

10 The Cave of Treasures and Pirqa de-Rabbi Eliezer

Chapter eight established that both Syriac and Arabic versions of the *Cave of Treasures* maintained a steady popularity from the end of Late Antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages. Chapter nine showed that the work was known to both Christians and Muslims, and it was the primary vehicle for traditions about the history of Israel in both Christianity and Islam. The current chapter is a comparison of PRE with several representative traditions from the *Cav. Tr.* cycle. The main goal of the chapter is *not* to prove that PRE used *Cav. Tr.* as a written source but that PRE was aware of the traditions from the *Cav. Tr.* cycle—traditions that were common in Syriac and Arabic sources but foreign to rabbinic literature.

The method is the same as the one employed in chapter seven. That is, I assess *presumed* sources (in this case, rabbinic literature and other Jewish sources) before addressing other *probable* sources from the surrounding environment. However, since I am, so to speak, in the defensive rather than the offensive position, the application of this method will look slightly different. Instead of a claim from secondary literature, the opening of each section addresses the way in which PRE departs from some established rabbinic tradition. Only when this discontinuity has been established do I cite the full tradition in parallel with a passage from the *Cave of Treasures*. At the end of each section, I justify PRE's apparent knowledge of traditions from *Cav. Tr.* through illustrations of that tradition's widespread presence in contemporary Christian and Muslim literature.

The working hypothesis of this chapter is that PRE knew of *Cav. Tr.* and its traditions through oral channels. Knowledge of Syriac varied among Jews. Some Jews knew and even wrote in Syriac (which is, after all, a dialect of Aramaic).¹ Concrete examples of Judeo-Syriac, however, are rare.² Others knew Syriac without writing it. Such was the case of Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Muqammiṣ (d. 937), the first medieval Jewish philosopher, preceding even Saadia Gaon, who studied under the Christian philosopher Nonnus of Nisibis (d. 860) and translated a Syriac commentary

1 Sergey Minov directed me to one of the canons of Jacob of Edessa (no. 59), where he responds affirmatively to the question of whether a priest may teach the children of pagans, Harranians, and Jews to read and write (in Syriac). Not only is it harmless, the priest may also teach them Psalms and Scripture. See Jacob of Edessa, *Die Canones Jacob's von Edessa: Übersetzt und erläutert*, trans. Karl Kayser (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1886), 29–30.

2 All known examples are given in Christian Stadel, "Judaean-Syriac: Syriac Texts in Jewish Square Script (with an Appendix on Syriac as a Religio-Linguistic Marker in a Judaean-Arabic Treatise)," in *Jews and Syriac Christians: Intersections across the First Millennium*, ed. Aaron Michael Butts and Simcha Gross (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 281–90.

on Genesis into Judeo-Arabic.³ Still others composed original Judeo-Arabic works based on Syriac models. David Sklare has proposed that two eighth- or ninth-century Judeo-Arabic manuscripts of questions and answers on biblical difficulties were influenced by this genre in Syriac writing.⁴ *Pirqa de-Rabbi Eliezer* might correspond to this third possibility, as its basic form resembles *Cav. Tr.* more than mid-rashic literature.

The *Cave of Treasures*, however, is not an exclusively Syriac book. It is also an Arabic one. The author of PRE did not need a Syriac environment—or even a Christian one—to be exposed to the book. Since its material had also penetrated the *Stories of the Prophets*, a genre closely aligned with Islamic preaching and storytelling, PRE did not even need to know the text to be exposed to its traditions. This is not to discount the possibility of oral transmission via Christians channels. The *Cave of Treasures* is filled with the sort of anti-Jewish traditions one might envision Christians preaching to Jews.⁵ In this regard, it is significant that the addressee of this work, Namosaya, is probably intended to be a Jew. In the end, the author of PRE could have encountered *Cav. Tr.*, in one of its myriad forms, in several different environments: oral or written, Christian or Muslim.

