) unfolds within it. And it is, first and foremost, the history of Israel and its life in the land that there, in the text and in the communities that interpret it, unfolds.

3 Matt 27:4 (δίκαιος ἄδικον) and 27:19 (δίκαιος); NRSV translates in both cases “innocent.”
the cross calls up the blood of Abel and Zechariah poured out on the earth. Matthew, in fact, adds crucifixion to the list of ways in which this generation will persecute God’s messengers (23:34): Jesus’ crucifixion, like the blood of Abel, like the blood of Zechariah, is a story of innocent blood.

In two other scenes in the Passion Narrative, scenes peculiar to his Gospel, Matthew develops the theme of innocent blood. In these scenes – and in the perspective of the innocent blood traditions – it becomes clear that this is a narrative, too, about defilement. Judas, declaring Jesus’ death a matter of innocent blood (ἀἵμα ἁθῆν, 27:4), tries to return the blood money (τιμὴ αἵματος, 27:6) to the chief priests. When they refuse it, he departs to hang himself, “throwing the silver into the sanctuary.” As Zechariah’s blood, in the legends, stains the temple stones, so the price of Jesus’ blood lands on the temple floor. This is defilement, the bloodguilt of the priests of Israel, reaching even into the holy place. That it is the chief priests who are here involved in blood money highlights the problem of pollution (and in the same way as the Zechariah legends): even those closest to the centre of holiness shed innocent blood. Indeed, the blood money lands not just in the temple but, like Zechariah’s blood in the legends, in the sanctuary: εἰς τὸν ναόν (27:5). The word ναός in Matthew, Davies and Allison assert, usually

2 Ἐκχυσάνωμεν, “poured out,” is a direct echo of 23:35. Luke, by contrast, has the perfect participle for the blood of the prophets poured out in 11:50. The echo is Matthew’s, by way of 1 En. 9:1-3 (see above, Chapter 7, pp. 284-86). Gundry (Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 528) notes the echo and says “pouring out blood connotes violent death (see Matt 23:35…) which alone can have the value of a sacrifice…” My point here is rather that the echo reinforces the fact that, in Matthew, Jesus’ blood is shed as innocent blood. Further, the present participle underlines the present generation’s involvement in Abel’s and Zechariah’s innocent blood in Matthew’s Gospel.

5 Garland’s contention (The Intention of Matthew 23 [NovTSup 52; Leiden: Brill, 1979], 185, cf. David Moffit, “Righteous Bloodshed, Matthew’s Passion Narrative, and the Temple’s Destruction: Lamentations as a Matthean Intertext,” JBL 125 [2006]: 299-320, esp. 314-16) that we should read δίκαιον instead of ἁθῆν in 27:4 does not do justice to Matthew’s text. The close correlation between Judas’ words in 27:4 and Pilate’s words in 27:24 suggests that Matthew intends to use ἁθῆν in 27:4 (so also Davies and Allison, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew (3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1997), 3.563 and n. 21). Further, the emphasis on blood in the rest of Judas’ story and the reference to bloodguilt and Deuteronomy’s ancient handwashing ceremony in Pilate’s corresponding words (see further below, p. 289) make it clear that Jesus’ blood, not just his righteousness, is at issue here. Jesus’ condemnation, as an unjust execution, is an act against “innocent blood,” precisely the kind of judicial murder against which Exod 23:7 warns (“you shall not kill the innocent and the righteous”).
indicates the inner shrine; Matthew apparently uses it deliberately here: the scene calls up Zech
11:13, but where LXX Zech 11:13 has ὠκος, Matthew uses ναός. The blood of Jesus, like the
blood of Zechariah, touches the heart of the temple; even the chief priests, even the inner
sanctuary, are defiled.

The theme of uncleanness continues in Judas’ death by hanging (“cursed is the one who
hangs upon a tree” Deut 21:23); in the burial ground (ταφή, 27:7) for foreigners bought with the
blood-money. The priests deal in defilement even while denying their complicity in innocent
blood (σὺ ὃψη, 27:4). As if to make the point, the cemetery they buy is called, Matthew tells us,
“the field of blood, to this day.” In this, perhaps, they are not much different from the Pharisees
who build the tombs (ταφος, 23:39) of the prophets while denying any share in their blood.
Innocent blood with its pollution pervades the land and enters the temple’s inner sanctuary, and
Pharisees and priests alike have a hand in it.

Matthew links the priests’ role in innocent blood (27:4-10) closely with Pilate’s role in
Jesus’ condemnation (27:24-25) through verbal echoes: σίμα; άθωγός / άθωγών; Σὺ ὃψη / ὑμεῖς ὁσεοθε occur in both passages in the interchanges between the priests and Judas, and
Pilate and the people. In both scenes, the problem is Jesus’ innocent blood. At the climax of the
trial before Pilate, as the crowd clamours for Jesus’ crucifixion, there is an abrupt pause in the
action. Pilate takes water and washes his hands, saying, “I am innocent [άθωγός εἰμι] of this

---

6Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.564 (contrast Senior, The Passion Narrative according
to Matthew: A Redactional Study (BETL 39; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1975), 383 n. 130). They do not,
however, come to a decision about whether the word here means the temple buildings in general or the inner shrine.
Commentators sometimes hesitate to take ναός here to mean “the sanctuary” in the sense it has elsewhere in Mat-
thew because, in terms of actual practice, Judas could not have been in the inner shrine (forbidden to all but priests).
As Gundry (Matthew, 555) points out, however, Matthew is thinking of Zech11:13 (“I took the thirty silver [pieces]
and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord”) and is not concerned about the practical problem. Further,
comparison with Matt 21:13 suggests that ναός in 27:5 indicates the inner shrine. In 21:13 (“My house shall be
called a house of prayer”) Matthew, quoting the LXX (Isa 56:7) and referring to the temple, retains his source’s
“οἶκος.” Here he again cites scripture (this time Zech 11:13) but uses ναός instead of the LXX’s οἶκος. (Cf. 23:38,
where Matthew uses οἶκος to describe the temple, and perhaps even the city, as a whole). That Matthew uses ναός
apparently deliberately in 27:5 suggests that he intends something more specific than “temple” in general. He in-
tends the inner shrine.
man’s blood” (27:4). Pilate’s gesture recalls pointedly the ancient biblical ceremony of expiation for innocent blood (Deut 21:1-9).\(^7\) With their hand-washing and breaking of the heifer’s neck, the elders seek to purge the guilt of innocent blood from their midst. When Pilate evokes that ceremony, he names Jesus’ condemnation a matter of innocent blood and bloodguilt, of the pollution that defiles land and people alike. He calls up the problem of expiation, for blood requires blood. In the background looms the question of the nation’s survival, for the Holy God cannot live in the midst of pollution, and the innocent blood that has been poured out upon the earth renders the land barren, drives God from the temple, and leaves the nation naked before its enemies.\(^8\) In Pilate’s handwashing, Matthew calls up this paradigm, the history of a holy God, the people and the land, and the history of the land’s defilement.

II. Innocent blood and the Fate of the People

i. Allusions to scripture

In Matthew’s Passion Narrative as we have traced it to this point, innocent blood and the problem of pollution thus play a shaping role. In conceiving of Jesus’ death as a matter of innocent blood, Matthew raises the question of the people and their life in the land. The cry of the people in 27:25 is not only the decisive moment in Jesus’ trial but, in the logic of innocent blood, the decisive moment for the fate of the people. That Matthew here intends, after the manner of the Zechariah and, indeed, the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, to raise the question of the people and their life in the land becomes clear in the phrase πᾶσας ὄλαχότις. When

---

\(^7\)See above, Chapter 3, pp. 79-82.

Pilate declares “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” it is “the whole people” who respond. There is a question about the meaning of the phrase “the whole people,” a question that is pertinent to this investigation. Commentators routinely observe that Matthew shifts here from ὁι ὀχλοὶ (crowds) to ὁ λαὸς (the people). Indeed, he uses the solemn term πᾶς ὁ λαὸς. The phrase πᾶς ὁ λαὸς “has most often been taken to refer to ‘the people’ of Israel in its entirety,” though some now take it to refer only to the people of Jerusalem (and the disaster presaged by their words “his blood be upon our heads” only to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.). In what sense does Matthew intend the term?

An examination of its use in the Hebrew Scriptures is helpful. The phrase “all the people” does occur in a limited sense in the Hebrew Bible (and LXX) to mean the people of a particular clan or city. It occurs rather more frequently, however, in the sense of “the whole people”:

Israel (or Judah). Twice in Exodus, in fact, Matthew’s precise phrase occurs in the context of the covenant. Moses tells the people all the words of the Lord, “and all the people answered…and said…, ‘All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do’” (ἀπεκρίθη δὲ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς…καὶ εἶπεν, Exod 19:8, cf. 24:3; Deut 27:15). ‘Ἀπεκρίθη πᾶς ὁ λαὸς…’: this is the phrase Matt uses

---

9 Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.591. See for example Michael Knowles, Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: the Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction (JSNTSup 68; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 202. Knowles points to O. H. Steck (Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung des deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbildes im Alten Testament, Spätjudentum und Urchristentum [WMANT 23; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967], 295) and Trilling (Das Wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Matthaus-Evangeliums [3rd ed.; Munich: Kosel-Verlag, 1964], 72-73, 75): In Steck and Trilling the phrase is taken to indicate the self-condemnation of the Jewish people as a whole and their subsequent rejection by God; hence the more recent efforts to circumscribe the term’s scope. I suggest we will find that Matthew, like Jeremiah, does intend the phrase to designate Israel as a whole, but understands in that designation not rejection but both coming devastation and hope, the ongoing history of the covenant people and their God.

10 Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.592. Cf. Hans Kosmala, “ “His Blood on Us and on Our Children” (The Background of Mat. 27, 24-25),” ASTI 7 (1968-69): 94-126. See Chapter 1, pp. 7-9. The point for Matthew, however, (as for the prophets) is surely that the fate of Jerusalem signifies the fate of the people as a whole. The fate of the whole generation is known in the fate of Jerusalem (23:36-39) and the destruction of the temple points to a cosmic cataclysm (24:2ff). See further below.

11 E.g. Gen 35:6, 41:40; Exod 17:13; Num 21:33-35; Josh 7:3; 8:3, 5, 11, etc…Judg 4:3; 7:1, 6, 7 etc…; 1 Sam 13:22; 14 (4x); 2 Sam 2:28, 30; 3:31; 12:29, 31; Jer 41:10, 13 (LXX 48:10, 13). Even in this usage, though, the smaller group often stands for the larger. Where it is used of an enemy king “and all his people,” although it indicates literally the men fighting under him, they stand for the whole people. When “Sihon and all his men” are defeated, the whole people is defeated.
in 27:25 (ἐποκριθεῖς πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἐκπεν...) In Deut 27:15-26, the phrase marks the response of the people of Israel as a people to the covenant commandments of God at the moment of their entry into the promised land. The phrase appears twelve times after twelve curses, in a solemn refrain: “All the people shall say AMEN” (ἐροῦσι πᾶς ὁ λαὸς Γένοιτο). Πᾶς ὁ λαὸς repeatedly marks the moments that constitute the people of Israel as Israel, not only in Exodus and Deuteronomy, but in Joshua and Judges at the entrance to and conquest of the promised land (Josh 1:2; 3:17; 4:1; 6:5, 19; 10:15, 21, 29; Judg 20:8: ἀνέστη πᾶς ὁ λαὸς... λέγουν) and in the Deuteronomistic history, as the people become a kingdom (2 Sam 8:15; 2 Chron 7:45; 36:23). In Deuteronomy, the term πᾶς ὁ λαὸς is connected not only to the constitution of the people as the covenant people, but to their future in the land. Immediately after the list of commandments to which “the whole people” will say AMEN at their entrance into the promised land, God sets before them blessings and curses. If they observe all God’s commandments the people will be blessed in the land, but if they do not, they will be cursed, precisely on the land: “Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field” (Deut 28:16); pestilence will consume you “off the land that you are entering to possess” (Deut 28:21); the final fate of the people will be exile (Deut 28:25-26; 36-37; 47-57, 63-68: “you shall be plucked off the land you are entering to possess” 28:63).

The phrase seldom occurs in the prophets (once in Isaiah; once in Ezekiel); in Jeremiah, however, it appears frequently (chapters 19, 25, 26, 27, 28, 34 and 36 [LXX 19; 33-35, 43]). As in Exodus and Deuteronomy, the word of God spoken to πᾶς ὁ λαὸς in Jeremiah has to do with their role as covenant people and their life in the land. “If you will not listen to me, to walk in

12 The last of the prohibitions is that against shedding innocent blood: “Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood.” All the people shall say, “Amen!” (27:25).
13 Cf. Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.591; in addition to Deuteronomy 27 they list LXX Exod 19:8; Lev 24:10-16.
my law...then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse” (Jer 26:4-6). Jeremiah 26 is particularly interesting, for when “the priests and the prophets and πῶς ὁ λαός” hear these words, “the priests and the prophets and πῶς ὁ λαός” seize Jeremiah to put him to death (Jer 26:7-8). This, Jeremiah says to “the whole people” (πῶς ὁ λαός, 26:15), is to bring “innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city” (26:15). Here, as in Matthew, the question of the prophet’s innocent blood has to do with “the whole people” and their fate. The chapter, indeed, makes it clear that the fate of Jerusalem is the fate of Judah, of the whole people of God in the land. “The whole people” who risk bringing innocent blood upon themselves and this city (i.e. upon Jerusalem) at the chapter’s end are, at the chapter’s beginning, “all the cities of Judah” (Jer 26:2); in Jeremiah 25 it is “this whole land” that “shall become a ruin and a waste” (Jer 25:11; cf. 25:2, 5, 9). “All the people” (in the NRSV translation; πῶς ὁ λαός in the LXX) to whom Jeremiah speaks in the temple stand for “the whole people” (πῶς ὁ λαός) of the land; the fate of Jerusalem is the fate of the land and the people as a whole.

When, then, Matthew introduces this term in 27:25 in Jerusalem and (as in Jeremiah 26) in the context of innocent blood it seems likely that he, like Jeremiah, intends by it not only the people of Jerusalem but the people of God, Israel. With this term, Matthew implies the scope of the question of Jesus’ blood: it is a question in which land and history are central, Israel in its history as the people of God in the land. In Deuteronomy, and by implication in Jeremiah, πῶς ὁ λαός is used in connection with the question of the land, with the blessings and curses that mark Israel’s entry into the land. If the people keep God’s word, blessing shall be theirs, but if

---

14Knowles, Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel, 202-203, citation 203, argues that Matthew has Jeremiah 26 in mind in 27:25: the Jerusalemites in 27:25 bring upon themselves “Jeremiah’s hitherto unfulfilled curse” (Jer 26:15). I am arguing for a broader correspondence between the two passages. Both Matthew and Jeremiah (like the Abel and Zechariah traditions) see the well-being of the people to be threatened in the shedding of innocent blood, in their violence and (in Jeremiah) their apostasy; the defeat of Jerusalem is understood as the eventual consequence of innocent blood and the pollution of the land.
they do not, they will be cursed – that is, cast out of the land (Deuteronomy 27-28; cf. Jer 26:4-6).

By his use of the term πᾶσα λαοῦ Matthew suggests that in his Gospel as in the logic of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions what is at issue in the blood of the innocent poured out upon the land is exile, Jerusalem’s defeat and the loss of the land.

The connection of innocent blood with exile is especially striking in the prophetic witness Matthew adduces for the Judas incident. After Judas announces that he has betrayed innocent blood and throws the blood-money into the sanctuary; after the priests buy with the blood-money a burial ground, “the field of blood,” Matthew makes this comment: “Then was fulfilled the word spoken through Jeremiah the prophet saying…”; a citation from Zechariah follows. Much scholarly ink has been spilled over the question of why Matthew attributes a passage from Zechariah to Jeremiah. Whatever the precise solution, the scene as Matthew describes it calls up several chapters of Jeremiah. Davies and Allison (following Brown) note the parallels:

“Jeremiah 18-19 concerns a potter (18.2-6; 19.1), a purchase (19.1), the Valley of Hinnom (where the Field of Blood is traditionally located, 19.2), ‘innocent blood’ (19.4), and the renaming of a place for burial (19.6, 11); and Jer 32.6-15 tells of the purchase of a field with silver.”

Gundry points in particular (and persuasively) to Jer 19:1-13. He notes (in addition to the numerous parallels in content) the similar phrases which introduce, in both passages, the (re)-naming of the Valley of Slaughter and the Field of Blood: “wherefore this place shall be called…” (Jer 19:6); “wherefore that field was called…” (Matt 27:8). Matthew continues immediately

---

15 See Davies and Allison, *Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3.568-69, for a list of 10 possible solutions ranging from scribal error to testimony collections to the Jeremiah-like character of the passage, to the attribution of a citation containing elements of both Jeremiah and Zechariah to Jeremiah (cf. e.g. Mark 1:2; Rom 9:27 and Matt 2:5-6); this last is Brown’s theory (*The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave; A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* (2 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 651, which Davies and Allison adopt (ibid., 569).

16 Davies and Allison, 569. See also Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 651-52. Brown notes the points of contact with Jeremiah 19 but finds Jeremiah 18 and 32 more important as sources for Matthew’s scene.

with the reference to Jeremiah: “Then was fulfilled the word spoken through Jeremiah the prophet” (27:9). The Field of Blood in particular, that is, as well as numerous parallels (the potter, the chief priests [Jer 19:1], innocent blood, a burial ground that becomes a field of blood) recall, when Jeremiah is named, Jeremiah 19.

Jeremiah 19 announces God’s wrath at Judah’s defilement: Judah is a city defiled by idolatry and by innocent blood. The people have profaned the temple and the city with idolatry; they have “filled this place with the blood of the innocent” (*τόπος τοῦ ἁρέτου, ἄμα κακοφόρον* [LXX], Jer 19:4). Therefore, Jeremiah declares, this city will become a place of slaughter (19:6). In its ruin its defilement will be enacted: “I will make this city a horror….And I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters” (Jer 19:8-9). Finally the city will be a burial ground. “In Topheth they shall bury until there is no more room to bury….And the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah shall be defiled like the place of Topheth” (19:11-13). Matthew’s interest in defilement and its consequences, his framing of defilement in terms of innocent blood, finds a parallel in Jeremiah.\(^{18}\)

Further, in Jeremiah the problem of defilement is a problem of exile: Jerusalem’s idolatry and the blood of the innocent that fills it (19:4) lead directly to the city’s destruction and exile.

*Because* the people have forsaken me and have profaned this place… and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent… *Therefore*…this place shall no more be called Topheth….but the Valley of Slaughter (19:4-6, italics added).

---

\(^{18}\) Cf. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel*, 70-74: the theme of innocent blood is prominent in both Matthew and Jeremiah 19 and in both presages disaster for the people. Knowles notes an impressive series of parallels between Jeremiah 19 and Matt 27:4-10, beginning with “the elders of the people and the priests” (Jer 19:1, cf. Matt 27:1, 3). Jeremiah, of course, also stresses idolatry. In the prominence he gives to innocent blood Matthew departs from Jeremiah and resembles the Cain/blood-flood/judgement and Zechariah traditions.
The city will fall by the sword (19:7); God will give “all Judah” into the hand of the king of Babylon (20:4). The people’s acts of defilement work themselves out finally in the defilement of the city by blood and foreigner, and exile is the result. As in Matt 27:25, the people as a whole, all Judah, suffer the consequences of defilement, in part by innocent blood, and that consequence is exile.

Interestingly, the other passages from Jeremiah that scholars adduce in connection to Matt 27:4-10 also announce the exile. In Jeremiah 18, exile again is associated with defilement. The city’s physical devastation only mirrors its devastation by idolatry:

But my people have forgotten me,
They burn offerings to a delusion;
they have stumbled in their ways…
Making their land a horror,
A thing to be hissed at forever.
All who pass by it are horrified
and shake their heads.
Like the wind from the east,
I will scatter them before the enemy. (18:15-17; cf. 19:7-8)

Jeremiah 32 reiterates at length the warning of certain doom (“I am going to give this city into the hands of the Chaldeans and into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon” 32:28; cf. 32:1-5, 26-36). Again, the problem is defilement, by idolatry and child sacrifice: “They set up their abominations in the house that bears my name, and defiled it” (32:34).

ii. The priority of innocent blood: signs of the innocent blood traditions

In Jeremiah as in Matthew, therefore, the theme of innocent blood is prominent; in both it presages disaster for the people. Jeremiah, however, understands defilement in terms of idolatry

---

19 That the purchase of a field (which provides a point of contact with Matt 27:4-10) is here a sign of hope and not of devastation, a promise of eventual return, may indicate that Jeremiah 32 provides a less apt background for Matt 27:4-10 than Jeremiah 18-19. Nevertheless it is important to note that in this chapter God’s word is not doom only but also hope: although God’s wrath will come upon the city that has “aroused my anger and wrath” (32:31) and defiled “the house that bears my name” (32:34), God’s final word is promise: “See, I am going to gather them…” (32:37).
and innocent blood (and innocent blood, insofar as it refers to child sacrifice, as a subset of idolatry). Matthew focuses on innocent blood. In the prominence he gives to innocent blood Matthew departs from Jeremiah and resembles the Cain/blood-flood/judgement and Zechariah traditions. Interestingly, there is an indirect link between Matt 27:9 and the Cain/blood-flood/judgement logic of 1 Enoch – not through Matthew’s reference to Jeremiah, but through the citation itself, which quotes Zech 11:13.

Though he attributes the citation in 27:9 to Jeremiah, Matthew in fact quotes Zech 11:13. Zechariah 11, too, announces doom for God’s “flock”: the corruption of Israel’s leaders leads to exile. “For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land (ךֵּבָּשׁ יָם), says the Lord.\(^\) I will cause them, every one, to fall each into the hand of a neighbour and each into the hand of the king; and they shall devastate the land (ךֵּבָּשׁ יָם)” (Zech 11:6). God will annul his covenant with the peoples.\(^\) Again, the coming destruction is associated with defilement. “What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed, and let those that are left devour the flesh of one another!” (11:9). We have seen that “devouring the flesh” is, against the background of Leviticus 17, an image for defilement. It occurs in this sense in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions evident in 1 Enoch and Jubilees; in these texts it is connected to the devastation of the land and the

---


\(^{21}\)Whether this means “all the people of Israel” (so Redditt, Haggai, Zechariah, 125-26; cf. BHS, which emends the plural to a singular) or “all the peoples of the earth” (NRSV), it includes Judah.
flood.\textsuperscript{22} In \textit{1 En.} 86-90, the image of flesh being devoured occurs in a context influenced by Zechariah 11; the image may thus stem from Zechariah 11.\textsuperscript{23} In \textit{1 Enoch}, that is, Zechariah 11 comes together with the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions to describe the corruption of Israel’s leaders in terms of defilement. Matthew finds in Zechariah 11 the biblical anticipation of the blood money which defiles at the hands of Israel’s leaders, here the chief priests. And for Matthew, as for \textit{1 Enoch}, defilement has become a matter of innocent blood. Matthew’s reading of Zechariah 11 in this respect parallels \textit{1 Enoch’s} reading of Zechariah: Matthew uses Zechariah, with its intimation of exile, to describe a situation of defilement and innocent blood.

In calling up both Jeremiah and Zechariah 11 in 27:4-10, Matthew thus evokes the spectre of exile in connection in particular with defilement. Matthew’s use of scripture in 27:4-10, like the phrase πᾶς ὁ λαός and the allusion to Deuteronomy 21 in 27:24-25 (and consonant with the use of Zechariah and Ezekiel in \textit{1 Enoch} 89-90) sets Jesus’ innocent blood in relation to the question of Israel, the history of the covenant people of God and their life in the land.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22} Cf. \textit{1 En.} 7:6; 86:5-6; 90:2-4 (the sheep are eaten by dogs, eagles and kites); \textit{Jub.} 5:2 and 7:21-23; cf. CD 2:3-6. For a full discussion of the significance in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions of “devouring flesh” or “eating/drinking blood” see above, Chapter 5 (1) Jubilees, 123-128.

\textsuperscript{23}Nickelsburg (1 \textit{Enoch} 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 \textit{Enoch}, Chapters 1-36; 81-108 [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001], 391) identifies Zechariah 10-11 as one of the sources (together with Ezekiel 34) for \textit{1 Enoch’s} image of disobedient shepherds in chapter 89 (\textit{1 En.} 89:59-69; 74). The shepherds appear again in \textit{1 En.} 90:1, 22, 25; in \textit{1 Enoch} 90 Zechariah 11 still stands in the background. It seems likely that if Zechariah 11 informs \textit{1 Enoch} 89-90, the image of animals devouring flesh in \textit{1 Enoch} 90, which, like the worthless shepherds, is found in Zech 11 (v. 9), is suggested by Zechariah. Zechariah 11, that is, (together with Ezekiel 34-37) provides for \textit{1 Enoch} 89-90 the images in which to express its vision of a land defiled by violence (and a people in exile; so Nickelsburg, [ibid., 395] on \textit{1 En.} 90:2-5) so that God sends the cleansing cataclysm. In Matt 27:4-10, Zechariah 11 (together with Jeremiah) provides the background for Matthew’s image of a land defiled by bloodshed (at the hands of Israel’s unworthy “shepherds”), a defilement that leads to cataclysm (23:35-39). There is here an interesting conjunction of Enochic blood-flood (or cataclysm) traditions, Zechariah 11, and innocent blood (and defilement) in Matthew, another indication perhaps of the traditional character of the innocent blood paradigm.

\textsuperscript{24}Cf. Joel Willetts, \textit{Matthew’s Messianic Shepherd-King}, who explicates Matthew’s use of Zechariah 12-13 (among other passages) in presenting Jesus as the Davidic Shepherd-King. Willetts agrees that for Matthew, the people as a whole – Israel – and their fate in the land are at issue (see esp. 46, 106-110, 134, 146-152). The problem is exile, the hope is national restoration; in Willetts’ view, territorial restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel. I am suggesting that Matthew also asks why Israel and its life in the land are at issue, first in the exile and now again in the death of Jesus, and finds an answer (with the innocent blood traditions) in the paradigm of bloodshed and defilement, the pollution – and the purgation – of the land. Willetts (ibid., 151) in fact suggests that between exile and restoration there is, in Matthew as in Zechariah, a need for a time in which the people will be “refined,” a time also serving to
finding Zechariah 11 apropos in the context of defilement caused by innocent blood he is like 1 Enoch. Matthew interprets Jeremiah and Zechariah, that is, in a way seen also in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions: the devastation that threatens the people is a matter of a defilement that may be summed up in the bloodshed of Cain. That both Matthew and 1 Enoch turn to Zechariah 11 in connection to the land’s pollution and consequent devastation suggests that the logic they share, the connection between pollution and Jerusalem’s devastation, and the emphasis on innocent blood in the larger story – innocent blood described in Matt 23:35 and 1 Enoch 6-11 and 85 as the blood of Abel – is not shared accidentally: there is here a tradition of interpretation. Matthew, in keeping with the innocent blood traditions and the paradigm of bloodguilt and pollution, implies in the blood-money in 27:4-10, in the people’s cry in 27:25 the devastation of Jerusalem. Blood pollutes the land and so the land is purged. We are reminded of Jesus’ warning to “this generation” in 23:35-38: “all this [innocent blood] will come upon this generation….Behold, your house is left to you, desolate.” The blood of Jesus, like the blood of Abel, like the blood of Zechariah, has as its eventual corollary the devastation of the land. The fate of the whole people is at issue in the blood of the innocent poured out upon the land, and the danger is exile.

III. Exile and Innocent Blood in Matthew 2.

I turn now to the theme of innocent blood in other parts of Matthew’s narrative.

The connection between innocent blood and exile, suggested in 27:4-10 and 27:24-25 by allusions to Jeremiah and Zechariah and the paradigm of innocent blood, is explicit in 2:16-18. Like 23:35, this passage too is linked to 27:25 and the problem of innocent blood by verbal echo (this time by the deliberate repetition of τέκνα in the context of a rich intertwining of chapters 2

purify the polluted land. Though Willetts does not pursue the suggestion it is, I think, exactly right: the problem of purity and the land is at the centre of Matthew’s logic and is elucidated in the theme of innocent blood.
and 27; see above, Chapter 2, pp. 48-51). Here Matthew, even as he looks forward from the
death of the children to the decision for Jesus’ death in 27:25, also looks backward in history. In
the slaughter at Bethlehem, “then was fulfilled the word spoken through Jeremiah the prophet”:

A voice was heard in Ramah,  
Weeping and loud lamentation,  

This word describes, in Jeremiah, Israel’s exile to Babylon. This present loss, the blood of
Bethlehem’s children, is, Matthew declares, like the loss of Israel’s children in the exile.\(^{25}\) Nor is
it only “like” that exile: in this moment too, Rachel’s weeping is heard. In the slaughter at
Bethlehem, Matthew suggests, Jeremiah’s prophecy of exile realized first in the time of Babylon
is now again fulfilled. The blood of Bethlehem’s children enacts the exile, even as it points
forward to the blood of Jesus and the question of Jerusalem’s fate.

Indeed, Matthew sets the story of the children of Bethlehem with its echo of exile in the
midst of another story of “exile,” Joseph’s flight with the baby Jesus and his mother into Egypt,
and their return “out of Egypt” εἰς γῆν Ἰσραήλ (2:21).\(^{26}\) Matthew finds fulfilled, in Jesus’
sojourn in Egypt, Hos 11:1: “Out of Egypt I called my son” (Matt 2:15). In Hosea this is in the
first place a reference to the Exodus. But Hosea then reverses the image: by 11:5, Israel for its
rebellion returns to Egypt, “and Assyria shall be their king.” Exodus in Hosea 11 is framed by
exile;\(^ {27}\) exile reverses the exodus. Matthew chooses to describe Jesus’ sojourn in Egypt with

Exile of the tribes to Assyria and Babylon” (216).

\(^{26}\) For Jesus’ flight into Egypt as another exile see, e.g. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel*, 172-73; Knowles
follows R. Schnackenburg, *Matthäusevangelium* (Die neue echter Bibel; 2 vols; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1985,
1987), 1.27. Knowles (172-73) states, “[T]he quotation of Jer. 31.15 in Mt. 2.17-18 clearly identifies this experience
[i.e. the departure into Egypt] with the Babylonian exile.” R. E. Brown sees in 2:13-18 the interweaving of Exodus
and exile and return so that “Jesus, who is to save God’s people (1:21), relives both great past moments of divine
salvation” (Birth of the Messiah, 216-17, citation 217).

\(^{27}\) At the end of chapter 10, “the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off.”
reference to this passage from Hosea in which Exodus and exile are intertwined; in which, indeed, exodus points to exile as its mirror image. When he calls up the Exodus in the words of Hos 11:1, Matthew calls up also its reversal, the exile at the hands of the Assyrians to which, in Hosea 11, the Exodus ironically points. Therefore Matthew cites Hos 11:1, “out of Egypt,” at the moment when Jesus goes down into Egypt: because in Hosea 11, the Exodus and the exile (as return to Egypt) are, precisely, linked. In Jesus, both moments of this history are repeated, with Exodus this time, the return εἰς γῆν ἱωσῆ ἱωσῆ, as the final word.28

Jesus’ own exile and the hope of return – in which Israel’s history is repeated – thus frames the “slaughter of the Innocents.” The story of the children of Bethlehem, itself a re-enactment of the Babylonian exile, is imbedded in another story of exile: Israel’s exile at the hands of Assyria; Jesus’ flight into Egypt. The birth narrative ends as Hosea 11 begins, with the return “into the land of Israel” (2:21).29

Thus from the beginning, Jesus’ life is in Matthew’s Gospel intertwined with the event of exile; the question of the land and its fate, of Israel and its life in the land, is central. Further, the problem of exile arises from the beginning in connection with the problem of the blood of the innocent. It is the slaughtered children of Bethlehem who call up Israel’s exile, and it is Herod’s murderous intent that sends Jesus into his own exile. Matthew does not use the term “innocent blood” in 2:16-18, but he does not need to, for the story itself spells out the theme. In Herod’s

---

28 To pay attention to the context of the citation in Hosea is thus to make sense of its placement in Matthew. As Brown (Birth of the Messiah, 219) notes, “Commentators have been struck by the peculiar localization of this citation. Although it deals with the Exodus or coming “out of Egypt,” Matthew inserts it as a comment on Joseph’s taking the child and his mother to Egypt” (emphasis original). Cf. Daniel Harrington, The Gospel of Matthew (SacPag 1; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 44; Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 1.262-63, who propose that Matthew wants to name Egypt at this point (as Hos 11:1 does). But because exodus and exile are linked in Matthew, the “return to the land of Egypt” (Hos 11:5) realized at Jesus’ birth enacts, again, the exile, and his return into the land of Israel speaks to the Exodus that Hos 11:1 recalls.

29 Thus Matthew’s birth narrative reverses Hosea 11, ending with return. The theme of exile and return in fact pervades the birth narrative. It structures Matthew’s sequence of fulfilment quotations: in each case, the citations in their original contexts have to do with exile and return. See my paper, “Hope among the Ruins: Matt 2:18 and the Role of Scripture in Matthew’s Theology” (unpublished paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL. San Francisco, CA., Nov 19, 2011).
kingdom as in the time of Jeremiah, the blood of innocent children fills the land (Jer 19:4-5).

Interestingly, Matthew links this passage with 27:4-10: as I have shown, the opening construction (27:3; 2:16) and the fulfilment formula (27:9; 2:17) are the same in both (and this version of the fulfilment formula occurs only in these two passages). In 27:4-10, the episode of the blood-money calls up Jeremiah 19 and the shedding of innocent blood. Matthew links 2:18 (like 27:4-10) with 27:25 also: these children point forward to Jesus and his innocent blood.

As was the case with Matthew’s use of Jeremiah and Zechariah in 27:4-10, the citations here from Hosea and Jeremiah speak of Israel’s exile. But the centrality of innocent blood with regard to exile, the conviction that it is Zechariah’s blood in particular that finds its final outcome in the destruction of Jerusalem; that it is Cain’s bloodshed that leads to the flood; this is the mark not so much of the prophets or of Deuteronomy as of the developing traditions reflected in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence and in the later legends about the blood of Zechariah. The blood that cries out from the land in 1 Enoch to bring the flood; Jubilees’ sense that blood, shed or consumed, is the one sin above all others to be avoided for the land and people’s thriving; Susanna’s conviction that the fate of the whole people hangs on the innocent blood of one woman (a conviction expressed, as in Matthew 27:25, in the phrase πᾶς ὁ λαός); this goes beyond the earlier biblical literature to a full-blown “from bloodshed to flood (or threat of destruction)” logic. The seeds of this logic are there, as Frymer-Kensky shows, in Genesis’ insistence on ἀνθρώπων and the Noahide blood-prohibitions after the flood. The seeds are there in Jeremiah, who (as Knowles notes) mentions innocent blood several times in relation to exile; in Ezekiel, who finds in the sword now turned against Jerusalem the necessary fate of the “bloody city.” The seeds of it are there, too, in Lamentations, whose sole explanation for Jerusalem’s

---

devastation is the innocent blood the city has shed, bloodshed that echoes Cain’s. Even the Deuteronomist identifies the innocent blood with which Manasseh has filled the city as the final cause of the city’s destruction (though not the only cause: 2 Kgs 21:1-16; cf. Jer 15:4).

But in these texts, with the possible exception of Lamentations – where Cain’s bloodshed emerges as type of all the innocent blood shed in Jerusalem – there is always more. Together with idolatry and unchastity, innocent blood defiles the land so that the people are cast out. In the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions and in the later Zechariah legends, however, innocent blood gains a particular prominence in association with destruction and exile. The blood poured out on the land sums up the iniquity of the land or people (1 En. 9; Sib. Or. 3); innocent blood (or the blood of Abel) and its capacity to defile replaces the sin of Adam (Jub. 5 and 7; Wisdom 10; cf. Jude 11) or serves as an image for the transgression of the people (CD 3.6; L.A.B. 16) and becomes the controlling image for a defiled land (1 En. 9:9; CD 2.8; in the Zechariah legends, for a defiled city and people) and the cause of flood or exile.31

In Matthew, the same sort of logic is at work. Exile is the problem, from the beginning of the gospel. Jesus goes at his birth into exile in Egypt as Israel went into exile in Assyria, and comes forth thence in another Exodus (and in this movement the movement of his life and of the Gospel is anticipated). The children murdered by Herod who seeks to murder the king of the Jews summon up the children of Israel going into exile at Ramah so that this moment touches that earlier one; this loss marks the fulfilment of Jeremiah’s prophecy of exile already fulfilled in the weeping of Rachel long ago. And from the beginning the problem of exile is linked to innocent blood. Herod seeks Jesus’ blood; the blood of innocent children is shed; and in this scene Judas’ blood-money and Jesus’ crucifixion, conceived as a matter of innocent blood, ____________________________________________

31 This is not to say that in these works as a whole there is no other kind of transgression or cause of flood or exile mentioned. But a Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence can be traced in varying forms within these works, a sequence which highlights innocent blood and links it to flood and, often, final cataclysm.
already are foreshadowed. At the gospel’s beginning as at its climax, the life of Jesus and his death have innocent blood at their centre and are set in the context of exile.

IV. Exile and Innocent Blood in Matthew 1: The Genealogy

Indeed, it is not only in 2:13-18 but in the gospel’s beginning more broadly that exile provides the context for Jesus’ life. That Jesus’ life was in his own eyes the proclamation to a people in exile of that exile’s end is N.T. Wright’s point with regard to the historical Jesus.32 In this, he finds, Jesus is like his contemporaries: “Most Jews of this period, it seems, would have answered the question ‘where are we?’ in language which, reduced to its simplest form, meant: we are still in exile.”33 The exilic focus that Wright and Pitre describe for the historical Jesus is evident also in the first chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, as Wright notes. The Gospel begins by setting Jesus in its opening line in relation specifically to Israel’s history (“Jesus Christ, son of David, son of

32 N.T. Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996). See also more recently Brant Pitre, Jesus, the Tribulation and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck/Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), with attention to the role of the Messianic tribulation in early Jewish eschatological expectation. Pitre (18-19, 31-40) endorses Wright’s emphasis on exile, but against Wright’s claim that the Jewish people as a whole still awaited the end of exile Pitre argues that Jews in Judaea did not believe they were still in exile, since they had returned to Jerusalem. The hope for return was a hope for the restoration of the 10 tribes of Israel. Wright’s exilic premise has not gone unchallenged. See the reviews of Jesus and the Victory of God by Clive Marsh (“Theological History? N.T. Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God”) and Maurice Casey (“Where Wright is Wrong: A Critical Review of N.T. Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God”) in Journal for the Study of the New Testament 69 (1998): 77-94, 95-103. Craig Evans, however, demonstrates the validity of the exilic premise for first century C.E. Judaism (and for Jesus’ own self-understanding) in “Jesus and the Continuing Exile of Israel” (in Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God [ed. Carey C. Newman; Downers Grove, Ill: Intervarsity Press, 1999], 77-100]. He presents evidence that “many Jews believed Israel had never truly escaped exile” (82) and concludes, “in short, Wright is correct, and Casey is wrong” (100).

Abraham,” 1:1) and continues with a genealogy that divides Israel’s history into three periods with three focal points: Abraham, David, and – “[t]he third focal point is unexpected” – the exile.\(^{34}\) That Matthew’s genealogy sets the birth of Jesus in the context of exile, of a history of Israel culminating in exile and still awaiting its resolution, is now a widely accepted reading. So Richard Hays describes Israel’s scripture in Matthew’s reading as a “story whose plot may be summed up in the following narrative sequence: election, kingship, sin, exile, and messianic salvation.” Further, “[t]his is precisely the plot sketched in the opening genealogy.”\(^{35}\)

Interestingly, as the blood of the children stands at the centre of the exile called up in 2:13-18, innocent blood raises its head in Matthew’s genealogy also. Four women (famously) punctuate Matthew’s genealogy. These are generally taken to stand together in some way; though their precise significance has proven elusive, many scholars currently favour the theories 1) that all of their actions are in some way scandalous or irregular and in this way, often by their own initiative, they become instruments of God’s purpose or 2) that all of them may be considered Gentiles; their inclusion thus foreshadows the gospel’s ending, the mission to all nations.\(^{36}\) As scholars sometimes note, however, “the wife of Uriah” is different from the other three. Only in this case is the woman’s name not given. Thus, Gundry suggests, it is in fact

---

\(^{34}\) Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 385. See also Knowles (*Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel*, 171-73) who divides the genealogy in the same way, ending in exile. Hence, he suggests, the importance of Jeremiah, prophet of exile, in Matthew’s Gospel.


Uriah, not Bathsheba, who is at issue in Matt 1:6.\textsuperscript{37} Uriah is named; Bathsheba is merely implied, and only by a genitive pronoun.\textsuperscript{38} Warren Carter concurs, and suggests that the emphasis in Matt 1:6 lies both on Uriah’s Gentile identity and on David’s actions with respect to Uriah; his “terrible abuses of power in his acts of adultery and murder.”\textsuperscript{39}

That the emphasis here lies on Uriah and David’s actions receives some support from Matthew’s text. First Chronicles, (to which Matthew is indebted at least in part for his genealogy),\textsuperscript{40} by contrast with Matthew, lists Bathsheba, like Tamar, by name. Matthew names Tamar, in keeping with 1 Chron 2:4 – but does not name Bathsheba. In his phrase “the wife of Uriah” he in fact echoes not 1 Chronicles but the story of David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11-12.\textsuperscript{41} There “the wife of Uriah” is used to describe Bathsheba four times, every time specifically in association with Uriah’s death. When David first sees Bathsheba, she is named (2 Sam 11:3), but from the time of Uriah’s death through the prophet Nathan’s accusation against David, to the death of David’s son as a consequence of Uriah’s murder, she is always called “the wife of Uriah” (11:26; 12:9, 10, 15). Only after the child has died and the episode of Uriah’s death is (for the time being) closed does the text again call her Bathsheba, rather than “the wife of Uriah.”

The phrase “the wife of Uriah” in 2 Sam 11-12 serves to emphasize David’s sin: he has taken Uriah’s wife and has had Uriah killed. These two acts are intertwined, one the consequence of the other, and constitute one grave sin, as Nathan’s parable makes clear: the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{37}Gundry, \textit{Matthew}, 15: the stress in Matt 1:6 is on Uriah himself, as a Gentile.
\item \textsuperscript{38}Hood, \textit{Messiah, His Brothers, and the Nations}, 125-138. Hood argues that Matthew has Uriah’s righteousness in mind; the mention of four women in the genealogy thus recalls four praiseworthy Gentiles. (But see David C. Sim, “The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentiles,” \textit{JSNT} 57 (1995): 19-48, esp. 22: neither Tamar nor Bathsheba are identified as Gentiles in the biblical texts; the evidence for Tamar’s Gentile status in particular is unclear). Hood’s insistence that we note the difference between Matt 1:6 and the other women named is important. Whether it is persuasive to argue that the woman is not at issue in the fourth case, and then to find the motive for Uriah’s inclusion in a status ("righteous Gentile") shared precisely with the other three women is another question.
\item \textsuperscript{39}Hood, \textit{Messiah, His Brothers, and the Nations}, 125-138. Hood argues that Matthew has Uriah’s righteousness in mind; the mention of four women in the genealogy thus recalls four praiseworthy Gentiles. (But see David C. Sim, “The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentiles,” \textit{JSNT} 57 (1995): 19-48, esp. 22: neither Tamar nor Bathsheba are identified as Gentiles in the biblical texts; the evidence for Tamar’s Gentile status in particular is unclear). Hood’s insistence that we note the difference between Matt 1:6 and the other women named is important. Whether it is persuasive to argue that the woman is not at issue in the fourth case, and then to find the motive for Uriah’s inclusion in a status ("righteous Gentile") shared precisely with the other three women is another question.
\item \textsuperscript{39}Warren Carter, \textit{Matthew and the Margins}, 59.
\item \textsuperscript{40}Brown, \textit{Birth of the Messiah}, 71.
\item \textsuperscript{41}Cf. Gundry, \textit{Matthew}, 15: Bathsheba comes from 1 Chron 3:5 ("Bathshua") but Matthew “switches from the Chronicler’s descriptive phrase…to the [wife of] Uriah” (so 2 Sam 11:26; 12:10, 15).”
\end{itemize}
lamb is both taken, like Uriah’s wife, and slaughtered, like Uriah. 42 “Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house,” the prophet Nathan concludes (2 Sam 12:9-10). In this verse the murder of Uriah frames the taking of his wife, and the consequence of David’s sin is “the sword.” Bloodshed sits now at the heart of David’s house, and the immediate consequence of Uriah’s death is the death of David’s son.

It is implied, further, that this death is the necessary retribution for Uriah’s murder: the child dies, as it were, in place of David. Upon David’s confession of sin Nathan says to him, “Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die” (2 Sam 12:13-14). We are reminded of Gen 9:5: “For your own lifeblood I will require a reckoning:....from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another.” With the sword that comes upon David’s house and with the death of the child “that the wife of Uriah bore to David,” as the text pointedly relates (2 Sam 12:15), 2 Samuel calls up the problem of bloodshed – in the case of Uriah, innocent blood – and its consequences. “For blood pollutes the land, and no expiation can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it” (Num 35:33). If, then, Matthew chooses to use the phrase “the wife of Uriah” although he has called all the other women in the genealogy by their names, and although “Bathsheba” was available to him both in 2 Sam 11:3 and in 2 Chron 3:5 (whence he has,  

42 So David Janzen’s insistence in his recent article (“The Condemnation of David’s “Taking” in 2 Samuel 12:1-4,” JBL 131, no. 2 [2012]: 209-220, citation 210) that the emphasis of the parable is on David’s “taking,” rather than his murder and adultery, because 2 Sam 12:1-4 “mentions no murder or adultery” seems to me to miss the point. The article’s footnotes (esp. pp. 209-211) provide a discussion of the various readings of the parable with reference to the nature of David’s sin.
Gundry proposes, already taken the name Tamar), it is likely that it hails from 2 Sam 11:26-12:23 and calls up the whole story: not only David’s adultery, but Uriah’s death.

In the story’s reception history, Uriah’s death is seen explicitly as a problem of innocent blood. Already in 1 Kings, David’s murder of Uriah is the one blot against his record as king:

“David did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (1 Kgs 15:5). In the tradition, the death of Uriah becomes “the blood of Uriah.” In the Damascus Document, the sins of David regarding Uriah (two-fold in 2 Sam 12:9-12) have become sin in the singular. David’s taking of Bathsheba falls out, and only the murder of Uriah – now called “the blood of Uriah” – remains: “And David’s deeds were praised, except for Uriah’s blood…” (מלבעם דוד בבית, CD 5:5). CD 5 deals with the sins which have made the land desolate (5:20-21); the text proceeds from “the blood of Uriah” to the temple’s defilement (in which blood signifies first of all, this time with regard to ritual defilement). For CD, that is, David’s murder of Uriah is not only a signal sin, but a matter of bloodshed and the land’s defilement. And in CD “the blood of Uriah” is one of the sins leading to exile.

In the rabbis, too, the blood of Uriah is an issue. There is an ongoing dispute ranging at least from the time of Shammai to the late second century and after as to whether or not David is liable for the murder of Uriah. In the later midrashim, David’s murder of Uriah is adduced in

44 b. Kid. 43a (214-15): Shammai, on the authority of Haggai the prophet: David is liable for the blood of Uriah. b. Shab. 56a (259-60): David is not liable because Uriah was disobedient (perhaps 2nd century). Cf. y. Ta’an. 2:10 (65d); mid. Sam. 25:2 (61b); mid. Ps. 3:5 (57); mid. Ps. 4:2 (60-61); mid. Ps. 3:3 (1, 53); these last anonymous, perhaps late. These passages, as well as CD 5:1-5, are given in Marshall D. Johnson, The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies: with Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus (SNTSMS 8; 2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 171-175. Johnson is interested in intra-Jewish polemic about the Davidic ancestry of the Messiah; he does not attach significance to the theme of Uriah’s blood (or murder) in itself.
connection to passages about bloodguilt. The rabbi comments on “David’s” prayer for deliverance from bloodguilt in Psalm 51:

‘Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God’ [Ps. 51:16].
(midr. Sam. 25:2 (61b); trans S-B, I.29). 45

In the midrash on Ps 3:3, Shimei’s curse on David in 2 Sam 16:7-8 – “because you are a man of blood” – which refers in 2 Samuel to “the blood of the house of Saul” (2 Sam 16:8) is taken to refer to the murder of Uriah. Uriah’s death still (at this perhaps fairly late date) is the sin at the centre of David’s history, and it is understood as a matter of innocent blood. The blood that David has shed is already named in 1 Chron 22:8 (though without any association with Uriah) as the reason that David shall not build the temple. In both the Damascus Document and in rabbinic literature, before and long after Matthew’s Gospel, that blood is associated with Uriah in particular. In the tradition of reflection on David’s story, the death of Uriah looms large. It signifies blood unjustly shed. It signifies blood-guilt, leaving the king of Israel with blood on his head and leading in The Damascus Document to exile.

Given these traditions, their focus in reflection on David’s kingship on the death of Uriah and its interpretation in terms of bloodguilt and even exile, it seems likely that Matthew’s phrase “the wife of Uriah,” which in the same way (and anomalously, in his treatment of women in the genealogy) calls attention to Uriah, makes the same point. It is Uriah that is at issue here, and in particular the blood of Uriah, David’s murder of Uriah for the sake of his wife. David’s reign for Matthew, as the Chronicler already suggests (“you shall not build a house to my name, because you have poured out so much blood in my sight on the earth,” 22:8); as CD asserts and the later

45 Cited in Johnson, Biblical Genealogies, 173.
rabbinic tradition reiterates, is marked from its beginning by blood – not merely the blood of war, but innocent blood, the blood of a lamb led unsuspecting to slaughter, the blood of Uriah.

That the reign of David, in Matthew’s genealogy, culminates in exile is consonant with this perspective. For the land on which (in Chronicles’ phrase) “much blood has been poured out” is defiled, and the land defiled by blood will vomit its people out. Already in the Hebrew Bible Matthew has precedent for this kind of logic, the connection between the King of Judah’s bloodshed and the exile, for the Deuteronomist finds the cause of the exile not only in Manasseh’s “abominations” (idolatry, by which he led Judah astray) but also, and climactically, in innocent blood: “Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another” (2 Kgs 21:16). Therefore, God says, “I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. I will cast off the remnant of my heritage, and give them into the hand of their enemies” (2 Kgs 21:13-14). Much later, the rabbis make this assessment of Manasseh’s reign: in the Tosefta and Sifre on Numbers, they say, “and so it is written, ‘Moreover, Manasseh shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from one end to the other’ (2 Kings 21:16): from this they said that for the sin of bloodshed the divine presence departed and the sanctuary was defiled.”46 If Matthew is suggesting, in his reference to

---

46 T. Yoma 1:12, t. Shebuot 1:4; Sifre Numbers (sec. 161; ed. H. S. Horovitz, Siphre D'Be Rab, Fasciculus primus: Siphre ad Numeros adjecto Siphre zutta [1917; reprint; Jerusalem: Shalem, 1992], 222). Cited in Jonathan Klawans, Purity, Sacrifice and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 183. Manasseh’s bloodshed here explicates a story about one priest’s murder of another before the altar in the time of the Second Temple; the concern is the temple’s defilement and (hence) its destruction. “[J]ust as the First Temple was morally defiled by Menasseh’s (sic) murderous behavior, so too was murderous behavior a cause of the Second Temple’s defilement by sin and subsequent destruction” (Klawans, ibid.) In this tradition, “Manasseh’s bloodshed was sufficient to cause the divine presence to depart from the First Temple…. [Bl]oodshed in general was (for the rabbis) the cause of the destruction of the Second Temple” (ibid., 184). Klawans is concerned to downplay the significance of the Second Temple’s defilement as cause for its destruction in the rabbinic view. Klawans notes (186) that the rabbis are reluctant to speak of its defilement by comparison with Josephus or the Qumranic sources. It is not clear that the evidence Klawans offers supports this conclusion; in fact it seems rather to point in the opposite direction. Nevertheless, one may note that the rabbis, when they do speak of the temple’s defilement, often choose to speak of it in terms of innocent blood. And they preserve in gory detail (and long after it first emerges) the legend of the blood of Zechariah, and attribute the temple’s subsequent destruction to his innocent blood. Perhaps it would be most accurate to say that the Zechariah traditions, with their focus on innocent
“the [wife] of Uriah,” that innocent blood taints the reign of David and his house from the beginning; if he follows a trajectory from David and the murder of Uriah to exile, then he reiterates a tradition that has roots in the Chronicler and in the Deuteronomist, becomes explicit in the Damascus Document, and is still seen in the rabbis. Matthew’s emphasis on Uriah, and the trajectory from David and Uriah to exile, is in keeping with this developing tradition about Uriah’s blood. In the tradition’s emphasis on the blood of Uriah, we see a logic similar to that reflected in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, as well as in Lives of the Prophets and the later rabbinic Zechariah traditions. There innocent blood poured out upon the land becomes the problem par excellence, leading to the flood in a paradigmatic “wiping clean” of the land; leading in the Zechariah legends to the temple’s destruction. In his focus on David and Uriah in the genealogy, in his insistence on the slaughter of the innocent children of Bethlehem, Matthew shares this way of seeing. As in CD 5 and the rabbis on Uriah’s blood, as in the Zechariah legends and the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, innocent blood is the primary problem in the history of kingdom and people. In Matthew as in CD and the Zechariah legends, it leads to exile.

When, then, the angel announces to Joseph that the son to be born of Mary “will save his people from their sins” (1:23), the scene is set. Israel’s history may be divided into the time headed by Abraham, the time headed by David, and the time headed by the exile. Jesus comes into this third period as a saviour; salvation means end of exile. This statement is not new: it is now one major reading of the genealogy and the gospel. Salvation for Matthew involves at its very heart the question of Israel in its history as God’s people and the problem of exile, the loss of the land. “The genealogy thus says to Matthew’s careful reader that the long story of blood, represent a particular view preserved in the rabbinic tradition of the causes of the temple’s destruction, one shared (as Klawans notes) with Josephus and the Qumran literature and (we are arguing) with Matthew.
Abraham’s people will come to its fulfilment…with a new David, who will rescue his people from their exile, that is ‘save his people from their sins.’” It is surely not accidental that Jesus’ early history repeats the history of Israel as a history of exile and return, and ends with his entry εἰς γῆν Ἰσραήλ (2:21). Nor is it, perhaps, accidental that the long string of fulfilment quotations that punctuate Jesus’ birth narrative in Matthew begin with a formula found in a similar form also in 2 Chron 36:21 and 22 and Ezra 1:1, and 1 Kings 2:27, and only in these 4 passages. In 2 Chron 36:21 and 22 and Ezra 1:1 the formula speaks to exile and return. “He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword…to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah” (2 Chron 36:20-21). With this formula the Chronicler concludes the history of Israel, and Ezra begins Israel’s new history, as a narrative of exile and return. In his own “history of Israel” in miniature, in the genealogy and in the birth narrative, Matthew uses the same phrase. This is a history that may be situated, like the Chronicler’s, like Ezra’s, in the context of exile and the hope of return.

V. Why, after all, Exile? The Logic of Innocent Blood

Yet what is lacking, in this now common description of Matthew’s vision, is the “why.” Granted, with Wright, that the problem is exile and salvation may be conceived as return, why is this so? Why is exile the necessary end-point of David’s history? Why does salvation mean “return”? The answers scholars offer are general: The Messiah “would deliver the nation from the sins that had caused God to turn his face from his people…”: exile follows upon the people’s sin;

47Wright, New Testament and the People of God, 386.
48Soares Prabhu, Formula Quotations, 62.
2 Chron 36:21: Τοῦ πληρωθῆναι λόγον κυρίου διὰ στόματος Ἰερεμίου;
2 Chron 36 :22: μετὰ τὸ πληρωθῆναι ρήμα κυρίου διὰ στόματος Ἰερεμίου; Cf. Ezra 1:1 MT.
492 Chron 36:22: “In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jerem-iah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia….Thus says King Cyrus…. ‘Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him! Let him go up.’” Cf. Ezra 1:1 (MT).
salvation means deliverance from sin. Wright speaks of “cleansing”: as through the Temple and its sacrificial system God forgave his people and “enabl[ed] them to be cleansed of defilement,” so in the face of exile “[c]ontrol and cleansing were what was required.” The exile, in other words, is in some sense connected to defilement, and the act of salvation awaited by Israel in exile is an act of cleansing. God “would cleanse his holy Land, making it fit again for his people to inhabit.” This is helpful, but tantalizingly vague. What defilement? Cleanse how? If the temple system provided for cleansing precisely from defilement, why was temple worship in the eyes of early Judaism not sufficient to ward off exile? If as Wright insists the promised salvation is concrete and historical, if the consequence of sin is equally concrete, measured in the long march into exile, then the question is raised as to the nature of sin and the meaning of cleansing. Are they, perhaps, equally concrete?

It is, we propose, precisely this question – the relation between sin and exile, cleansing and salvation/return – that Matthew illuminates. He does so after the manner of the Cain/blood-flood/judgment traditions and the legends of Zechariah’s blood, in terms of innocent blood, the defilement of the land, and its purgation. As the exile of Israel is real and concrete, experienced in the temple’s destruction and the devastation of the land, so its roots are concrete. The exile can be traced back to the episode of Uriah and the sin of David, to Genesis and the blood of Abel and Chronicles and the blood of Zechariah. It follows upon the corruption – the sin – of kings

---

51 Wright, New Testament and the People of God, 225, 227. It is not clear to me what Wright means here by “control” – national sovereignty and so control of the temple, perhaps? – or how it is related to cleansing. (Nor, for that matter, does Wright ask what “cleansing” might mean, exactly. Yet his insistence on the concreteness of the promised salvation, its connection to the land, raises precisely that question).
52 Wright, ibid., 227.
53 Willetts (Shepherd-King, 152) recognizes the lacuna. Jesus as Matthew’s shepherd-king is “not only the one who will govern over the kingdom at its consummation...but he has also inaugurated the prerequisite refinement of the nation of Israel through his death (cf. 1:21; 26:28).” Later he says that Jesus inaugurates the eschatological Empire of God through “the purifying work of his death” (175). As in Wright, there is a sense that cleansing is at issue, but, Willetts’ focus being elsewhere, the question is not pursued.
and priests and Pharisees, a corruption summed up in Matthew in “all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth.” It is foreshadowed in Herod and the blood of the children of Bethlehem. It comes to a climax in the blood of Jesus. The land is stained by the blood of the innocent; therefore it vomits the people out and history culminates in the exile.\textsuperscript{54} Therefore salvation means cleansing, and return. Innocent blood serves for Matthew as an explanation for exile. And in this he follows the logic of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions; the logic of the legend of Zechariah’s blood. Story serves theodicy: from the innocent blood of Abel; from the boiling blood of Zechariah emerges an explanation of Jerusalem’s devastation that is rooted in the history of the people and the justice of God. The Zechariah legends have no hesitation in attributing the bloodbath of Nebuzaradan to the sins of the people: that is the whole point of the boiling blood. The suffering that comes upon the holy city is neither arbitrary nor random. It is rooted in an ancient and persistent wrong, a sin that will not be hidden and demands expiation. It is rooted in the death of Zechariah, in the blood of Abel and the murder of Uriah. Exile follows upon “all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth.”

Wrights’ insistence on history, on the concrete outworking of both sin and salvation in the history of Israel and the centrality of that history in Matthew, finds both confirmation and illumination in the innocent blood traditions, reflected in Matthew’s own focus on innocent blood. As Frymer-Kensky, Patai, Milgrom and Nahum Sarna all note, sin, the alienation of the people from their God, is felt, in the paradigm of innocent blood, of purity and pollution, “on the ground,” quite literally. The “theological” categories of sin and salvation are not separable from the physical life of the people in the land; theology and history are one. Even in the prophets, Frymer-Kensky argues, “The concept of pollution was thus understood as one of the motive

\textsuperscript{54} Cf. Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution, Purification and Purgation in Biblical Israel,” 408: “The pollution of the land cannot be rectified by ritual purification”; “there can be no repentance in the face of such a pollution.”
principles of Israelite history: the pollution of the land cleared the way for Israel to enter it; its pollution during their occupation presents a major danger.\textsuperscript{55} For Matthew, as for the Cain/blood-flood/judgement or Zechariah traditions, as for CD and the rabbis in their reflection on the blood of Uriah, innocent blood has become emblematic of this pollution. Therefore the woes against the Pharisees and scribes culminate in innocent blood; therefore innocent blood leads directly to the temple’s destruction. Therefore the blood-money that lands in the temple and the cry of the people are momentous: for innocent blood has landed in the heart of the holy place, on the heads of God’s holy people, and city and temple alike are defiled.\textsuperscript{56}

Matthew brings the theme of innocent blood and pollution to its logical conclusion in the crucifixion scene. At the moment Jesus “gives up the spirit,” the veil of the temple is torn in two. In the Pseudepigrapha, this is an image of the temple’s destruction. In \textit{LivPro} 12:12, Habakkuk prophesies the end of the temple: “By a western nation it will happen. At that time…the curtain of the \textit{Dabeir} will be torn into small pieces.” It also signifies the Shekinah’s departure. In 2 \textit{Baruch}, the temple veil (along with other holy objects) is removed and swallowed up by the earth as the prelude to the enemy’s entrance: “a voice was heard from the midst of the temple…saying, ‘Enter, enemies, and come, adversaries, because he who guarded the house has left it’” (8:1-2, cf. 6:7-9, trans. A.F.J. Klijn, \textit{OTP} 1.615-652). Commentators often suggest that Matthew in the same way envisages here the departure of the Shekinah in fulfilment of Jesus’

\textsuperscript{55}Frymer-Kensky, ibid., 408-409.
\textsuperscript{56}For the representative and climactic character of innocent blood and its capacity to defile the temple see also Ben Sira 34:21-27. Here unacceptable offerings (offerings that pollute the temple) are likened to shedding innocent blood: “if one sacrifices ill-gotten goods, the offering is blemished” (\textit{μεμοιμένη}, 34:21). “The one who takes away a neighbour’s living is a murderer; the one who deprives an employee of wages sheds blood” (\textit{ἀδικέων σήμα}, 34:26-27; LXX 34:23-24; cited in Klawans, \textit{Purity, Sacrifice and the Temple}, 153). This passage confirms for Klawans his suspicion that ancient Jews in general were concerned with the possible impact tainted wealth might have on the sanctuary. He does not note that the taint implied is expressed through the image of innocent blood.
declaration in 23:38, “your house is left to you.” That declaration arose out of Israel’s history of bloodshed; now, as Jesus’ innocent blood is shed, it is fulfilled. Jesus’ death is, as Kloppenborg notes for Mark, “correlated with the destruction of the temple.” Precisely because Jesus’ death is a matter of innocent blood, this is the story’s necessary end. This is the explanation and the final enactment of exile. For Matthew, the Pseudepigrapha and the rabbis alike, innocent blood defiles the land, and “defilement pushes God out of his house.” Therefore God’s presence departs from the sanctuary. The house of David, LitPro 23:1 says, poured out Zechariah’s blood “within the sanctuary,” and from then on the temple was empty of angels and oracles. Matthew reads the death of Jesus as LitPro 23 reads the death of Zechariah, as a problem of innocent blood; a problem with immediate consequences for the temple and, in Matthew’s vision, for the land. Like the blood of Abel, like the blood of Zechariah in the rabbis, the innocent blood of Jesus poured out ἐκ τοῦ ἱλάτου brings down destruction – flood and exile, Babylon and Rome – upon the land. Like the land that cries out in 1 Enoch from the blood that has been shed upon it, Jerusalem in the wake of Jesus’ violent death, in the wake of the blood and the blood money that stains the temple, can only be destroyed.

58 John Kloppenborg, “Evocatio Deorum,” 449. “Mark’s forecast of the destruction of the temple…entails a claim that the divine presence is no longer there” (450).
60 Note that it is “The house of David” that here sheds Zechariah’s blood. As in 1 Kings 15, 2 Kings 21, CD 5 and the rabbis, where David’s murder of Uriah and Manasseh’s bloodshed lead to exile, in LitPro 23 too a line is traced from innocent blood shed by the kings of Judah to the desolation of the temple.
VI. What of Salvation?

The crucifixion and resurrection narratives in relation to the problem of innocent blood and exile

What, then, of the birth narrative’s promise of salvation? Are we to read the rending of the temple, with Clark and the *extra muros* reading, as a sign of the limitation of the promise: God has departed from temple and Israel; henceforth salvation goes to the Gentiles? “The people” (27:25) of Israel have blood upon their heads; Matthew’s Christian community only, now “his people” (1:21), will receive the Messiah’s salvation? By this reading there is no continuity between the genealogy’s opening problem, the exile in which Israel still lives, and the hope offered by the birth of Jesus.

It is true that Jesus’ death, in the paradigm of innocent blood, augurs the land’s devastation. Yet destruction in the Zechariah legends, flood in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, does mean purgation. In the logic of innocent blood, it is the same land that is at issue both for devastation and for renewal. Is this the case in Matthew’s narrative of innocent blood? Matthew brings his narrative of innocent blood to a climax in the cry of “the whole people” in 27:25, a cry whose implications, in the logic of innocent blood, begin to be worked out in 27:51, with the tearing of the temple veil as Jesus’ blood is shed. For an answer, therefore, to the question of hope in Matthew’s narrative of innocent blood we shall turn to this scene, the rending of the veil in which the temple’s destruction is announced, and the earth-shaking events that accompany it. How is the angel’s prophecy of salvation for “his people” to be fulfilled in the city stained by innocent blood? Is it to be fulfilled?

The tearing of the temple veil does not stand alone at the moment of Jesus’ death. Matthew adds, to Mark’s splitting of the veil, a series of cosmic signs, in a set of four parallel phrases:
These signs heighten significantly the drama of the moment of Jesus’ death; they also have a bearing on the meaning of the rent veil (and indeed of Jesus’ death). In the first place, they echo Old Testament theophanies: when God goes out the earth shakes; it reels and rocks and mountains tremble. In Zech 14:4 the Mount of Olives is split on the day of the Lord’s coming. Matthew thus makes the moment of Jesus’ death the moment also of God’s visitation of the earth. The signs, Davies and Allison note, have an eschatological background: in the prophets they are associated with “that day,” the Day of Salvation. Thus this is in some sense the eschatological moment.

The climactic sign is one peculiar to Matthew’s Gospel: the proleptic resurrection of the saints. The tombs are opened and many bodies of the holy ones who had fallen asleep are raised and “after his resurrection” enter the holy city (27:52-53). Scholars debate the background of these verses. The majority, however, point to Ezekiel 37.

---

61 I take 27:53 to be an expansion of the last sign (“many bodies were raised and coming out of the tombs…”) rather than a separate sign. So also Senior, *Passion Narrative*, 314. Gundry (Matthew, 575-76) notes that these four phrases (and also the tearing of the temple veil) each end in a “divine passive.” They also begin with a noun, so that the text creates a staccato series of striking events: and the earth…and the rocks…and the tombs…and many bodies. The next clause is constructed differently; it begins with a participle and so depends on the preceding clause: (and many bodies) coming out of the tombs…went into the city and appeared to many.

62 E.g. Judges 5:4, 5; Psalm 18:7-9; 77:18; Isa 24:18-23; 29:6; Ezek 38:19-20; Joel 2:10; Nah 1:5-6. See also later parallels in 1 En. 1:6-7 102:2; 4 Ezra 5:8; 2 Bar 27:7; L.A.B. 3:9 etc…For parallels see e.g. Davies and Allison (*Gospel according to Saint Matthew*), 3.632; 340-41 and n. 86; cf. Senior, *Passion Narrative*, 313.

63 Davies and Allison, *Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3.631. Cf. Senior, *Passion Narrative*, 313-14: “the earthquake in 27:51b, then, is a traditional element of eschatological imagery”; so, too, the splitting of rocks.

64 Zech 14:4-5, Dan 12:2, Ezek 37 (and to a lesser degree Isa 26:19) all have resonance in varying degrees in the passage. See, e.g. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 536: Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah. Davies and Allison (Gospel according to Saint Matthew 3.628-29) point to Zech 14:4-5 as the scene’s primary background: there the Mount of Olives is “split” (σχισθησεται, LXX Zech 14:4) and God comes in judgement “and all the holy ones [οι ἁγιοι] with him” (14:5). So also John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 1216-17. Davies and Allison note that there is no mention of bones in Matthew; this they find problematic if the primary reference is to Ezekiel. As we will see, however, Matthew’s passage closely
i. Matt 27:50-53 and Ezekiel 37: restoration out of defilement

Ezekiel 37 presents a vision of the dead bones of the house of Israel raised by the spirit or breath of God and returning to the land of Israel, a vision with obvious affinities with Matt 27:52-53, where the bodies of Israel’s saints are raised and return to the holy city.  Further, Matthew’s phrasing recalls Ezek 37:12. “And the tombs were opened (καὶ τὰ μνημεῖα ἀνεῴχθησαν),” Matthew says, “and many bodies of the holy ones were raised, and coming out of their tombs (καὶ ἢξελθόντες ἐκ τῶν μνημείων)...went into the holy city (εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν)” (27:53). In Ezekiel, God says, “I am going to open your tombs (ἐγὼ ἀνοίγω ύμῶν τὰ μνήματα), and bring you forth out of your tombs (καὶ ἀναζωέω ύμῶς ἐκ τῶν μνήματων ύμῶν), O my people; and I will bring you back into the land of Israel (καὶ εἰσάχω τοῦ Ἰσραήλ)” (Ezek 37:12 LXX). “Tombs” (τὰ μνημεῖα / τὰ μνήματα), parallels Ezekiel 37 in several important ways, and the distance between (dead) “bodies” and “bones” is not, perhaps, very great.

For Ezekiel as the primary influence on 27:52-53 see, e.g. Gundry, Matthew, 576; Senior, Passion Narrative, 320 (possibly also Daniel); R.T. France, The Gospel of Matthew (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 1081-82 (with Dan 12:2 and Isa 26:19); Donald A. Hagner, Matthew 14-28 (WBC 33B; Dallas: Word, 1995), 849; Daniel Harrington, The Gospel of Matthew (Sacra Pagina 1; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 403: Ezekiel 37 is “the biblical inspiration” for the portents in Matthew; “The key verses (Ezek 37:11-14) connect the resurrection of the dead with the restoration of Israel in its land….Thus the death and resurrection of Jesus anticipate the restoration of the saints in the land of Israel.” David C. Sim, Apocalyptic Eschatology and the Gospel of Matthew (SNTSMS 88; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 110-11 (and see notes for a summary of positions): Ezekiel 37 (also Zechariah and perhaps Daniel).

The verses have affinities with both Ezekiel 37 and Zech 14:4-5; the Ezekiel wall painting in the synagogue at Dura-Europos, with its apparent synthesis of Ezek 37 and Zech 14:4-5 (the Mount is split and the dead rise out of tombs) suggests that the two passages became associated in eschatological expectation (see Gundry, Matthew, 577). Yet the primary reference is to Ezekiel. Matt 27:51-53 paints a rather different picture than does Zech 14:4-5. In Zechariah, the splitting of the Mount of Olives (no rocks are mentioned, though of course we may imagine that “rocks” and “mountains” are equivalent) opens a valley as safe passage on the Day of the Lord. It is an image akin to Isaiah 40:4 (“every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill made low” for the passage of the people through the wilderness on the day of the return), or to the story of the Exodus. Further, though the identity of Zechariah’s “holy ones” is unclear and may include saints of old, it certainly includes the heavenly host. So Redditt, Haggai, Zechariah, 140; Joyce G. Baldwin, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, 203; the holy ones are God’s “heavenly attendants (Ps. 89:5, 7)”; Merrill F. Unger, Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1963), 249; Hill, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, 263; David L. Petersen, Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi: A Commentary (London: SCM Press, 1995), 143. Matthew, by contrast, describes not a valley opening but tombs, and the holy ones do not come down from heaven but rise up from the dead. Matthew’s cataclysm unfolds “from below,” Zechariah’s from above.

Scholars are generally agreed that it is the holy ones of Israel who are raised in this passage. See e.g. Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.633: “We should here think of pious Jews from ancient times.” Cf. Gundry, Matthew, 576; Senior, Passion Narrative, 315.
and the repetition of “tombs” in the second clause;⁶７ “open” (ἀνοίγω); God’s agency (the divine passive in Matthew; “I am going to open” in Ezekiel); and, strikingly, the two-part action of coming out of the tombs and going into Jerusalem / the land of Israel; all these occur in Matthew as in Ezekiel. Ezekiel here structures Matthew’s thought.⁶⁸ Indeed, the two-part action (“and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city”) renders 27:53 awkward in Matthew: why, commentators wonder, the gap between the saints’ resurrection and the return to Jerusalem; how is “after the resurrection” related to each part of the clause?⁶⁹ But the point for Matthew is not how the two stages, going out and coming in, are related, but that in this two-fold action this moment enacts Ezekiel. Therefore the tombs are opened and the dead come out of their tombs and go into the holy city, precisely as Ezekiel said they would. When the tombs are opened at Jesus’ death and the risen dead enter the holy city after his resurrection, Ezekiel’s ancient promise of restoration is realized.⁷⁰

This is, in the context, a startling statement. For Jesus’ death is, in Matthew, a matter of innocent blood, and innocent blood leads for Judas and for Jerusalem, for πᾶς ὁ λαός, to

---

⁶⁷“But the tombs were opened… and coming out of the tombs” (Matt 27:52-53); “I will open your tombs and I will bring you forth out of your tombs” (Ezek 37:12).

⁶⁸Cf. Davies and Allison (Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.634), who, though they find the primary source for this passage in Zechariah 14, point to Ezek 37:12 at Matt 27:52. Note also ἵδου (Matt 27:51, Ezek 37:12); the repetition of the same verb with different prefix in both Matthew and Ezekiel (ἐξέρχομαι, εἰσέρχομαι; ἀνάγω, εἰσάγω [Matt 27:53; Ezek 37:12]), and the repetition of the preposition in the last clause: εἰσῆλθον εἰς; εἰσάγεται εἰς.

⁶⁹Does Matthew mean, Gundry wonders (Matthew, 576), that the risen saints came out of their tombs before the resurrection but waited in the countryside until Jesus had arisen? Davies and Allison (Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.634) deem the phrase “after the resurrection” a later gloss, noting that the Diatesseron omits it. The Diatesseron’s omission may, however, simply point to the fact that the phrase puzzled antiquity too. Cf. Calvin’s comment, ad loc.: “It is absurd…to imagine that they spent three days alive and breathing, hidden in tombs” (cited in Davies and Allison, ibid., n. 133).

⁷⁰Note also Matthew’s emphasis on τὸ πνεῦμα in 27:50. Where Mark has ἔξηπνεον (15:37), which could be translated simply “breathed his last,” Matthew has ἀφῆκεν τὸ πνεῦμα (27:50): “gave up the spirit.” In this emphasis, Matthew again recalls Ezekiel. There, when the dry bones rise, God commands Ezekiel to summon τὸ πνεῦμα so that they may live (Ezek 37:9-10); “I will put my spirit within you,” God says in 37:14, “and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil.” In Matthew as in Ezekiel the scene of dry bones/dead bodies and the rising from the tombs is coordinated with τὸ πνεῦμα. It is not that Jesus gives the holy ones his breath or spirit in dying; commentators rightly object to that causative link. Rather, Jesus’ giving up the spirit leads into the cataclysm that means for the holy ones of Israel new life. Matthew is playing with paradox here: in the act of giving up his spirit, in the loss of “God with us” (1:23; 28:20), Jesus makes possible the return to the holy city.
devastation. “Behold, your house is left to you, desolate,” Jesus says in the face of all the innocent blood that has been poured out upon the land, and at Jesus’ death the veil of the temple is torn in two. At this very moment, however, Matthew inserts the echo of Ezekiel 37, and the notice of resurrection. Desolation, defilement and its consequences, is juxtaposed with the new creation.

In Ezekiel 37, the new creation also follows upon devastation, a devastation caused in part by innocent blood. Ezekiel 37 begins with exile, the valley full of bones (37:2). These dry bones represent Israel’s exile, Israel no longer “on its own soil”: “Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely’” (Ezek 37:11). This is also a scene of defilement, for bones, like tombs, defile.71 As the rest of the chapter (and indeed much of the book of Ezekiel) makes clear, Israel has been reduced to bones because it has defiled itself. “They shall never again defile themselves,” God announces, “with their idols and their destestable things, or with any of their transgressions” (37:23).

Interestingly, the defilement that characterizes Israel and that is expressed in the vision of a valley of bones is in Ezekiel 36 MT (though not in the LXX) described in terms of idolatry and bloodshed:

The word of the Lord came to me:
Mortal, when the house of Israel lived on their own soil, they defiled it with their ways and their deeds; their conduct in my sight was like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual period. So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for the idols with which they had defiled it. (Ezek 36:16-18 MT)

71 So tombs (except for the tombs of kings) were located outside the walls of Jerusalem so as not to defile it (as Matthew implies in his scene of dead bodies coming out of their tombs and then going into the city). See e.g. Hershel Shanks, Jerusalem: An Archaeological Biography (New York: Random House, 1995), 81, 196. Cf. 1 Kgs 13:1-2 and Ezek 6:5, where God promises not only to destroy Israel’s idol-altars but to scatter them with bones so as to render them unusable.
The consequence of the land's defilement by the blood that has been shed upon it and by idol worship is exile: “I scattered them among the nations…. [I]n accordance with their conduct…I judged them” (36:19). And the salvation God brings to the exiled house of Israel, in Ezekiel 36 as in Ezekiel 37, is sanctification: “I will sanctify my great name….I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses” (36:23, 25; cf. 37:23, 28).

It is also restoration, the return of the people, now again holy, to the holy land. “I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you….” (36:24-25). It is, too, the restoration of the land. “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the towns to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. The land that was desolate shall be tilled” (36:33-34). It is, finally, a new creation: “And they will say, “This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden” (36:35). If exile follows upon defilement, return marks the reversal of that defilement: The vision of dry bones that come rattling together, being covered once again with sinew and flesh and skin so that they are no longer dead but alive is a graphic image not only of return, but of purification. Bones become living flesh and defilement is pushed out of the house: “…and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude” (37:10).

ii. Matt 27:50-53 and 1 Enoch 1 and 10.

It is this passage from Ezekiel in particular that Matthew calls up at the death of Jesus. Jesus’ death, like the dry bones of Ezekiel 37 (and like them associated with innocent blood), implies the defilement of the land and his resurrection promises a return: the dead saints rise and walk “after his resurrection” into the holy city, Jerusalem. Thus far Matthew’s narrative follows the vision of Ezekiel 36-37 in the centrality of exile and its roots in defilement; in the persistent promise of return. Yet Matthew differs from Ezekiel in two important respects. Although there is
a finality about the salvation Ezekiel 37 envisages (God will set his sanctuary among them “forevermore,” 37:26), there is no cataclysm, eschatological or otherwise.\(^{72}\) Matthew, by contrast, collapses the death of Jesus into the Last Day and the upheaval of the earth that marks the final cataclysm. Secondly, in Matthew it is, strikingly, in the moment of cataclysm that cleansing and return are accomplished. Whereas in Ezekiel return and restoration follow upon devastation, Matthew holds devastation and restoration together. Jesus dies…and in that very moment the dead are raised. The temple veil is torn…and the holy ones return to the holy city.

These two things, the cataclysmic and eschatological character of Matthew’s crucifixion scene, and its peculiar juxtaposition of devastation and restoration, death and life, go beyond Ezekiel. In these things, in fact, Matthew resembles 1 Enoch and aspects of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions. The devastation of the land by corrupt teaching and innocent blood in 1 Enoch 6-11 leads into the cataclysm, a cataclysm imaged, as in Matthew 24, as a flood; a cataclysm that is finally eschatological. The flood shades into the judgement of the last day: “a flood is going to come upon the whole earth…Bind Asael…and on the day of the great judgement he will be led away to the burning conflagration” (1 En. 10:2, 4, 6). Elaborate eschatological cataclysms occur in a good deal of early Jewish literature from 1 En. 10 and 89-90 and Sib. Or. 3 to 4 Ezra; As. Mos. 10:4-5 and T. Levi 4.1, like Matthew, combine eschatological earthquake and eschatological darkness.\(^{73}\) In this respect Matthew is a child of his time. But in Matthew, cataclysm follows upon innocent blood. Jesus’ death is, in Matthew, the summation of all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth. That innocent blood leads into the cataclysm is

\(^{72}\) Even Zechariah, who describes the Mount of Olives splitting in two as in an earthquake, describes this as a singular act of God at the time of his coming rather than as one part of a general cataclysm. Note, however, that the LXX hears in Ezekiel 37 at least the beginning of cataclysm: in LXX 37:7 there is an earthquake.

\(^{73}\) Davies and Allison, 3.632. These signs imitate in Matthew 27 imitate Matthew’s own eschatological discourse: in that day, after the time of affliction, “the sun will be darkened” (24:29, cf. 27:45) and earthquakes will announce the “beginning of the birth-pangs” (24:7-8, cf. 27:51). In both passages these signs are tied to the destruction of the temple (24:2; 27:51).
the logic of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, beginning with *1 Enoch*. Because the giants have filled the earth with blood and violence, the flood (which becomes the eschatological cataclysm) comes in *1 Enoch* upon the earth. A rushing eternal destruction comes upon Babylon in *Sib. Or.* 3 in the same way as it has poured out the blood of good men and righteous men whose blood even now cries out to high heaven; in Pseudo-Philo, the flood that follows upon the story of Cain leads into the end-time cataclysm (*L.A.B.* 2-3) and, in *L.A.B.* 16, Cain’s bloodshed and the destruction that followed serve as prototype for Korah’s destruction and the eschatological judgement. In his insistence not only on eschatological cataclysm, but on a cataclysm that follows upon innocent blood, Matthew resembles not Ezekiel 37 but *1 Enoch* 6-11 and other Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions.

Indeed, Matthew describes the cataclysm that follows upon innocent blood in language that recalls *1 Enoch* 1 and 11. In its opening theophany, *1 Enoch* employs standard Old Testament images for God’s coming in judgement; the same images are used in Matthew, at the death (and again at the resurrection) of Jesus: “And the high mountains will be shaken,…and the earth will be split apart in a cleaving, by a chasm,” as the Greek puts it. Further, Matthew’s logic unfolds not only in the images, but even in the words of *1 Enoch*: ἐσεῖβοθη / σεισθῆσονται, Matt 27:51/*En. 1*: 5-6; ἡ γῆ / τὰ ἄκρα τῆς γῆς, Matt 27:51/*En. 1*: 5; ἐσχίσθησαν / διασχισθῆσαι, Matt 27:51/*En. 1*: 7. Although these images are commonly used in the OT for the day of God’s coming, *1 Enoch*’s particular combination of being shaken (σεισθῆσονται, 1:5, 6) and being split (διασχισθῆσαι, 1:7) is unusual. Earthquakes occur in OT theophanies from Judges and Psalms to Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Nahum and Micah, but in none of them is the earth or

---

74 Cf. *Jub.* 5 and 7; CD 2; even perhaps Jude, where reference to “the way of Cain” immediately precedes the announcement of impending eschatological judgement in a citation of *1 En.* 1:9.

75 Καὶ σεισθῆσονται πάντα τὰ ἄκρα τῆς γῆς…καὶ σεισθῆσονται…ὅρη ὑψηλὰ…διασχισθῆσαι ἡ γῆ σχίσμα ραγάδι 1 En. 1:5-7, Grk [a]); cf. Ethiopic: “Mountains and high places will fall down…and earth shall be rent asunder…” (trans. Isaac).
rock also split.\footnote{See the theophanies or descriptions of eschatological judgement from Judges and Psalms (18:7-9; 77:18) to Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Nahum and Micah. All of them involve earthquakes but in none of them is the earth or rock also “split.” The earth or mountain is “shaken” (ἐσείσθη, Judg 5:4; Joel 2:10; Nah 1:5; cf. σείσθη Isa 29:6; Ezek 38:19-20; ἐσαλεύθη, Judg 5:5; Psalm 18:7-9 [LXX 17:8]; 77:18 [LXX 76:19]; Mic 1:4) and trembles (τροφόσσω, Ps 18:7-9 [LXX 17:8]; 77:18 [LXX 76:19]; Isa 24:18-23). Senior (Passion Narrative, 313) notes that Nah 1:5 has mountains quaking and the earth “rent asunder.” But in the LXX the verb that Senior translates “rent asunder” is not σχίζω but διακρυπτω (break in pieces). NRSV renders the Hebrew “heaves.”} Matthew, however, has \textit{I Enoch}'s combination: the earth is shaken (ἐσείσθη, 27:51) and the rocks are split (ἐσχισθήσων, 27:51).\footnote{Ezekiel 38 (LXX) has much the same imagery, but uses different vocabulary: there is a great earthquake and the mountains are rent (ῥήγαμοι, 38:20; Ezek 38 MT has “thrown down”). Matthew, describing the rending of the rocks, uses \textit{I Enoch}'s word “split” and not Ezekiel’s “rent,” even though Ezekiel 37 informs the next verse. Matthew is perhaps influenced in the choice of σχίζω by its occurrence in the preceding verse (from Mark 15:38). If the use of σείω and σχίζω together were all, the parallel with \textit{I Enoch} 1 would perhaps be unremarkable. But in other ways too the passage is reminiscent of \textit{I Enoch}.} Not only do σείω and σχίζω (unusually) appear together in both \textit{I Enoch} and Matt 27, they occur in both in the context of a cataclysm brought about by the shedding of innocent blood. The echo of Enoch in this eschatological scene is perhaps not surprising, for Matthew has already demonstrated an acquaintance with Enochic traditions about eschatological judgement, and with \textit{I Enoch} 1 in particular: in his description of the judgement in 25:31, Matthew uses an image from \textit{I En.} 1:5 – God comes in judgement with the myriads of his holy ones – with Christ now as the coming judge.\footnote{Cf. Matt 22:13-14 and the discussion of both passages in Chapter 7. See \textit{I En.} 1:9: In that day “my holy one” (ὁ ἁγιὸς μου, \textit{I En.} 1:3) will come out from his dwelling (in a realization of Deut 33:1) with ten thousand of his holy ones (ὅτι ἔρχεται σὺν ταῖς μωριάσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις αὐτοῦ…, \textit{I En.} 1:9, Grk [a]; cf. Deut 33:2, esp. MT).} 

iii. Matt 27:50-53 and 28:1-10 and \textit{I Enoch} 1 and 10

Matthew’s crucifixion cataclysm is in fact in several ways reminiscent of a judgement scene. Matthew goes to some trouble to link, by verbal echoes, Jesus’ death and his resurrection. At the moment of Jesus’ death, ἰδοὺ: the veil is torn and there is an earthquake (ἡ γῆ ἐσείσθη, 27:51). Likewise at his resurrection, ἰδού, a great earthquake (σειμός, 28:2). The guards at his resurrection are shaken (ἐσχισθήσων, 28:4); they quake “from fear” (ἀπὸ τοῦ φόβου, 28:4). At Jesus’ death the centurion and the guards, seeing the earthquake and the things that had happened,
are extremely afraid (ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα, 27:54). At the earthquake at Jesus’ death the tombs are opened (27:51-2); at the earthquake at his resurrection the angel opens the tomb (28:2). At Jesus’ death the holy dead are raised (27:52); at his resurrection the guards become as dead (28:4), a reversal that, like the other parallels, brings the two scenes together. Finally, the women go “to see” (θεωρησαί, 28:1) the tomb at the beginning of the resurrection account, as the women “see” (θεωροῦσαί, 27:55) from afar the crucifixion. The verb θεωρέω appears only in these two passages in the gospel, Carter notes, and serves to connect the two scenes.79 By means of these connections and echoes, Matthew brings together the crucifixion and resurrection scenes. When, then, notice of Jesus’ resurrection appears in the midst of the crucifixion cataclysm, it serves to confirm the interlocking character of the two events and their eschatological nature: the earth shakes and the dead are raised in a “preview [of] the end.”80

As he brings together the crucifixion and resurrection scenes, Matthew simultaneously creates a dichotomy among the onlookers. Jesus’ death and resurrection divides those who see it into two groups. The guards at the resurrection are filled with fear. The women, however, are filled with fear (as in Mark 16:8) and great joy (Matt 28:8; cf. 2:10). The women go from the tomb to announce the resurrection; the guards are paid (like Judas, in silver pieces) to deny the resurrection (28:11-15).81 The holy ones at Jesus’ crucifixion (and proleptic resurrection) are

79 Carter, Matthew and the Margins, 544. In addition, Matthew alters Mark so as to allow the women named at crucifixion and resurrection to be the same. At the crucifixion Matthew, like Mark, lists two women named Mary: Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph (Matt 27:56; cf. Mark 15:40). Matthew identifies the women at the resurrection as “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” while Mark has “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James” (16:1). By not specifying which “other Mary” is at issue in 28:1, Matthew departs from Mark and allows the Mary at the resurrection to be the same “other Mary” who is present at the crucifixion. (Cf. Mark 15:40: Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the lesser and Joses are present at the crucifixion in Mark. Senior [Passion Narrative, 332] notes that “Joses” and “Joseph” are equivalent in Mark.)

80 Gundry, Matthew, 578.

81 Note also 28:5: μὴ φοβέيلة ἡμῖν, “You, do not fear.” “You” here is emphatic, a Matthean addition, like his repetition of “fear” (φοβεύσατε), the word just used for the guards (compare Mark: μὴ ἐκθαμβεύσατε, 16:6). The effect is, again, to contrast the women with the guards. While the guards fear at the sight of the angel, the women need not.
raised from the dead. At Jesus’ resurrection the guards become as dead, thus reversing the fate of the holy ones.

Further, Matthew aligns the guards at resurrection with those at the crucifixion, thereby dividing the onlookers at the crucifixion likewise into the same two groups that are present at the resurrection: the centurion and the soldiers on the one hand, and the women (and risen saints) on the other. Although the soldiers at the cross are different from those at the empty tomb, Matthew describes both with the same word: they are ὁι τηρούντες (27:54; 28:4); simply, the guards. Both groups, by the majority reading, are Roman. In both cases ὁι τηρούντες experience an earthquake; in both cases their response is fear (ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα, 27:54; ἀπὸ φόβου, 28:4). In both cases, too, they are juxtaposed with the women who, moreover, provide a contrast: while the centurion and guards keep watch over “this man” (ὁ ὑπὸ, 27:54) whom they have crucified, the women behold from afar Jesus whom they have followed and served (27:55).

In fact, Matthew edits Mark so as to emphasize the fact that the guards watching the eschatological events at the cross are the same ones who have mocked and crucified Jesus several verses before. Where Mark has only the centurion, Matthew adds the soldiers “who with him were keeping watch” (ὁι τηρούντες, 27:54); ὁι τηρούντες is used also for the guards who crucify Jesus and divide his clothes (27:35-36) and who have just mocked him (27:27-31). Indeed, the centurion’s “ὁ ὑπὸ” serves to emphasize further his role in that mockery and

82 See Davies and Allison’s strong case that the guards at the resurrection, like those at the crucifixion, are Roman (Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.655); cf. Brown, Death of the Messiah, 1294-95; Gundry, Matthew, 584. It is not clear whether Pilate says to the Pharisees who ask for a guard “You have a guard; use it” or “Have a guard” (27:65). As Davies and Allison (ibid., 655) point out, in 28:12 the soldiers at the tomb are called στρατιῶται, the same word used for the Roman soldiers at the crucifixion, and 28:14 makes it clear that the guard ultimately answers to Pilate.

83 Davies and Allison (Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.666) note the parallel. They, however, see it as describing a contrast: while the centurion and those at the crucifixion fear and confess Christ, those at the resurrection fear and deny Christ.

84 David C. Sim (“The ‘Confession’ of the Soldiers in Matthew 27:54,” HeyJ 34 [1993]: 401-24, here 404-406) draws attention to this point: “Matthew identifies the group of soldiers who acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God at the foot of the cross with those who humiliated, tortured, degraded and executed him. The centurion is included among these soldiers of the governor and is presumably their commanding officer” (405-406).
crucifixion. This is the same word written on the cross (and there derogatory) where these soldiers keep watch over the dying Jesus (27:37), and it is used in 27:54 emphatically, as a predicate nominative – just as it is used on the cross. The centurion and soldiers at crucifixion and at earthquake are aligned, and their role in the mocking of Jesus is emphasized. When they, like the guards at the resurrection, “fear greatly” at the eschatological events that accompany Jesus’ death, the implication is that, as in 1 Enoch, they belong to the category of those to whom the eschatological cataclysm means fear. At the crucifixion as at the resurrection, Matthew divides those who see the cataclysm into different groups, one for life, and one for fear and seeming death; one that has followed and served; one that has mocked and crucified. This is, that is, not only a proleptic resurrection but a proleptic judgement scene.

Yet what of the centurion’s “confession”? “Truly this man was Son of God”: that these words represent a confession of faith is the common reading. David Sim, however, has made a strong case for understanding the centurion’s words not as confession of faith but as a cry of defeat from the ungodly. In light of Matthew’s deliberate association of the guards at the crucifixion and at the resurrection, Sim’s proposal is persuasive. 1 Enoch 1-11 may, in fact, help adjudicate the question. We have seen that Matthew’s crucifixion scene shows parallels in

---

85 For a contrasting view see Senior, Passion Narrative, 327: The repetition of ὁ τὸν emphazizes the reversal, the new confession of faith. The evidence, however, points in the opposite direction: the centurion and soldiers at crucifixion and at earthquake are aligned, and these are aligned in turn with the guards at the empty tomb.
86 So also David Sim, “The ‘Confession’ of the Soldiers,” 421.
87 For a sampling, see Ulrich Luz, Matthew 21-28: A Commentary (trans. J.G. Crouch; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 569-70; John P. Meier, The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church and Morality in the First Gospel (New York: Paulist, 1978), 35; Paul S. Minear, Matthew: The Teacher's Gospel (New York: Pilgrim, 1982), 138; Donald Senior, Passion Narrative, 324; Gundry, Matthew, 578; Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.635-36 (though they prescind from the view that the centurion is representative of all Gentiles [ibid. 605-606]; contrast Gundry, ibid., 578). Pierre Bonnard (L’Évangile selon Saint Matthieu [Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1982], 407) disagrees: « Il est peu probable que, selon Mat., le centenier ait confessé la divinité de Jésus. » His reaction is typically pagan, panic at having offended the Jewish God. So also David C. Sim, “The ‘Confession’ of the Soldiers in Matthew 27:54.” The resemblances to 1 Enoch 1 and 1 I suggest that Bonnard and Sim are right. This is a preview of the judgement day, and what is at issue in both Matt 27:54 and 1 En. 1:5 is recognition of the power of God by those who have not believed (see further below).
imagery and vocabulary with the eschatological judgement described in *1 Enoch* 1 (cf. *1 Enoch* 10). The response of the soldiers at Jesus’ death also finds a parallel in *1 Enoch*’s judgement scene. *1 Enoch* 1 establishes a dichotomy between the “chosen righteous” and the ungodly.

When God comes in *1 Enoch* 1 there will be peace and mercy and blessing for the righteous, and light will shine upon them (*1 En.* 1:8). For the ungodly, however, God’s coming means destruction (1:9). In *1 Enoch* 10 we see that destruction worked out in the punishment of the rebel angels, the Watchers. The response of the soldiers at Jesus’ death (Matt 27:54) is reminiscent of the reaction of the Watchers at God’s coming in *1 Enoch*. All are afraid when the Holy One comes, *1 Enoch* says (φοβηθήσονται πάντες, 1:5; cf. φόβος μέγας, 1:5) and the Watchers will believe (πιστεύουσιν οἱ ἐγρήγοροι, 1:5); the description of the earth’s quaking follows. At Jesus’ death the centurion and those keeping watch over Jesus are greatly afraid (ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα, Matt 27:54) when they see the earth quake, and they say, “Truly this man was Son of God” (ἀληθῶς θεοῦ ὢν οὗτος, Matt 27:54). Like the Watchers, the soldiers “believe” at the signs of God’s power. Recognition of the power of God is not yet, however, faith, as the letter of James notes: καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίσσουσιν – “Even the demons believe, and tremble” (Jas 2:19). That the soldiers in Matthew are “greatly afraid”; that they are aligned with the unfaithful soldiers at the resurrection; that their role in the crucifixion is emphasized; that Matthew’s text, further, contains probable verbal echoes of *1 Enoch*: all this suggests that Sim’s reading is correct. In the contrasting reactions of joy and fear, the contrasting fates of death and life, Matthew’s crucifixion/resurrection cataclysm hints at the judgement (also, in *1 Enoch*, marked by cataclysm) in which the holy and the ungodly are divided, the former for life and joy; the latter for fear and death. In this, again, it resembles *1 Enoch* 1 and 10, where present cataclysm shades into the eschatological judgement, and the holy righteous are separated from the ungodly.
Not only in the generally eschatological character of the cataclysm but in particular
details – the pairing of σχιζω and σείω; the contrasting groups of “chosen righteous” (1 Enoch;
cf. Matthew’s holy ones /women) and the ungodly (Matthew’s centurion and soldiers; the
Watchers and the ungodly in 1 Enoch); the fear of the ungodly at the signs of God’s judgement
and their recognition of God in the cataclysm; the conjunction of present cataclysm and final
judgement; in all these ways Matthew sounds like 1 Enoch 1-11. And as in 1 Enoch, cataclysm
and eschatological judgement in Matthew follow upon innocent blood. Matthew draws on
Ezekiel’s vision in his crucifixion scene, but filters it through the lens of an eschatological
expectation like 1 Enoch’s, reflecting the logic of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence.

In 1 Enoch and in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, the cataclysm that follows
upon innocent blood comes both to destroy and to cleanse. As is the case in Matt 27:50-53, the
same event encompasses both devastation and renewal. This is the characteristic of cataclysm in
the logic of innocent blood; this is why flood serves as the appropriate image for blood’s
consequence. It implies purgation, the wiping out and in this the wiping clean of the land. In the
severe paradigm of innocent blood, there is still room for hope. After the flood there was a new
creation. The blood of Zechariah is swallowed up, in the end, and the wicked Gentile is
converted to the faith of the very city he has just destroyed. The cataclysm that comes upon the
rebel angels, upon the blood-stained land, serves also to heal the earth, and the righteous escape
out into a restored land. If pollution is the problem at the centre of the paradigm of innocent
blood, its hope is healing, precisely for the land. It is the land that has been corrupted that is now

---

89 Ronald Troxel (“Matt 27:51-4 Reconsidered: Its Role in the Passion Narrative, Meaning and Origin,” NTS 48
(2002), 30-47) proposes the influence of 1 Enoch also on 27:52: Matthew’s “holy ones” derive from 1 Enoch 93:6.
His suggestion is intriguing as a way of explaining Matthew’s use of “holy ones” here without recourse to Zech 14:5
(which otherwise has little in common with 27:51-53, as Troxel points out). But the case is not yet convincing, as
he can show little in 27:52 other than this word that suggests dependence on 1 Enoch 93 in particular.
cleansed: this is the whole point of the flood, in *1 Enoch*. From innocent blood to cataclysm, for the desolation and the cleansing of the land.

iv. The cataclysm as cleansing: Matt 27:50-53

So, too, in Matthew. For it is in fact cleansing that is at issue in Matthew as in *1 Enoch* and the logic of innocent blood. In the crucifixion cataclysm, it is the *holy* ones, Matthew observes, who rise, and they go into the *holy* city. In Ezekiel 37, there is the same emphasis on sanctification: the defiled land is restored. But in Matthew, as in *1 Enoch* and the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions but not in Ezekiel, the defiled land is restored in the very cataclysm that destroys it. Matthew brings together defilement and its reversal. The tombs (τὰ μνημεῖα, 27:52) are opened, and the bodies of the holy ones who have fallen asleep are raised. We have seen these tombs before. In Matthew 23 it is precisely the tombs (τὰ μνημεῖα, 23:29) of the righteous that are the sign of the pollution of the land by innocent blood. “You adorn the tombs of the righteous” (τὰ μνημεῖα τῶν δικαίων), Jesus says to the Pharisees, and claim that you have no share in their blood. But “you are sons of those who murdered the prophets….Therefore I send to you prophets and sages and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify….so that upon you may come all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth” (23:31-35). The Pharisees, like the chief priests (27:4-10), shed innocent blood and the tombs they build are the signs of the land’s defilement (23:29; 27:7). Now at Jesus’ death these very tombs are opened and the holy ones return to Jerusalem, the city called now not desolate but holy. It is precisely what is defiled that is reclaimed. The cataclysm that follows upon Jesus’ death, even as it announces Jerusalem’s destruction, also reverses the devastation wrought upon the land by the shedding of innocent

90 “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the towns to be inhabited and the waste places shall be rebuilt….And they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden…’” (Ezek 36:33-35).
blood. The effect of innocent blood, the defilement and devastation of the land, is in the cataclysm both enacted and overturned. Given Matthew’s interest in defilement throughout the gospel and in particular in association with innocent blood; given that in this very passage he recalls the defilement associated with innocent blood in the tombs from which the holy ones rise, we may conclude that his insistence at the end of the crucifixion cataclysm on τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν is deliberate. Not “Jerusalem” as in 23:36, the city polluted by innocent blood, but “the holy city”: Matthew announces here not only return, but restoration – restoration understood as purgation, cleansing. “You will call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins”: in the cataclysm at Jesus’ death, Matthew declares the fulfilment of the promise. He claims for Jerusalem the same sanctification promised by Ezekiel in his vision of the return. But unlike Ezekiel he announces salvation as cataclysm, the cataclysm that both destroys and cleanses, in accord with the logic of innocent blood. Matthew has set the birth of Jesus – saviour – in the age of exile. Now at his death he announces the end of exile, and defines that end not only as return, but as purification. “Cleanse the earth (ἡ γῆ) from all uncleanness and from all oppression and from all sin,” God says to the archangels in 1 Enoch; “and the earth shall be cleansed from all pollution and from all sin” (10:20; 22, Grk [a]): the cataclysm that destroys serves finally to render the land clean once again.

---

91 Note, too, Matthew’s emphasis on the land (ἡ γῆ) here and in 23:29-39. In chapter 23, “all the innocent blood” is poured out “upon the land” (ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, 23:35, where ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν is Matthew’s). At the crucifixion, the land (ἡ γῆ, 27:51) is shaken as the holy ones rise. It is the land and its defilement (and restoration) that is at issue. Cf. also the emphasis on the land in the Beatitudes: the meek will inherit “the land” (ἡ γῆ, 5:5). Again, this is Matthew’s addition; this beatitude does not appear in Luke 6. Matthew’s emphasis on the land is consonant with his focus on innocent blood: what is at issue in the coming of the Messiah and in the blessings of the messianic kingdom is entirely concrete, having to do with the land, with the well-being of the people in the land. Innocent blood is a problem – the central problem – because it threatens the land and its thriving.

92 Cf. Ezek 37:23: “I will save them from all the apostasies into which they have fallen, and will cleanse them…..”
VII.  “This is My Blood…”: Matt 23:35 and 26:28

Not only by comparison with *1 Enoch* but also in the literary composition of his Gospel, Matthew raises the theme of cleansing in association with innocent blood and with the death of Jesus. That the cataclysm that visits the land at Jesus’ death has to do with cleansing receives some support from Jesus’ words in Matthew at the Last Supper. “This is my blood of the covenant poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (τοῦτο γάρ ἔστιν τὸ ἁμαρτίαν τῆς διαθήκης τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυσίμενον εἰς ἁφεσίν ἁμαρτιῶν, 26:28): Matthew here adds “for the forgiveness of sins.” He also changes ὑπέρ to περί. Gundry finds the change of preposition significant: “Matthew’s preposition reflects sacrificial terminology in the LXX.” Matthew’s addition likewise summons up the world of blood-sacrifice, sacrifice specifically for sin. Though the precise phrase εἰς ἁφεσίν ἁμαρτιῶν never occurs in the LXX, ἁφεσίς does occur in the LXX in connection with sin – once, in Lev 16:26. There, in a chapter concerned with making atonement for the people and the sanctuary, the goat over whose head the sins (ἁμαρτία, 16:21) of the people have been confessed is sent into the wilderness εἰς ἁφεσίν (16:26; cf. 16:10). Its fellow goat, the goat of the sin offering, is sacrificed to “make atonement for the sanctuary, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions, all their sins (περὶ πασῶν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν) …”(16:16). In Leviticus 16, the sending away of sin (through the scapegoat) is part of a rite of atonement also including blood sacrifice that cleanses the sanctuary and the people (16:19: “He shall sprinkle some of the blood on [the altar]…and cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel”

93 Mark 14:24 reads “This is my blood of the covenant poured out for many.”
94 Gundry, *Matthew*, 528. Davies and Allison (*Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3.474) list a number of explanations for Matthew’s use of περί, including its appearance in Isa 53:10 and Matthean preference for the word. In conjunction with “for the forgiveness of sins” with its reference to Leviticus (see argument below), and given the sacrificial meaning attributed in Jewish tradition to the blood of the covenant (Exod 24:8; Matt 26:28; cf. Davies and Allison, ibid., 474-75) it is quite possible that περί here carries sacrificial significance.
95 Davies and Allison, *Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3.474, n. 139.
Matthew’s terminology – περί, ὀμορτία, ἁφεσίς – is in part that of Leviticus 16, where the problem is uncleanness and the concern is sanctification of the people and the holy place. In Leviticus several different animals and sacrifices together deal with the problem of uncleanness: the bull and the goat of the sin offering whose blood is sprinkled for atonement for the sanctuary, and by whose blood the altar is cleansed and hallowed “from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel” (Lev 16:14-16; 19); the live goat sent out into the wilderness εἴς ἁφεσίν (LXX) with all the sins of the people on its head (Lev 16:20-26). Matthew has only the blood of Jesus, poured out for many εἴς ἁφεσίν.

Matt 26:28 also, and more obviously, summons up Exod 24:8 and the blood of the covenant. In Exodus, this blood has to do with the ratification of the covenant and not with atonement and cleansing, in contrast to the sacrifices of Leviticus 16. In later tradition, however, this blood too becomes blood sprinkled “for the forgiveness of sins” (as in, for example, Targum Onkelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan; cf. Heb 9:19-22, “where it is taken for granted that the blood Moses sprinkled was for the forgiveness of sins”). Its appearance in Hebrews, Davies and Allison point out, attests to the existence of this tradition in the 1st century. Matthew describes the blood of the covenant (from Exod 24:8; cf. Mark 14:24) in terms of sacrifice for sins. Matthew, it seems, reflects an understanding of Exodus 24 and the blood of the covenant that is already current, and appears in both Christian and rabbinic texts. The blood of the covenant is poured out precisely for forgiveness of sins. And Matthew uses the language of

96 Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3.475. The references are theirs.
97 That the blood of the covenant is also a sacrifice for sin may well already be implicit in Mark 14:24: “blood of the covenant poured out for many.” Matthew makes explicit what the tradition implies.
Leviticus 16 LXX – εἰς ἄφεσιν, περὶ, ἁμαρτίαν – to express the sacrificial character of Jesus’ blood poured out. ⁹⁸

In Leviticus, this language describes cleansing, atonement for the sanctuary “because of the uncleannesses of the people,” so that the holy place may again be holy. Insofar as Matthew’s terminology sets Jesus’ death against the background of Leviticus and the idea of sacrifice for sin and for the cleansing of the sanctuary, it calls up the problem of purity and pollution. Because Jesus’ blood is poured out “εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτίαν,” it addresses the problem of defilement, of the people and the holy place, and the need for cleansing.⁹⁹

Significantly, Matthew’s terminology also links the blood here poured out for forgiveness of sins to another passage that raises the problem of defilement, of the people and of the holy place. In Matthew as in Mark, Jesus’ blood is “poured out” (ἐκχυσθείς) for many (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24). In Matthew but not in Mark this same word, in the same form, describes all the innocent blood poured out upon the earth (ἐκχυσθείς, Matt 23:35), blood also of the crucified, that is, of Jesus. In 23:35 the blood that is poured out – Abel’s blood, Zechariah’s blood, the blood of Jesus – is innocent blood, blood that sums up the corruption of the Pharisees and scribes, blood that brings devastation in its wake. In the crucifixion of Jesus (as Matthew presents it) the leaders of Israel seal the land’s fate: behold, your house is left to you, desolate.

---

⁹⁸ There are a number of scriptural ideas that resonate in Matt 26:26-28, ideas of covenant as well as sacrifice for sin. For discussion see the standard commentaries, esp. Davies and Allison, Gospel according to Saint Matthew, 3:465-474; Gundry, Matthew, 528; Senior, Passion Narrative, 81-83. A variety of allusions inform the passage (cf. in addition to Exod 24 and Lev 16, Isa 53:10-12 and perhaps Jer 31:34) as well as a rich liturgical history (cf., in addition to the synoptic Last Supper passages, 1 Cor 11:23-25; 15:3-4; 1 Pet 3:18). I do not intend to exclude ideas of covenant and the resonance with Isaiah or Jeremiah, but simply to highlight Matthew’s sacrificial emphasis.

⁹⁹ Cf. J. Andrew Overman, Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel according to Saint Matthew (The New Testament in Context; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 359. On “forgiveness of sins” he notes that there is no indication that Matthew has “an ontological state” in mind, i.e. that all people are sinners and must be “saved.” That is a later Christian theological formulation. Rather, “Matthew has been speaking throughout the Gospel of the ills that have corrupted Israel and its leaders.” Forgiveness is salvation for Israel from its own corruption. Overman finds that salvation in Jesus’ “message of repentance and reform” – but his reading prompts the question, what was wrong with John the Baptist’s message of repentance? For Matthew, that is, there is something more at issue in salvation than a message of repentance. Pollution is concrete, blood poured out, and salvation is therefore equally concrete: this is my blood which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
And so the temple veil is torn as Jesus gives up the spirit. Jesus’ innocent blood poured out spells doom for the people with blood on their heads; in his death that doom, the temple’s desolation, is enacted.

Matthew, however, brings together innocent blood, the blood that leads to devastation, with Jesus’ blood poured out for forgiveness of sins in the repeated verb ἐκχυστάμενον. In the present participle at 23:35 Matthew departs from Luke/Q’s perfect participle and coincides with 1 Enoch 9:1-3. Whether the anticipation of 26:28 that Matthew thus creates is deliberate or not, the reader hears in 26:28 the echo of 23:35. Innocent blood poured out for the land’s defilement – Jesus’ innocent blood, finally – comes together in the reading of the text with the blood of Jesus poured out for forgiveness. And this forgiveness, set as it is against the background of Leviticus, describes a cleansing. Jesus’ blood poured out εἰς ἀφέων addresses precisely the problem of defilement, of the uncleannesses of the people raised by innocent blood. In Jesus’ blood as in Leviticus’ scapegoat the sins of the people are taken away, sent away, resting no longer upon their own heads, so that the land may again be holy. In Matthew, that is, defilement and cleansing, the people’s doom and their hope, come together as the blood of Jesus is poured out. The temple veil is torn in two and the whole earth heaves; the devastation of temple and land are adumbrated in the death of Jesus. Yet at the same moment, the tombs are opened and the dead rise and return to the holy city.

Εἰς ἁγίαν πόλιν: it is surely not accidental that Matthew twice uses the word “holy” at the climax of the crucifixion cataclysm. Given the problem of defilement that runs through the

100 See above, Chapter 7, pp. 284-86.
101 In Leviticus 16, it is the sanctuary in particular whose holiness is at issue; the people’s uncleannesses must be expiated and removed so that the temple and altar may be holy. In the Holiness Code, the concern for the holiness of priests and sanctuary becomes a concern for the holiness of the whole land and its people (see above, Chapter 3, pp. 68-70). For Matthew as for the Holiness Code it is land and people as well as the temple that are defiled by the corruption summed up in innocent blood. Innocent blood is poured out “upon the land”; the temple (“your house”) and the city (“Jerusalem”) are left desolate, and the whole people have blood upon their heads.
gospel in the theme of innocent blood, surfacing again in the tombs from which the holy ones rise; given the suggestion in 26:28 that Jesus’ blood is, precisely, cleansing – so that the problem of defilement represented by his innocent blood finds an answer in his blood poured out εἰς ἁπάντησιν – Matthew’s insistence on holiness at the climax of the crucifixion cataclysm is telling. Here is the end and goal of the death of Jesus, in the opening of the tombs and the resurrection of the dead and their return to the city called now not desolate but holy. If the land is devastated by the innocent blood poured out upon it, it is also, by the blood of Jesus, cleansed. In the juxtaposition of the devastated land and the holy city, Matthew suggests that Jesus’ death is not only for destruction but also for healing. “Cleanse the land,” God says to the archangels at the end of 1 Enoch’s cataclysm: this is the final purpose of the flood that comes to wipe out the blood-polluted land. In the same way, Jesus’ death brings the cataclysm that rends temple and land, and at the same time renders Jerusalem, once again, holy.

That the moment of devastation is also the moment of cleansing and restoration is an idea that belongs to the cataclysms of 1 Enoch and the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions. The flood destroys, eradicates the evil, washes the polluted earth clean, so that the land may be restored. Both moments are necessary, in the paradigm of innocent blood. In this respect Matthew follows the pattern of the innocent blood traditions. But that it is Jesus’ blood that saves; that the blood itself may be not only for devastation but also for new creation, that is an idea peculiar (with regard to the blood-flood traditions we have examined) to Matthew. In 1 Enoch, innocent blood is the offense against the land that brings on, finally, the cataclysm. It is the cataclysm and not the blood poured out that purges that land. Even in the midrashim’s tale of Nebuzaradan shedding the people’s blood in an attempt to silence the blood of Zechariah, it is not the blood poured out that finally brings the slaughter and the bubbling of Zechariah’s blood.

102 Cf. Jub. 5 and 7; CD 2-3; Sib. Or. 3; Wis 10:4-5; L.A.B. 16 (and 2-3).
to an end, but the sheer mercy of God. In bringing together defilement and cleansing, destruction and re-creation in Jesus’ blood, so that it is both innocent blood and sacrificial blood for the forgiveness of sins, Matthew adds a new element to the logic of innocent blood. Innocent blood in Matthew leads to the cataclysm that both destroys and cleanses: so far Matthew follows the innocent blood paradigm. What is new is the idea made available in the Last Supper traditions about Jesus’ blood, that Jesus’ innocent blood is also the blood that saves.

VIII. Salvation for “His People”

In the return “εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν” (27:53) at Jesus’ death the gospel’s opening promise of salvation is realized. “You will call him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (1:21). Those sins, culminating in the innocent blood poured out upon the earth, have defiled the land. Israel’s leaders deal in defilement, as Matthew’s language of tombs and burial grounds and innocent blood makes clear; therefore Jerusalem is left desolate and the narrative comes to a point in the blood upon the heads of the whole people. In Jesus’ death and resurrection, this defilement is overturned. The tombs are opened and the holy people rise and go into the holy city. This holiness, Jerusalem’s new holiness, is salvation from sins.

Further, it is salvation “for his people”: for it is Jerusalem that is now again holy, and Jerusalem to which the people return. When the tombs open in an echo of Ezekiel 37 and the holy ones rise and go into Jerusalem, Matthew claims the fulfilment of Israel’s hope: this is new

103 Cf. Lam. Rab. 2.2.4 and 4.13.16; Eccles. Rab. 3.16.1: At Nebuzaradan’s exclamation – I have slaughtered so many! Do you want me to kill them all? – the blood finally stops seething and God allows the ground to absorb the blood: “forthwith the Holy One, blessed by He, was filled with mercy, and gave a hint to the blood, which was then and there absorbed in the ground.” No amount of slaughter, apparently, is enough: it is God’s mercy (or Zechariah’s, in the Talmudic versions) that silences the blood. Cf. b. Git. 57b; where, however, God does not speak.

104 So the “sins” from which the people will be saved (Matt 1:21; 26:28) are defined by Matthew’s Passion Narrative in terms of defilement; that is why innocent blood serves to sum up Israel’s corruption. The problem of sin, even a “spiritual” sin like the Pharisees’ hypocrisy, but especially a transgression like murder, is a problem of purity and impurity. Its consequence is the pollution of the holy places, indeed of the people and the land. As Daniel Antwi (“Did Jesus Consider His Death to Be an Atoning Sacrifice?” Int 45 [1991]: 17-28, here 26) puts it, “Sin, in the thinking of the Jews, was not an abstract quality but a localized, sinister sphere arising from transgression” that must be purged. Salvation is equally concrete: blood is poured out, and dry bones walk.
life for the buried saints of Jerusalem, in the holy city itself.\footnote{Cf. Anders Runesson, “Rethinking early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict,” \textit{JBL} 127, no. 1 (2008): 95-132, esp. 116, who likewise draws attention to the centrality of “the holy city” at the end of Matthew’s Gospel (as at its beginning: 4:5). Matthew’s emphasis on the holy city (among other things) indicates for Runesson a continued reverence for Jerusalem and the temple even after 70 C.E., and a location within “common Judaism.”} This is the ancient hope of Israel for restoration, realized at the heart of Israel, in the death of Jesus. That is the point of the echo of Ezekiel. Matthew claims for this moment of Jesus’ death and resurrection Ezekiel’s promise of return, a promise made to the whole house of Israel.

For the hope that is realized in the crucifixion cataclysm is not just cleansing, but return. That, too, is the point of Matthew’s echo of Ezekiel. Dry bones rise, and walk into the holy city. The promise of salvation at Jesus’ birth was spoken to a people in exile. At his death, their exile comes to an end. Cleansing and return are linked, in the logic of innocent blood. Insofar as defilement offers a reason for exile, the holiness of the city in the aftermath of Jesus’ death proclaims the end of exile. In the return εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν, we are taken back to Jesus’ birth and the history of exile and return sketched there. Jesus, “who will save his people from their sins,” goes down into Egypt in a re-enactment of exile (2:15) even as Israel’s own exile is recalled in the shedding of the children’s innocent blood (2:16-18). His return εἰς γῆν Ισραήλ (2:21) forecasts the end of the story. When his own innocent blood is shed, that blood to which the children’s deaths already point, there is another return. The children are not forgotten, in Matthew’s history of innocent blood and defilement, exile and return. As in their blood the blood of Jesus is anticipated, so in his death is their hope, Matthew’s text (with its interweaving of chapters 2 and 27) suggests. The tombs of the righteous built in the shedding of innocent blood now are opened and Israel’s children come back into the land. “Thus says the Lord: Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears;…there is hope for your future, says the Lord: your children shall come back to their own country” (Jer 31:16-17). Matthew sets Jer 31:15 and
Israel’s exile at the heart of the story of Jesus’ birth. At Jesus’ death, God’s answer to the long weeping of Rachel is heard. “They shall come back to their own country”: they shall go into Jerusalem, and the city shall be called holy.

Yet the return thus promised does not ignore the real problem of exile, Jerusalem’s devastation. Jerusalem, after all, will be destroyed. The temple will be razed by the Romans as it was razed in the time of Babylon. There is no hope that can be spoken to Israel’s people that does not take this real desolation into account. Matthew’s Gospel does not leap lightly over Israel’s history of loss. The promise of return is spoken out of exile, recognizing its cost. Jesus dies. The veil of the temple is rent. There is in the life of ὁ λαός this tragedy. Yet desolation, in Matthew’s tale of innocent blood, is not the end of the story. Even at the moment of death, even when the temple is rent, there is hope for the people’s future. They shall come back, and the city shall be called holy.

The question for the ironic reading, and indeed for any reading that takes seriously both 23:35 and 26:28, is this: Why, if Jesus’ blood forgives, need the temple and the city be destroyed? The answer is given in the paradigm of innocent blood. It is not just forgiveness that is necessary but purgation. Matthew, in keeping with the legends of Zechariah, in keeping with the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions, sees not only sin but defilement in the blood money that stains the temple, in the blood upon the people’s heads. But Matthew, like the innocent blood traditions, insists that the story does not end there. The temple’s desolation coincides with the

106 So the problem of innocent blood yields a reading of Matthew’s attitude to temple and Jerusalem that stands somewhere between Anthony Saldarini (for example) and Anders Runesson. This is a gospel in continuity and conversation with Judaism, as both Saldarini (Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994] and Runesson (“Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations”) agree. Runesson is right that Jerusalem is still revered after the destruction of the temple: destruction does not (contra Saldarini) coincide with a loss of respect for the temple or the holy city. But Saldarini is right that there is a problem with the temple: its destruction, in the literature, does have to do with a loss of holiness. What the innocent blood traditions enable us to see is that the destruction made necessary by the pollution of the holy place does not entail the rejection of the holy place, but its purging. Jerusalem, in defilement and in holiness, is the centre of the story – and the final word is holiness.
tombs opening and the dry bones of Israel walking again. Destruction and re-creation come together in Matthew’s vision, as in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions. Neither one stands alone. Marguerat, who sees in the blood on their heads a people “effacé du salut,” is no more right than Cargal, who sees in the same blood simply forgiveness. Judgement and forgiveness coincide.

In describing a salvation written upon the land and culminating in the entrance into the holy city, and in setting the story of salvation under the sign of exile, Matthew’s Gospel makes it clear from the beginning that this is a narrative about Israel. The question of exile raised by the genealogy comes to its climax in the cry of the people at 27:25, and it is this cry, the blood upon the people’s heads, that the crucifixion cataclysm addresses. The cataclysm that follows upon the death of Jesus brings both desolation and promise, the final enactment of exile in the temple’s rent veil and also the end of exile in the people’s return to the holy city. The whole narrative unfolds against the background of Israel’s history and hope, defined in terms of exile and return. That is why the cry of the people at 27:25 is climactic: because it brings precisely this narrative, Israel’s story, to a point. What is the future for the people with innocent blood upon their heads? So the events that follow, Jesus’ death, the cataclysm, the resurrection, speak to the question of πᾶς ὁ λαός. If commentators have read the cry of the people as the end of Israel’s story – in part because they see, correctly, that it is connected in the Gospel narrative to the destruction of Jerusalem – that is because they have not seen the logic of innocent blood that underlies the story. Innocent blood defiles, and so the people are cast out. But innocent blood brings also (in the mercy of God) the cataclysm, and so the promise of new creation. Destruction is part of the history, but it is not that history’s end. Or rather, the cataclysm that, in the vision of Matthew (as in the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions) rises over Israel’s history means both destruction and new beginning, new life rising out of the purged land.
In Matthew’s history of innocent blood, Israel thus stands at the centre of the story, both for sin and for salvation, and its history culminates in the return of Israel’s holy ones to Jerusalem. This term “holy ones” is, however, interesting. Does Matthew mean to suggest, in calling attention to the holiness of the ones who return, a limitation on salvation? Ezekiel, after all, in his vision of return – a vision so important to Matthew’s crucifixion cataclysm – speaks not of the holy ones, but of the whole house of Israel. If Israel stands at the centre of salvation in Matthew’s history (as it stands also at the centre of the story of sin and exile), why is it only the holy who return?

In fact, attention to Matthew’s narrative suggests that the Gospel does here imply a limitation of the proffered salvation – only it is a limitation determined not by ethnic-religious identity but by, precisely, holiness. The distinction Matthew makes here (as elsewhere in the Gospel) between those who will see the salvation of God and rejoice, and those who will find in it only fear and desolation, is not, as it has so often been understood, a distinction between Jews and Gentiles, or between “Judaism” and “Christianity”\(^\text{107}\) (whether that Christianity is conceived as largely Gentile or Jewish/Gentile or even largely Jewish), but between the righteous and the ungodly. We have seen that this episode describes the reversal of the defilement caused by innocent blood and signalled by the tombs of the righteous. Now when the tombs are opened the innocent blood of the prophets and of the righteous, Israel’s holy ones, gives way to their new life and defilement yields to holiness. Here the holy recall the righteous of Matthew 23, and the distinction that chapter has already introduced between the righteous of Israel and those who

\(^{107}\) The terms, I believe (with Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations”), imply a distinction that does not yet exist. See further below, pp. 355-358.
persecute them. In Matthew 23 it is a distinction within Israel: some of Israel’s leaders (the Pharisees, the scribes) oppose others who are righteous: prophets, sages, scribes (23:34).  

The distinction between the holy or righteous and those who oppress them described in Matthew 23 and recalled in Matt 27:52-53 appears again in the resurrection narrative, first of all in its ironic reversal of 27:52. At Jesus’ death the holy ones rise to life; at his resurrection the guards appointed to prevent rumours of resurrection become as dead. Again the narrative implies a contrast between the holy ones and the (lying and money-grubbing) guards. This time the unrighteous (the guards) are, by scholarly consensus, Roman, while the holy ones are Jewish. These guards are further contrasted with the (Jewish) women at the tomb, who are filled at the sight of the angel not only with fear but also with great joy, and go from the tomb to proclaim the resurrection. Conversely, the guards at the tomb stand parallel to the Roman soldiers at the crucifixion cataclysm, who first shed Jesus’ blood and then are filled with fear at the signs of God’s presence in him. We have seen reason to believe that the centurion who is with them represents not so much faith as fear in the presence of the living God. The Roman soldiers who have crucified Jesus (and the narrative draws this to the reader’s attention) stand side-by-side as witnesses to the crucifixion cataclysm with the (Jewish) women who have, the text recalls, followed and served Jesus. In Matthew’s narrative, the righteous and the unrighteous are

---

108 Note that the righteous who are opposed are in their own way leaders too: the prophets of old were certainly considered religious leaders, and scribes appear on both sides of the righteous/unrighteous divide in Matthew 23. While I do think, with the majority of commentators, that Matthew reserves special blame for the leaders in the matter of Israel’s corruption, the distinction between righteous and unrighteous, those in the end cast out and those saved, does not line up with the categories of leader/laity any more neatly than it does with those of Jew/Gentile – though Runesson (“Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations,” esp. 117-125) may be right that Pharisees in particular come in for fairly unmitigated censure. Here I would disagree with Saldarini (Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community), esp. 201, who sees the Gospel as setting up a dichotomy between the leaders and the people so as to encourage the people to come over from the Pharisee-led groups in contemporary Judaism to Matthew’s group.
commingled: some on both sides of the distinction are Jewish, both righteous and unrighteous found within Israel.\(^{109}\)

Indeed, if the centurion’s words do not constitute a confession of faith; if they are simply a recognition (in the manner of \textit{I Enoch} 1) of the coming of God in “this man” he has crucified, then there is no explosion of Gentile faith or righteousness in the crucifixion and resurrection narrative.\(^{110}\) If the centurion stands parallel to the rest of the soldiers, then the question of righteousness and unrighteousness that plays out in the crucifixion cataclysm is located within Israel.\(^{111}\) The holy ones who rise in the cataclysm are Jewish, as are the Pharisees and scribes who have murdered the holy one; the women who announce the resurrection with joy are Jewish as are the chief priests who lie to the Jewish people about it (28:8-15), and the crucifixion and proleptic resurrection culminates in Jerusalem. Like \textit{I Enoch}, and often using the same imagery, Matthew distinguishes between righteous and unrighteous in the crucifixion cataclysm. But that

\(^{109}\) Cf. Terence Donaldson’s astute observation in \textit{Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology} (JSNTSup8; Sheffield: JSOT, 1985), 207: “What makes the phrase ‘the rejection of Israel’ somewhat misleading is the fact that Matthew does not treat non-Christian Judaism as an undifferentiated mass that can be unambiguously assigned to the negative side of the line of division.” It should be noted that by my reading there is no evidence of righteousness among the Gentiles in particular at the crucifixion and resurrection. The gospel opens, however, with the magi, who witness to and serve the purpose of God. If the centurion’s words are taken as a confession of faith, then the Roman gives evidence of righteousness at the crucifixion alongside the Jewish holy ones and disciples. Matthew seems to assume a mix of “wheat and tares” in any group of people regardless of their ethnic or religious identity.

\(^{110}\) Cf. David Sim’s strong argument in “The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentiles” that the Gentiles are portrayed largely negatively in the Gospel of Matthew. Warren Carter, however, rightly challenges Sim’s corollary – that the gospel is not interested in a mission to the Gentiles because the Gentile world is regarded as a “patently foreign place to be avoided at all costs” (Sim, ibid., 30, quoted in Carter, “Matthew and the Gentiles: Individual Conversion and/or Systemic Transformation?” \textit{JSNT} 26.3 [2004]: 259-282, here 260). Carter’s argument for the centrality of the Gentiles, and especially of the question of Empire in Matthew’s message of judgement and salvation (see also Carter, \textit{Matthew and the Margins}) is an interesting mirror-image of my own argument for the centrality of Israel in exile and return: for the end of Israel’s exile implies the end of Roman domination. But Matthew’s concern in the matter of salvation is first of all with Israel’s well-being in itself, without relation to foreign oppression: he sees sin in terms of Israel’s corruption, a pollution of land and people that finds its consequence in exile, or Roman domination. What is important in Matthew’s frame of reference is not first of all the end of Roman oppression but Israel’s return to holiness. It is not Rome and Empire that absorbs his attention, but Israel and its relation to the holy God.

\(^{111}\) Even if the centurion’s words at the sight of the cataclysm constitute a confession of faith, there are (as we have seen) no grounds in the crucifixion-resurrection narrative as Matthew writes it to find in that confession the sign of a distinction between Israel (whose time is over) and the faith of the Gentiles. The Jewish women too rejoice at the resurrection, and it is Israel’s holy ones who rise.
distinction is not made along ethnic-religious lines. It is made within the human heart, and it is in the compass of the Gospel a distinction that plays out chiefly within Israel. The Romans are at this point largely spectators in an event that means both judgement and hope for Israel. Their time will come; in the end the (Jewish) disciples will go out to proclaim to all nations the good news that has been shown forth in Israel— but in the Gospel that good news has meaning in and for Israel, for judgement and also for hope.

To read Matthew’s history of Jesus as a history of innocent blood and against the background of innocent blood traditions is thus to discover a vision that is thoroughly Jewish. Matthew’s theodicy is the theodicy of the Zechariah traditions, which see in the city’s devastation the consequence of the innocent blood that has been shed in it, and the final mercy of God. It is the theodicy of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions in which the cataclysm that comes upon the land defiled by blood is, precisely, cleansing: for destruction and for renewal. It is the same land that stands at the centre of the story both of defilement and of cleansing; it is Jerusalem in the Zechariah legends that knows both devastation and the mercy of God. What is new, in Matthew, is the claim that the history of the land and covenant people, the history both of bloodshed and pollution and of sacrifice and purification comes to its climax in Jesus. It is a

112 Cf. Stanislau Savarimuthu, A Community in Search of Its Identity: Mt. 21:28-22:14 in a Subaltern Perspective (Delhi: ISPCK, 2007), 156, on Matt 22:11-14: “An ethnic indication is far from the interest of the parable, while its ethical orientation remains undeniable.” Later, however, Savarimuthu contrasts the Jewish community which has failed in the practice of righteousness with the Christian community which “is called to be victorious” (212); he posits a “definitive break” from Judaism (251). Not only 22:11-14 but also the crucifixion and resurrection narratives, however, call this neat distinction between Jewish and Christian into question.

113 Cf. J. Andrew Overman, Church and Community in Crisis, 407: the Gentiles, while they ultimately have a place in the Gospel message, are “an afterthought.”

114 Terry Donaldson (Jesus on the Mountain, 213) makes a similar point in his discussion of the mountain motif, and Zion traditions, in early Judaism and in Matthew: “In place of the anticipated fulfilment of eschatological hopes on Zion as the foundation for Christian existence, Matthew proposed the realized fulfilment of every Zion expectation in Christ.” He continues, “Perrin describes the accomplishment of the rabbis in Jamnia as that of providing for Judaism in the Torah a foundation for existence that, with the temple in ruins, could no longer be found in Zion. The suggestion being made here is that Matthew responded to the same set of circumstances by attempting to provide for the Church a secure and independent foundation in Christ.” I would simply add (in this respect against the tenor of Donaldson’s argument) that the parallel indicates two Jewish ways of dealing with the destruction of the temple; it does not yet imply the existence of a Church-vs.-Judaism polarity.
claim made especially in Jesus’ words about his blood at the Last Supper. As the covenant
people take defilement upon themselves, the covenant is made again in the blood of Jesus. As
Jesus’ innocent blood is poured out for the pollution of the holy place, Jesus’ blood is poured out
also for the forgiveness of the people’s uncleannesses. The city will be razed, but it is in the holy
city that the risen ones will walk. Jesus’ blood, as Matthew describes it, is poured out not only
for the destruction of the covenant people and the temple but for their restoration. This
restoration of Israel, however, happens in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, Matthew
implies, with the destruction of the temple, a shift in authority. The authority that belonged to
the temple resides now in Jesus and in the community gathered around him. There,”where two
or three are gathered in my name,” is now the place of the presence of the Lord. “And lo, I am
with you always” (28:20).

This is not yet, however, to imply a separation between Jesus and Israel in the theology of
the Gospel, or between Jesus-followers and Judaism in the Gospel’s social location. All the
signs in fact point away from these distinctions. Matthew finds in Jesus an answer to a problem
that is Israel’s, in particular. How is Israel to understand the destruction of its holy place by
Babylon and again by Rome, the repeated agony of exile? Matthew offers an answer rooted in
innocent blood and the paradigm of purity and pollution, an answer shaped by Jewish traditions
about innocent blood and flood, finding a parallel in rabbinic traditions about the blood of
Zechariah. Exile and sin are linked, and sin is concrete, the pollution of the land. In Jesus’ death
the problem of pollution comes to a head. But, as the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions also
insist, the cataclysm that follows in the economy of God upon the land’s defilement is not only
for destruction but also for restoration. The temple is destroyed. Yet Jerusalem will again by
holy, and the history that began in exile will come to its climax in the return to the holy city.
Matthew, like the rabbis after him (who posit a shift in authority from temple to Torah, priest to
rabbi), seeks to articulate hope for Israel in the aftermath of the temple: in spite of the temple’s desolation, “God with us” is still true, and the problem of the people’s defilement, the problem that ends in exile, has found in the blood of Jesus its resolution. Yet the story is not yet over. The crucifixion cataclysm points forward, in the proleptic resurrection of the holy ones and their return to the holy city, beyond destruction and cleansing to the time of the hoped-for return.

In the event, Jesus followers and Judaism parted ways, and in light of that separation Matthew’s location of Israel’s hope – “God with us,” the end of exile; the assurance of return – in the death and resurrection of Jesus seems to define those who follow Jesus over against Israel. But in Matthew it is not so. The whole story is about Israel, and Jesus is Israel’s hope. In him the restoration is assured. It is perhaps risky business to move from a gospel’s literary and theological shape to its social location (though it is a fundamental assumption of redaction criticism and is now becoming a standard move in narrative criticism as well). Yet this much is clear. Matthew does not define the good news he proclaims over against Israel. Instead, he sets the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah within the history of Israel. It is as part of a particular history – Israel’s history, of exile and promised return, sin and promised salvation (and these related concretely to exile and return through the paradigm of innocent blood), that Jesus’ life and its meaning unfold. Neither historically nor theologically does Matthew set the

115 Cf. J. Andrew Overman, Church and Community in Crisis, 414: “It is the case, however, that followers of Jesus separated from Judaism, which was something Matthew could not have imagined.” As the Christianity that emerged began to understand itself as distinct from Judaism, “Matthew’s story became a text aligned with the church and very often set against Jews and Israel.” Yet “Few things could be further from Matthew’s message and initial setting.” So also Anthony J. Saldarini, Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 11.

116 Donaldson, Jesus on the Mountain, esp. 209. 211-213 makes a similar though distinct point. Matthew portrays Jesus as the true Israel, and, in the aftermath of the war with Rome, locates Israel’s hope for restoration not in Zion theology but in Jesus. It is still, however, a hope shaped by Israel’s Zion expectation: “Matthew proposed the realized fulfilment of every Zion expectation in Christ” (213). The accompanying conclusion, however (viz. that the church’s identification with Jesus as God’s true Son Israel replaces its identification with national Israel) is called into question (for Matthew’s Gospel) in the perspective of Jewish traditions of innocent blood.

good news of Jesus Christ over against Israel. His way of seeing in terms of innocent blood, furthermore, is a Jewish way of seeing, consonant with the world of Jewish literature before and after Matthew’s Gospel. At the least, we can say that Matthew’s vision, so insistently centred in Israel, points to a situation where our present-day clean distinction between Israel and the followers of Jesus, Jews and Christians, did not exist. As Runesson shows, the hard distinctions in terms of which scholarship asks the question about Matthean identity – Jesus and disciples or the church vs. Jews and Israel or Judaism – are not appropriate to the Gospel text. On the contrary, “a close reading of the Gospel, however, suggests that such distinctions are not found in the text.”118 To read the gospel in light of early Jewish innocent blood traditions is to find Runesson’s judgement (like Saldarini’s and Overman’s) confirmed. In the community associated with Matthew’s Gospel “we are dealing with Jewish Christ-believers”; or, perhaps better, Christ-believers who locate themselves within Judaism.119

It is a group, I would add, that still thinks so thoroughly in terms of Israel that its driving purpose is to locate Jesus’ death in relation to the great tragedy that had again befallen Israel in the Roman war, to answer the pressing question, “Where is God, the God of Abraham and David, the God of Israel, in this”? What of the promises of God? It finds in the blood of Jesus an answer; a thoroughly Jewish answer, rooted in the problem of purity and pollution, described in the theme of innocent blood and pointing beyond destruction to restoration. Matthew’s account of Jesus’ death and its meaning belongs within a Jewish conceptual context, the paradigm of purity,  


119 Runesson, ibid., 107. I would prefer to say, a group of Christ-believers who locate themselves within Judaism, as it seems possible to me that the group includes ethnic non-Jews. Runesson describes Matthew’s community as one among a number of Jewish groups that constituted “common Judaism” in the first century (a group, in his view, in the process of defining themselves over against a Pharisaic association from which they evolved).
pollution and purgation, the problem of innocent blood and its consequences. In its shape it imitates Jewish traditions of innocent blood springing from the biblical figures of Cain and Zechariah; it echoes, like many of the other texts in which these traditions occur, *I Enoch*, a text whose influence is seen extensively in Jewish literature from the 3rd century B.C. to the 1st century C.E. Throughout, Matthew places Israel at the centre of his history, from the gospel’s beginning in Abraham, David and exile to the answer to exile revealed in Jesus’ death and the return to the holy city.
Primary Sources and Tools

Ancient Authors: Classical and Christian


Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha


Non-Canonical Gospels


Rabbinic Literature


Steinberger, Avraham, ed. מדרש רבי ברא והמעון (Midrash Rabah ha-Mevo’ar). Jerusalem: מחלקת ה’on ha-Midrash haMevo’ar, 1982 or 1983/1983 or 1984-.


**Bible Editions, Lexicons and Tools.**


Secondary Sources


Beare, Francis Wright. The Gospel according to Matthew: Translation, Introduction and


Fortress: 1983.


Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. “The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for Our Understanding of


______. Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under


______, The Death and Resurrection of Jesus: A Narrative-Critical Reading of Matthew


Klawans, Jonathan. *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press,


Kosmala, Hans. “‘His Blood on Us and on Our Children’ (The Background of Mat. 27, 24-25).” *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 7 (1968-69): 94-126.


Petersen, Norman. “‘Point of View’ in Mark’s Narrative.” *Semeia* 12 (1978): 97-121.


Skehan, Patrick W. *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom.* Catholic Biblical Quarterly


## Appendix A

### Elements of Cain/Blood-Flood/Judgement Sequence in Individual Texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Blood</th>
<th>Cain</th>
<th>Flood/ Judgement</th>
<th>Enochic Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jubilees</strong></td>
<td>7:23-33</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>7:21-28 / 7:29 (Restoration: 7:34-39)</td>
<td>7:21-25, 27 (1 En. 6-11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:3-4</td>
<td>4:1-6 / 4:31-32</td>
<td>----- / 4:5-6</td>
<td>4:3 (1 En. 9:1-3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Damascus Document</strong></td>
<td>2.8; 3.6 (cf. idea of innocent blood in 1.17-21)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>2.20 / 2.2-9, 17-21; 3.10-12a (Restoration: 3.12b-20)</td>
<td>2.16-21 (1 En. 6-11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Susanna</strong></td>
<td>46 6, 53, 62</td>
<td>----- [but cf. Eden Narrative]</td>
<td>----- / 55-59; OG 55-59, 62 (Restoration: 62-64; 62-63 OG)</td>
<td>OG 62; cf. 7-9 et passim (1 En. 6-11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pseudo-Philo</strong></td>
<td>16:2 [2:1“he killed Abel,” cf. 2:10 “I have destroyed men”]</td>
<td>16:2</td>
<td>16:3 / 16:3 1:22, 3:1-4 / 3:10 (Restoration: 3:10)</td>
<td>16:2-3 (1 En. 6-11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jude</strong></td>
<td>----- [But cf. Jude 16 with Jude 11, where innocent blood may be implied]</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>----- / 14-15, 23, 24 (Restoration 21, 24)</td>
<td>14; 6, 12-13, 21-23 (1 En. 1-11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wisdom of Solomon and the Cain/Blood-Flood/Judgement Traditions

Wisdom 10 presents the reader with a conundrum. Its history of Wisdom’s aid to righteous humanity from Adam to the Exodus (a kind of catalogue of heroes and impious anti-heroes) departs, in its first verses, from the biblical story – or at least from the standard reading of it. In terms of sin, the focus is not on Adam and Eve, but on Cain. Adam, “first-formed father of the world,” is a hero of Wisdom of Solomon’s own making: Wisdom guards Adam and delivers him from his transgression; we leave Adam not exiled from the garden but given “strength to rule all things.” This is quite a different reading of Genesis 1-3 from Paul’s, for instance (“for as in Adam all die” [1 Cor 15:22]; “as through one man sin came into the world and through sin death...; death reigned from Adam to Moses” [Rom 5:12-14]), or 4 Ezra’s. There the “evil inclination” that plagues the human soul originates with Adam. In 4 Ezra, indeed, the flood is linked to Adam’s transgression: “And you laid upon him [i.e. Adam] one commandment of yours; but he transgressed it, and immediately you appointed death for him and for his descendants…. And the same fate befell them: as death came upon Adam, so the flood upon them” (4 Ezra 3:7, 10). Matthew Goff notes that in Wisdom (as in 4QInstruction), by contrast, Adam “has more to do with eternal life...than primordial sin.”

1 4 Ezra 7:116-118: “It would have been better if the earth had not produced Adam, or else, when it had produced him, had restrained him from sinning. For what good is it to all that they live in sorrow now and expect punishment after death? O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants” (trans. Bruce M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” OTP 1.517-559, here 541). Compare Jubilees, where Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden and Adam dies without “complet[ing] the years of this day” because he ate the fruit of the tree (Jub. 3:17-31; 4:29-30, citation 4:30). In Jubilees, however, Cain’s murder of Abel also features prominently, and the flood is connected not to Adam but to the Watchers and giants and, in Jubilees 7, the blood that stains the earth.

Instead it is Cain who is chief sinner. Cain is the “unrighteous man” (ἄδικος, 10:3) who turns away from Wisdom in a brother-murdering rage and perishes. It is Cain, too, whose angry apostasy has consequences for the world: “Because of him” the earth is flooded (δι’ ὧν κατακλυζομένην γῆν πάλιν ἔσωσεν σοφία, 10:4). That the deluge is Cain’s fault is, commentators say, a “novel” explanation. Wis 10:3-4 makes a connection between Cain and the flood that Genesis does not make. Nor is it found in those readings of the primordial history that focus on the sin of Adam.

In this section I argue that Wisdom’s connection between Cain and the flood is not, in fact, novel. Rather, Wisdom 10 displays a logic like that we have seen in 1 Enoch’s story of the flood: from the blood of Abel to the flood, in a story of sin that is paradigmatic. We will examine Wis 10:3-4 for its similarity to the Cain/blood-flood/judgement logic of 1 Enoch 6-11, and also for its distinctiveness (and here some comparison with other versions of the theme is helpful). Wisdom, for instance, is not particularly interested in blood. We will also consider it in relation to larger themes – of persecution of the righteous and judgement – in Wisdom 1-6 and 16-18. At the same time we will ask about Enochic context: does Wisdom show other signs of an Enochic thought-world? In this respect we will look in particular at the description of the righteous man and the judgement of the wicked in Wisdom 4 and the reference to the flood in Wisdom 14.

In Wisdom 10’s history of heroes, Cain’s brother-murder leads directly to the flood: “he perished because in rage he killed his brother. When the earth was flooded because of him…” (Wis 10:3b-4a). Genesis’ primordial history does not draw this straight line from Cain’s murder

---

4 Ernest G. Clarke, Wisdom of Solomon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 70. Cf. Joseph Reider, The Book of Wisdom: An English Translation with Introduction and Commentary (New York: Harper, 1957), 133 n. 4: “It is surprising that Cain is held responsible here for the flood, while according to Gen. 6.1ff. the flood was caused by the folly of the sons of God marrying the daughters of men and by the wickedness of the earth generally.” In light of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement logic we have seen repeatedly in early Jewish literature, it is of course not so surprising. Reider proposes an emendation, but as we will see the text intends to refer to Cain.
of Abel to the flood: Wisdom here interprets Genesis. *1 Enoch* 6-11 makes precisely the same connection. In *1 Enoch* 9:1-2, the blood that has been poured out upon the ground in the aftermath of the mating of Watchers and women speaks with the voice of Abel. Cain’s bloodshed serves as figure for the violence of *1 Enoch*’s giants. Further, it is the earth crying out with the voice of Abel that prompts the archangels’ prayer to God, and so brings on the flood. From Cain’s bloodshed to the flood: *1 Enoch* already makes the connection between Cain and the flood that is here evident in Wisdom 10. Is Wisdom’s sequence, then, related in some way to *1 Enoch*’s Cain/blood-flood/judgement progression?

Wisdom 14 offers another brief treatment of the flood. Here, too, there is a parallel with *1 Enoch*’s flood story. In Wis 14:6, Noah’s safe passage through the flood serves as proof and pattern of God’s providence, which guides a mere piece of wood safely through the sea. The flood happens, Wisdom tells us, “In the beginning, when arrogant giants were perishing” (καὶ ἄρχης γὰρ ἀπολλυμένων ὑπερηφάνων γιγάντων, 14:6). But, of course, there are no perishing giants in Genesis’ flood. These hail from the tradition reflected in *1 Enoch*. In *1 Enoch* 6-11 it is the giants, violent offspring of the Watchers and the women, who fill the earth with blood until the earth cries out with the voice of Abel. The flood, and the concomitant destruction of the giants, is God’s response. The flood shades into a judgement in which the giants are destroyed (*1 En.* 10:10-12).

---

5 We have seen the same movement from bloodshed to the flood in *Jubilees* and in CD. There however the emphasis is on the blood shed rather than on Cain who shed it; CD in fact does not mention Cain at all. *Sib. Or.* 3, which refers clearly to Abel’s blood in its prophecy of end-time retribution, connects bloodshed to cataclysm without explicit mention of the flood. Thus *1 Enoch*’s line from Cain and Abel to the flood is clearest in Wisdom.

6 “As for the women, they gave birth to giants to the degree that the whole earth was filled with blood and injustice...” (*1 En.* 9:9). “And then spoke the Most High... ‘Tell Noah in my name, “Hide yourself!”...The Deluge is about to come upon the whole earth and all that is in it will be destroyed’” (10:1-2).

7 “destroy the children of adultery and expel the children of the Watchers from among the people. And send them against one another (so that) they may be destroyed in the fight” [trans. Isaac, *OTP*]. Cf. 3 Macc 2:4, where giants also are destroyed by the flood. In relation to Wis 14:6, David Winston (*The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 43; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979], 267) notes several references to giants in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, including Jud 16:6, Sir 16:7, Jos. *Ant.* 1.31 (73); 1.3.8 (100).
Nor is it only the perishing giants who appear in both Wis 14:6 and 1 Enoch 10. In Wisdom, Noah, “the hope of the world,” is guided by God’s hand safely through the flood so that he “left to the world the seed of a new generation.” In 1 Enoch 10:2, God instructs Noah to flee so that “his seed will be preserved for all generations.” In this common focus on Noah’s seed, both Wisdom and 1 Enoch give a particular emphasis to Genesis’ flood story. In Genesis the main point is Noah’s righteousness: for his righteousness God saves Noah from the flood. Noah’s “seed” comes in only at the end, after the flood, when God makes a covenant with Noah and his descendants (Gen 9:9). In Wisdom 14 (esp. v. 7) and 1 Enoch 10 (cf. Wis 10:4) Noah’s righteousness is also important. But both texts bring the question of Noah’s seed to the fore: preserving the (righteous) seed so that a new generation may be born becomes the story’s end.

The emphasis in Wisdom 14 emphasis not just on Noah’s salvation but on the salvation of the world is apparent in Wis 10:3-4. Here the earth is saved through Noah. Verse 4 recalls Wis 14:6-7:

> When the earth was flooded because of [Cain], wisdom again saved it, steering the righteous man by a paltry piece of wood.” (10:4)

> …the hope of the world took refuge on a raft, and guided by your hand left to the world the seed of a new generation.

For blessed is the wood by which righteousness comes. (14:6-7)

In Wis 10:4, Noah’s escape saves the earth; in Wis 14:6 Noah is the hope of the world. In 10:4 Wisdom steers Noah; in 14:6 Noah is guided by Wisdom’s hand. In 10:4 Noah is righteous; in

---

7:22, 1 En. 7:5. The point in Wisdom, however, as in 1 Enoch and the traditions related to it (like Jubilees), but not in Judith or Sirach or Josephus, is the link between the giants and the flood.
14:6 it is righteousness that comes to the world by Noah’s raft. In 10:4 Noah escapes on a “paltry piece of wood”; in 14:6 he escapes on a raft. Both texts insist on the word “wood.” And in both the wood brings or preserves righteousness. Wis 10:4 and Wis 14:6-7 present Noah’s role in the flood in the same way. And in both it is not only Noah who is saved, but the world.

Given the similarity between the passages, their signal difference is all the more striking. Whereas Wis 10:3-4 makes Cain the cause of the flood, Wis 14:6-7, with its Enochic echoes, mentions only the arrogant giants. It is true that Wisdom 14 is simply using the flood story as an illustration of God’s providence, his ability to save even small barks on the mighty sea. Wisdom 14 does not trace the primeval history and so Cain properly has no place in it. Conversely, Wis 10:1-4 traces Genesis’ history from Adam to Cain to the flood and Noah who saves the earth; insofar as it is Genesis’ history the giants do not arise. The different contexts and aims of the passages provide a partial explanation of their different versions of the flood story. Nevertheless, the two passages propose different reasons for the flood: in the one case, Cain’s murder of Abel; in the other, obviously reminiscent of 1 Enoch, the arrogance of the giants. It may be, that is, that the causal relationship between Cain’s bloodshed and the flood (a logic characteristic of 1 Enoch) does not here derive directly from 1 Enoch. The connection between Cain and the flood has, it would appear, become traditional: it occurs even where there is no textual dependence on 1 Enoch. And it takes in Wisdom 10 its own shape, notably in the omission of any direct reference to blood. It occurs, however, in a work that shows familiarity with 1 Enoch, as evidenced by its later description of the flood.

---

8 (It is a power to save that contrasts with that of idols: while Wisdom can guide even Noah’s bit of wood safely through the flood, the piece of wood the sailor calls on is useless, “more fragile than the ship that carries him” [14:1]).
9 That the flood is the consequence of the giants’ arrogance is not stated, but it is clearly punishment for that arrogance; hence a causal relationship is implied.
Further evidence of Enochic influence in Wisdom appears in Wisdom 4. Wis 4:10-19 describes the fate of the righteous and the unrighteous. In this passage, too, we find hints of Enoch.

**Enoch.** Enoch himself appears in Wis 4:10-11:

Εὐάρεστος θεῶ γενόμενος ἠγαπήθη
Καὶ ζῶν μεταξὺ αμαρτωλῶν μετετέθη.
ἡπάγη, μὴ κακία ἄλλαξῃ σύνεσιν αὐτοῦ
ἡ δόλος ἀπατήσῃ ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ….

[The righteous person] became pleasing to God and was loved by Him
And living in the midst of sinners was taken up;
He was caught up so that evil might not alter his understanding
Or guile deceive his soul….10

Commentators agree that the reference is to Enoch, and point to Gen 5:24.11 Jane Schaberg goes further. She believes that the figure of Enoch underlies Wisdom 1-6 as a whole.12 Enoch “seems to be the primary inspiration of the figure of the righteous” in Wisdom 1-6 and the developing Enoch tradition undergirds the thought of the section.13 She points to various parallels between the persecuted righteous figure in Wisdom 1-6 and the figure of Enoch. Like Wisdom’s righteous person, Enoch is righteous (*Jub.* 10:17, *I En.* 91:3-4, 19); he is the sage who knows what will be (*I En.* 82:2-3; 92:1; 105:1); he is exalted to a heavenly dwelling-place (*I En.* 106:7-9; cf. Wis 5:1-5); he is a witness against the wicked (*I En.* 1-36; 92-105; Wis 4:16, 5:1-3).14 These are, of course, broad parallels, and (as Lester Grabbe points out) characteristic traits of the righteous.

10 Translations of Wisdom follow the NRSV; where they differ from the NRSV they are my own.
12 Jane Schaberg, “Major Midrashic Traditions in Wisdom 1, 1-6, 25,” *JSJ* 13, No 1-2 (1982): 75-100, citation 95. “Wisd 4, 10-15 is only the most explicit allusion to Enoch in Wisdom 1-6”(ibid., 90); a “story” of Enoch underlies these chapters (ibid., 91).
13 Schaberg, “Major Midrashic Traditions,” 95. She suggests also that if the figure of Enoch informs Wis 1-6, then Enoch’s heavenly dwelling place may lie behind Wisdom’s presentation of the righteous one exalted in the heavenly court (Wis 5:1-5, 15).
14 Schaberg, “Major Midrashic Traditions,” 86-96.
person. There is no need, therefore, “to assume that [Wisdom’s] description of the righteous is confined to Enoch.”\footnote{Grabbe, Wisdom of Solomon, 45.}

Yet other reminiscences of \textit{1 Enoch} in Wisdom 4 lend credence to Schaberg’s thesis, as least as to Enochic influence. Whether or not Enoch alone informs Wisdom’s description of the righteous person, there is evidence in these chapters of an Enochic world-view. In Wis 4:10, Enoch lives among sinners (\zetan metoxu`o `omaro\twolow`on) and is therefore taken by God, so that he will not be corrupted. That he lives among sinners is Wisdom of Solomon’s gloss on the text of Genesis: Gen 5:21-24 gives no explanation for Enoch’s translation beyond his being well-pleasing to God.\footnote{Gen 5:24 LXX: eu\are\sthsan `En\ox to\ o\teo` kai `o\xh `ep\ri`sketo, o\ti met\et\hke\nu aut\on o\ theo`.} Wisdom goes on to describe Enoch’s sin-filled situation in words and images curiously suggestive of the \textit{Book of Watchers}. In the first place, “witchery” and “desire” together corrupt innocent minds:

\begin{quote}
\begin{verbatim}
βασκανία γὰρ φαυλότητος ἁμαυροὶ τὰ καλά,
καὶ ἡμβασμός ἐπιθυμίας μεταλλεύει νοῦν ἁκακον (4 :12).
\end{verbatim}
\end{quote}

Bewitching wickedness
Obscures what is good,
And roving desire perverts the innocent mind.

The NRSV here translates \textit{βασκανία φαυλότητος} as “the fascination of wickedness.” “Bewitching wickedness,” or “the witchery of evil,” in David Winston’s translation, perhaps communicates the sense better, however. For \textit{βασκανία} is a strong word.\footnote{Winston, Wisdom of Solomon, 136.} It suggests malign influence; it conjurs up the evil eye. It is the word Paul uses in Gal 3:1: “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you [τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβασκανεν]?” In the Pauline context commentators regularly suggest that the word’s association with the world of witchcraft should be taken seriously. In the same way, the use of \textit{βασκανία} in Wis 4:12 makes a strong statement about the power of what is
base to degrade what is good and beautiful. Wickedness does not just fascinate, it casts an evil spell. We are in the realm of sorcery: sorcery provides at least the metaphor for, if not the literal description of, the power of wickedness to darken the good.

Sorcery, together with desire, likewise corrupt the world in 1 Enoch 6-8. In addition to breeding bloody offspring, the rebel angels in 1 Enoch 7 teach the women forbidden secrets. Prominent among the secrets are various kinds of sorcery or witchcraft: “And they began to go in to them,…and to teach them sorcery and charms, and to reveal to them the cutting of roots and plants” (1 En. 7:1, trans. Nickelsburg; Grk [a]: καὶ ἐδίδαξαν αὐτὰς [i.e. γυναῖκας] φαρμακείας καὶ ἐπαιδείας καὶ ῥίζοτομίας, καὶ τὰς βοτάνας ἐδήλωσαν αὐταῖς). In 1 Enoch 8 likewise the Watchers teach mortals not only weaponry and cosmetics, but, again, witchery: “Shemihazah taught spells and the cutting of roots. Hermari taught sorcery for the loosing of spells and magic and skill. Baraqel taught the signs of the lightning flashes. Kokabel taught the signs of the stars…And they all began to reveal mysteries to their wives and to their children (8:3). The secret arts of the angels bring deception and destruction; in the wake of witchery the world becomes corrupt (1 En. 8:2). Wis 4:12 might, indeed, be a comment upon 1 Enoch’s story: bewitching wickedness obscures what is good.

Wis 4:12 speaks not only of bewitchment but also of desire. 1 Enoch also pairs the corruption caused by sorcery with a story of corrupting desire. “Desire” for the beautiful daughters of men drives the angels’ rebellion: the word is, as in Wis 4:12, ἐπιθυμία [ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐγεννήθησαν θυγατέρες ὦραίαι καὶ καλαί. Καὶ ἐθεάσαντο αὐτὰς οἱ ἄγγελοι υἱὸι οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἐπεθύμησαν αὐτὰς, 1 En. 6:1-2. Grk [a] cf. [syn]). Indeed, 1 En. 6:1-2, like Wis 4:12, brings together the terms καλός (beautiful, good) and ἐπιθυμία (desire):

---

18 Grk [a]: Σεμιαζός ἐδίδαξαν ἐπαιδείας καὶ ῥίζοτομίας. Αρμαρῶς ἐπαιδεῶν λυτήριοι. Βαρακηλ ἀστρολογιῶς. Χαχιήλ τὰ σημειωτικά. Σαθηλ ἀστεροσκοπίαν. Ξερηλ σεληναγώγιας. τῶν ὁσν ἀνθρώπων ἀπολλυμένων ἢ βο[η] εἰς οὐρανοὺς ἀνεβή.
the angels see the beautiful (καλοί) daughters of men and desire them. In Wis 4:12, wickedness obscures what is good (τὰ καλά) and desire perverts the innocent mind.

That Wisdom of Solomon describes society’s corruption in terms of the perverting effects of desire and of baseness that is bewitching, is (particularly in light of its reference to Enoch immediately beforehand) at least interesting. Further, Wisdom 4 proceeds from the earth’s corruption to a scene of cosmic judgement. So does 1 Enoch. And while the move from wickedness to judgement is a standard one and need not indicate in itself any common ground between Wisdom and 1 Enoch, its specific features are, again, reminiscent of 1 Enoch.

Wisdom 4 describes the contrasting fate of the chosen righteous and the ungodly that have killed them. The word for the righteous is δίκαιος; for the chosen ἐκλεκτός. God takes the righteous early, as God took Enoch, and the ungodly gloat. But their lots will be reversed in the day of God’s visitation. The people who see the early death of the righteous (δίκαιος, 4:7) do not understand

That grace and mercy are with his chosen
And (his) visitation with his holy ones.

οὕτως ἐλέος καὶ ἔλεος ἐν τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς αὐτοῦ
καὶ ἐπισκοπὴ ἐν τοῖς ὅσιοῖς αὐτοῦ. (Wis 4:15)\(^{19}\)

The word “visitation” (ἐπισκοπή) gives the scene an eschatological colouring. In Wis 3:7, 13 it indicates the time of final vindication for the elect:

In the time of their vindication (ἐπισκοπή) they will shine forth

---

\(^{19}\) The NRSV has “the Lord watches over” for ἐπισκοπή. With most commentators, however, I take it to mean “visitation,” as it does in the similar passage in Wis 3:7 and 13. The context is full of images of God’s eschatological intervention and final judgement (4:16, 18-19). Joseph Ziegler, in the Göttingen edition of Wisdom, brackets 4:15 as a later gloss, from 3:9b (Sapientia Solomonis, 107). Winston (Wisdom of Solomon, 143) follows Ziegler. Larcher, however, like Rahlfis (and the NRSV), accepts it: the text is, he notes, better attested here than in 3:9 (Le Livre de la Sagesse ou La Sagesse de Salomon [3 vols.; Études Bibliques NS 1; Paris: Gabalda, 1983-85], 2.343). The sense also suggests that the verse belongs here: ἐπισκοπή points to “a supreme and decisive intervention which will introduce the glorification of righteous souls,” and, perhaps, the punishment of the wicked (Larcher, ibid.) In expectation of this time, the righteous person who has died is “kept secure” (4:17c).
And will run like sparks through the stubble….
And the Lord will reign over them forever. (Wis 3:7-8; cf. 3:13)\textsuperscript{20}

The imagery that follows in 4:19 underlines the eschatological context. In the time of this visitation the wicked are confounded and overthrown: God will “dash them speechless downwards” and “shake them from their foundations;” they will be made dry and barren utterly (or: “until the last time”); they will suffer anguish (Wis 4:19). It is the time of judgement for the wicked, “and their lawless deeds will convict them” (4:20). For the chosen ones, however, it is the time of vindication and mercy: “grace and mercy (χαρίς καὶ ἔλεος, 4:15) are with his chosen ones.”

In 1 En. 10 the rebel angels and their bastard offspring suffer a similar fate. As in Wis 4:19 the wicked are dashed down headlong, at 1 En. 10:4 God commands the rebel angels to be cast down into a pit in the earth. Again, in 1 Enoch the rebels angels are dragged off in the last times into the fiery abyss, where they will be in torment (1 En. 10:13). Compare Wis 4:19: they will be made dry and barren “ἐσχάτου,” “utterly” (NRSV); or perhaps more accurately (given the correspondences with 1 Enoch 10) “unto the last times”; and they will be in pain.

This judgement scene in 1 Enoch 10 is anticipated in 1 Enoch 1, in the scene of eschatological judgement with which the book opens. Lars Hartman points out that the Book of Watchers deliberately draws the two scenes together.\textsuperscript{21} Interestingly, both the imagery and the wording of Wisdom 4’s judgement of the wicked find echoes in the scene of eschatological “visitation” with which the Book of Watchers opens. In 1 Enoch 1, as in Wisdom 4, we have to

\textsuperscript{20} Note the echo of Dan 12:1-3 (and so of its eschatological import): at that time, when the dead rise, “those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky”(12:3). See Jane Schaberg, “Major Midrashic Traditions,” 77; cf. David Winston, Wisdom of Solomon, 128, who notes similarity with Dan 12:1-3 as well as with other Jewish apocalyptic texts.

do with the “chosen” who are righteous: the words in the Greek are ἐκλεκτός and δίκαιος (ἐκλεκτοὶ δίκαιοι, I En. 1:1). At the time of God’s coming the elect will find vindication: “mercy (ἐλέος I En. 1:8) will be upon his chosen ones.” For the wicked, however, there is “trembling,” and “great fear” (I En. 1:9), and the earth, like the wicked in Wisdom, is shaken and overthrown. “And high mountains shall be shaken and they shall fall and be dissolved…” (IEn. 1:5-6). Further, God will convict all flesh for all its works of ungodliness (I En. 1:9).

The contrast between the righteous and the ungodly, the images of judgement, the ungodly convicted for lawless deeds; the vindication of the chosen (and the word ἐκλεκτοί), the mercy that is their final end (and the word ἐλεος); all these are the same in both texts. In addition, in both 1 Enoch and Wisdom, the chosen righteous play a part in the judgement of the ungodly. The chosen righteous, Enoch says, will on the day of tribulation remove all the enemies (I En. 1:1, Nickelsburg; according to OTP, will be present at their removal). Immediately before its own judgement scene, Wisdom announces that “the righteous one who has died,” who has just been compared to Enoch, “will condemn the living ungodly” (Wis 4:16). Wisdom 4 thus moves from a reference to Enoch to bewitching wickedness and desire that corrupts, to the (eschatological) vindication of the chosen righteous and the punishment of the wicked. It is a logic, I suggest, that has something in common with the logic of 1 Enoch 6-11 and 1; indeed, even the vocabulary and images of the two works sometimes coincide.

---

22 Grk [a] ἔθροις; Ethiopic “evil and wicked ones.”
23 Following Nickelsburg’s text. In Hartman’s translation, too, the elect righteous “remove” all the enemies (Asking for a Meaning, 23).
24 Note, too, that it is God himself who responds to the violence and arrogance of the ungodly, in 1 Enoch and Wisdom of Solomon both. “...The earth is filled with blood and violence!” the archangels cry to God in I En. 9:9. “Then the Most High said... ‘Go to Noah and tell him, “Hide yourself!”’, for a deluge is coming upon the earth (I En. 10:1-3). Similarly, Larcher (Le Livre de la Sagesse, 2.345), notes that it is the Lord himself who reacts to the scorn of the wicked for the wise in Wis 4:18: “but the Lord will laugh them to scorn.” The punishment of the wicked follows.
Against this background, Wisdom’s reference earlier in the same chapter to lawless offspring—even “bastard offshoots”—takes on new significance. The many children of the ungodly are, in Wis 4:3, “bastard suckers” (ἦκ νυόθων μοσχευμάτων, 4:3), easily uprooted. They are, indeed, born from “unlawful nights” (ἦκ γὰρ ἀνόμων ὑπνῶν τέκνα γεννώμενα, 4:6).

David Winston points to 1 En. 10:9 here (as well as Sir 23:25, BT Yeb 78b) to indicate that all three make the same point: bastard children will not thrive.\(^{25}\) But given the Enochic flow of thought in Wisdom 4, it is possible that 1 Enoch here again provides the images for Wisdom’s portrayal of the wicked and the chosen righteous, and their fates. In both, the offspring of the arrogant wicked are “bastards” (1 En. 10:9, 10:15).\(^{26}\) In both, they are the product of unlawful dalliance.\(^{27}\) Repeatedly, Wisdom of Solomon “thinks like” 1 Enoch does, sometimes in the same words.

Larcher in fact made this point with reference to Wisdom and 1 Enoch 1-5 in his 1969 commentary. There are, he notes, both broad correspondences between 1 Enoch 1-5 and Wisdom and also precise verbal echoes, “the chosen,” “mercy,” “bastards” (in Wisdom 2:16 and 15:9) being only the most obvious. “For all these reasons, he concludes, “it is likely that Wisdom knew this first section of Enoch, and in its Greek form.”\(^{28}\) I am suggesting that it is not only 1 Enoch’s opening chapters, but its larger history of primordial rebellion, 1 Enoch 6-11, that lies behind Wisdom (as, indeed, Larcher’s observation on the use of κῆβδηλοι, found in 1 En. 10 and Wis 2 and 15, already suggests).

---


\(^{26}\) Note that the word κῆβδηλοι (“counterfeits”; “base metal/false coin”) used here to indicate the angels’ offspring, occurs also at Wis 2:16; 15:9e. See C. Larcher, *Études sur le Livre de la Sagesse* (ÉBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1969), 106 n. 1.

\(^{27}\) Wis 4:6: ἀνόμων ὑπνῶν. Cf. 1 En. 6:3, Shemihazah to the other angels: “I fear that you will not want to do this deed and I alone shall be guilty of a great sin”; in 1 En. 9:10 the people cannot escape “lawlessness” (ἀνομίας τα τὸ). Larcher, ibid., 106. Cf. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 148: “The cluster of terms in this verse [1 En. 1:8] is partly paralleled in Wis 3:1-9; and the whole of Wisdom 3-4, with its alternation between blessing and curse in the context of a coming judgment, could reflect parts of 1 Enoch 1-5.”
It is, therefore, not simply the figure of Enoch who appears in Wisdom 4, but a narrative tradition found in the book that bears his name: the story of the chosen righteous and the wicked who oppress and torment them, even kill them; a story involving bastard offspring and cataclysmic judgement, the casting down of the wicked and peace and mercy for the righteous, by the act of God. That the echoes of this tradition occur in the context of a reference to Enoch himself is telling. Grabbe suggests that Wis 4:12, ἴπιθυμία, the witchery and desire that corrupt the innocent mind, “interrupts” the Enoch theme in Wis 4:10-13. But, of course, it does not. Like the rest of the chapter, it is that theme’s essential elaboration. To hear the traces of 1 Enoch in Wisdom 4 is to understand the logic of the chapter (and perhaps of the first six chapters).

In both Wisdom 1-6 and Wisdom 14, then, at the book’s beginning and near its end, correspondences – extensive in Wisdom 4 – exist with the thought-world and, indeed, the vocabulary and images of 1 Enoch 1-11. In this context Wisdom 10 draws a straight line from Cain and his murder of Abel to the flood. This is a reading of the primordial history at home in an Enochic context. Behind the picture of the righteous one and the wicked in Wisdom of Solomon generally lies the primordial story of wickedness and the persecuted innocent, unjust death and final vindication told in Enoch’s book. It seems likely that in the same way the logic of 1 Enoch lies behind Wisdom’s portrayal of Cain. But the Cain-flood sequence does not, in Wisdom 10, derive directly from a reading of 1 Enoch. The absence of blood in Wisdom’s sequence makes this clear, as does the different understanding of the flood evident in Wis 14:6-7. Rather we are in the realm of interpretive tradition, Wisdom’s version of a logic already seen in 1 Enoch that links Cain’s murder of Abel to the flood.

29 Grabbe, Wisdom of Solomon, 37.
In fact, the Enochic interpretation of the primordial history, the prominence of Cain’s bloodshed, the flood that comes in punishment, suits Wisdom’s world. It is not surprising that Wisdom’s history of sin in chapter 10 begins with Cain’s murder and not Adam’s “apple”: for it is in Cain’s murder of Abel that we see the pattern and first instance of the persecution of the innocent by the wicked. And in the flood that follows (as Wisdom tells the story) we see Cain’s punishment, and the salvation of the chosen righteous. In the history that leads from the unrighteous Cain and his “brother-murdering” rage to the flood, Wisdom finds a figure of the world as it is. And so it finds also its hope: for in the flood the wicked are dashed down headlong, and the righteous find vindication and a new creation. Cain and the flood together provide the scriptural type for Wisdom’s vision. And it is a vision that finds its logic in the sequence of Cain’s bloodshed and flood also articulated in 1 Enoch.

This vision, the sequence of brother-murder (in Wisdom’s words) and flood, the conviction that history moves from oppression to judgement and vindication for the innocent, finds expression in the overall movement of the book. Wisdom 1-6 describes the contrasting fates of the wicked and the righteous; its central problem is the persecution of the righteous by the wicked. Wisdom’s final chapters rehearse the Exodus, God’s vindication of the righteous and destruction of their persecutors; Exodus is described as a flood.

In Wisdom 2, the ungodly plot against the righteous, planning a persecution that ends in death: “Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; …Let us condemn him to a shameful death” (2:12, 20). This is, of course, the trajectory of Cain and Abel’s short history; indeed Cain’s “brother-killing rage” finds a perpetual re-enactment in the lethal resentment of the ungodly toward the righteous man. Wisdom highlights the violent intent of the ungodly. Wis 2:12 quotes LXX Ps 9:29-30 (MT 10:8-9): “They sit in ambush in the villages; in hiding places they murder the innocent” (ἐγκράβη τοῖς ἑξώποροι θείοις...).
From the beginning, that is, there is bloodshed in the air. Wisdom’s story, like its reading of Genesis, brings to the fore the death of the innocent and righteous, killing like Cain’s. It does so without emphasis on blood poured out, on the problem of the pollution of the earth. But (and this is all the more interesting therefore) the Cain-flood sequence is the same. Wisdom, without any interest in blood and pollution, finds in Cain’s act of murder the primordial sin and in the sequence from innocent blood to the flood the fundamental shape of history.

For Wisdom ends, like Cain’s story (as Wisdom reads it) with the flood. In its final chapters, Wisdom revisits the Exodus. Israel in Egypt provides a historical enactment of the narrative of the righteous and the wicked with which the book of Wisdom began, and the deliverance God offers his people at the Red Sea affirms the hope Wisdom 1-6 holds out to the persecuted innocent. That deliverance, the vindication of the righteous and judgement upon the ungodly oppressor, is pictured as a flood. Egypt caps its oppression of Israel by killing the innocent, Israel’s infants (Wis 18:5). God’s answer, the Exodus, appears as a flood:

you in punishment took away a multitude of their children; and you destroyed them all together by a mighty flood (ἐν ὑδάτι σφοδρῷ). (18:5)

---

30 Patrick W. Skehan (Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom [CBQMS 1; Wash., D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1971], 151) notes the allusion: “The malevolent proposals of the wicked in Wis 2:10-12 find their basis in Ps 9:29-30 (MT 10:8-9).” He points also to Psalm 36 (37):12-14; Prov 1:11-14 MT; Amos 2:6, 8:6.

31 Compare Psalm 93:21 LXX, which also imagines the plotting of the wicked against the innocent and righteous: wicked rulers “band together against the life of the righteous and condemn the innocent to death” (theidoussiven eti phuxi diakianou kai amia athmovn katadieusontai). Amia athmov: In the plotting of the ungodly against the life of the innocent, in Wisdom, we are in the realm of “innocent blood.”

32 Wisdom is often divided into three parts (1-6; 7-9[or 10]; 10[or 11]-19), Wis 1-6 constituting an “exhortation to righteousness” (NRSV) or a narrative of the righteous and the wicked, 7-9 Wisdom and Solomon, and 10-19 Wisdom and Israel (or Exodus). Scholars concur, however, that the work as a whole is a unity, and the individual sections complement each other. In this case, the problem of oppression – even bloodshed – and flood recurs in both first and last sections so as to structure the narrative as a whole. The theme of innocent blood and flood, the death of the righteous at the hands of the ungodly, draws together chapters 10-19 and chapters 1-6. For the divisions, and also the overall unity of the work see, e.g., Winston, Wisdom of Solomon, 9-12: “…recent scholarship has succeeded in demonstrating the structural unity of the book and the skill with which it was put together” (9).
At each reiteration, the crossing of the Red Sea takes on the characteristics of the flood.

For the elements changed places
with one another…
For land animals were transformed
into water creatures,
and creatures that swim moved
over to the land. (Wis 19:18-19)

Further, it is a flood that, here as in 1 Enoch 10 and Genesis, brings the new creation:

For the whole creation in its
nature was fashioned anew…
…dry land emerging where
water had stood before,
an unhindered way out of the Red Sea,
and a grassy plain out of the
raging waves…. (Wis 19:6-7)

From the murder of the innocent to the flood: Wisdom imagines the deliverance of Israel from Egypt after the pattern of the primordial history, read as 1 Enoch 6-11 and the Cain/blood-flood/judgement traditions read it. This is true in the specific instance – Egypt’s murder of the children of Israel and Israel’s subsequent deliverance – and also in the narrative as a whole. At the book’s end, Israel’s deliverance from its oppressors by an Exodus that looks like the flood serves as instance and pledge of the promise with which the book began. The wicked who devise for the righteous a shameful death will themselves find destruction like the destruction of the flood, and the righteous will find a new creation, “dry land emerging where water had stood before…and a grassy plain out of the raging waves.”

That it is the Exodus which stands as the final instance of flood (which is both judgement and deliverance) raises a question about just who is punished and who is delivered, in Wisdom’s vision. In finding in the Exodus the climactic instance of the flood story (and the blood/or oppression]-flood sequence) Wisdom seems to divide the righteous and their ungodly oppressors along ethnic lines. Israel is the righteous oppressed; Gentile Egypt the oppressor; Israel is delivered by the flood/Exodus, while Egypt is destroyed. In this scenario – as in the Sib. Or.’s version of the Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence (though in Sib. Or. 3 with the exception of Egypt!) and in contrast to the
Thus the history of Israel, like the ongoing history of the righteous and the wicked, confirms even as it repeats the pattern found in the primordial history. From blood to flood and new beginning: Cain’s story structures the world. The killing of the innocent and righteous, from the righteous man of Wis 2:12-20, to Cain’s brother in Wis 10:3, to the innocent children of Israel in Wis 18:5, sums up the wickedness that plagues the world. In the wake of brother-killing comes the flood, for Cain and for the Egyptians, and in the sequence of the book as a whole for all the ungodly. The Cain/[blood]-flood/judgement pattern appears not only in Wisdom’s rehearsal of the primordial history, but in the structure of the whole. Wisdom’s version of the pattern is also distinctive, for in Wisdom there is no concern with blood *per se* and the problem of pollution. Rather, the problem (understandably, perhaps, if Wisdom stems from Egypt in the time of Caligula’s persecution) is oppression and its essential connection with apostasy or

Cain/blood-flood/judgement sequence in *1 Enoch* – the hope of restoration that accompanies judgement belongs to Israel alone. Indeed, insofar as the ending fulfills the promise made at the book’s beginning, Wisdom 14 may draw the problem of the first six chapters, the violence of the wicked against the righteous, the suffering of the righteous at the hands of the wicked, into this ethnic bifurcation. Thus Terence L. Donaldson (*Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* [Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007], 68) concludes that the “particularistic forces at work” in Wisdom are stronger than any tension it may exhibit between universalism and particularism (for the tension between particularism and universalism see J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* [2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 201, cited in Donaldson, ibid.). The question, though, is in part whether the Exodus narrative has a representative function in the text. There are good reasons (not least its merging into the Flood) for believing that it is representative – that is, that the particular story of Israel and Egypt stands for a larger story that applies to the whole world. The Exodus, after all, enacts a promise of deliverance of universal import made in Wisdom’s first six chapters. In these chapters, the categories are not “Israel vs. Gentiles” but “righteous vs. ungodly,” and it is Israel’s scriptures, in particular Psalms and Proverbs, that underlie the chapters. When the ungodly say, “Let us oppress the righteous poor man; let us not spare the widow or regard the gray hairs of the aged,” they echo the prophets’ accusations *against Israel*, accusations of unrighteousness within Israel and warnings to Israel of doom. Israel’s scriptures and Israel’s experience thus provide the pattern against which the nature of the world can be seen. The unrighteous, if they are in some places obviously the Gentiles, are also, and first of all, the unrighteous within Israel. Israel provides the pattern. So, too, perhaps, the Exodus provides a pattern: in this case the oppressors are the Gentiles and the deliverance of Israel witnesses to the hope of the righteous. But the universalistic opening of the book (“Love righteousness, you rulers of the earth” Wis 1:1) suggests that the sequence of oppression and deliverance is not true for Israel alone. As Cain’s murder of Abel led to the flood, Egypt’s oppression of Israel leads to another flood. And as the first flood is of universal import, so is this one: anyone who is unrighteous, who is an oppressor, whether Gentile or Jewish, can expect to be wiped out by God’s justice. And anyone who is oppressed can look forward to vindication. Even the historical circumstances, if Wisdom is written in Egypt ca. 30-50 C.E. (and so during a time of persecution) point to this reading: it is not only “the other” who becomes the oppressor in a time of official persecution, and the oppression experienced as most cruel is often precisely the “brother-killing” rage. For a detailed contrasting argument see Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 62-68.
unbelief. The story of Cain and the flood provides a paradigmatic instance of oppression and its consequences, and a sign of hope: although the brother-murderer will bring destruction on the world, yet the righteous person will escape and bring to the world a new beginning.

That Wisdom is not interested in blood itself and the attendant problem of pollution, that it frames the problem instead in terms of “brother-murder” (the gratuitous and deadly oppression of the righteous by the ungodly which does, in the event, often amount to “innocent blood”) points up two things. First, it reveals the strength and pervasiveness of the logic that associates Cain’s bloodshed with the flood and final judgement. For even where blood is not an issue, this is the shape of primordial history and (therefore) the shape of things to come. Cain is chief sinner, and his bloodshed (now registered as oppression) brings down judgement upon the oppressor, a judgement envisioned as a flood. Second, it indicates that this is a living tradition: not set in stone, it is a way of seeing (usually associated with an Enochic context) whose precise articulation accords with the perspective and needs of the particular text at hand.