3 Georges Vajda, “Du prologue de Qirqisānī à son commentaire sur la Genèse,” in *In Memoriam Paul Kahle*, ed. Matthew Black and Georg Fohrer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968), 222–31 (224): “David b. Marwān ar-Raqqī, connu sous le nom d’al-Miqmās, a composé sur la Genèse un bon ouvrage qu’il avait tiré de l’exégèse des Syriens” (“Dāwūd ibn Marwān al-Raqqī, known under the name al-Muqammiš, composed a good work on Genesis that he took from the exegesis of the Syrians”). Qirqisānī claims that he has taken the best from Muqammiš (and another, unnamed source) in his own commentary on Genesis. The anonymous commentator is none other than Saadia Gaon, left anonymous due to his noted hostility to Karaism. See Bruno Chiesa, “A New Fragment of al-Qir-qisānī’s ‘Kitāb al-Riyāḍ,’” *Jewish Quarterly Review* (1988): 175–85.

4 David Sklare, “Ninth-Century Judeo-Arabic Texts of Biblical Questions and Answers,” in *Senses of Scripture, Treasures of Tradition: The Bible in Arabic among Jews, Christians and Muslims*, ed. Miriam L. Hjälm (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 104–24 (116–20).

5 Most directly: Sergey Minov, *Memory and Identity in the Syriac Cave of Treasures: Rewriting the Bible in Sasanian Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 49–141. See also Sidney H. Griffith, “Theodore Abū Qurrah’s Arabic Tract on the Christian Practice of Venerating Images,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105 (1985): 53–73 (59–62), who discusses several examples of renewed polemics between Jews and Christians following the rise of Islam. The anonymous *Polemic of Nestor the Priest: Qiṣṣat Muḥādalat al-Uṣquf and Sefer Nestor ha-Komer*, ed. and trans. Daniel J. Laster and Sarah Stroumsa, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1996), is a particularly aggressive example of Jewish attacks on Christian beliefs. According to these polemical tracts, Christians saw Jews as complicit with Islam; conversely, Jews looked to Muslims for support against Christians on topics such as the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the veneration of images.

10.1 Satan and the Serpent

Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer is the first rabbinic text to introduce the devil into the Garden of Eden. The idea that the devil—via the serpent—tempted the First Parents was so widespread that Qur’ānic renditions of the story (e.g., Q 2:30–39; 7:11–25; 20:115–124.) do not even mention the serpent and speak only of Satan. Rabbinic literature, on the other hand, only ever treats the serpent as an animal. Satan does not appear in any rabbinic exposition of Gen 1–3, nor is the serpent ever identified with the devil or any other angelic being.

One typical example of the rabbinic treatment of the serpent appears in the first chapter of *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, recension A.

Translation

[1.51] What was the first serpent thinking at that hour? “I will go and kill Adam, and I will take his wife. Then I shall be king over the entire world. Then I shall walk upright, and I shall taste all the world’s delicacies!”

[1.52] The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: “You have said, ‘I will kill Adam and take Eve.’ Therefore, I shall put enmity [between you and the woman] (Gen 3:15). You have said, ‘I shall be king over the whole world.’ Therefore, cursed are you above all animals (Gen 3:14).

[1.53] “You have said, ‘I shall walk upright.’ Therefore, on your belly you shall crawl (Gen 3:14). You have said, ‘I shall eat all the delicacies of the world.’ Therefore, you shall eat dust all the days of your life” (Gen 3:14).

[1.54] R. Simeon b. Menasiah said: Alas for the great utility that was lost from the world! If the serpent had not been cursed, everyone in Israel would have two serpents in their household. They would dispatch one to the west and one to the east, and they would bring to them beautiful gems and precious stones and pearls

Text (*editio princeps*)⁶

[1.51] מה חושב נחש הראשון באות' שעה אלך ואהרוג את אדם ואשא את אשתו ואהיה מלך על כל העולם כלו ואלך בקומה זקופה ואוכל כל מעדני עולם

[1.52] א"ל הקב"ה אתה אמרת אהרוג את אדם ואשא את חוה לפיכך איבה אשית אתה אמרת אהיה מלך על כל העולם לפיכך ארור אתה מכל הבהמה

[1.53] אתה אמרת אלך בקומה זקופה לפיכך על גחונך תלך אתה אמרת אוכל כל מעדני עולם לפיכך עפר תאכל כל ימי חיך

[1.54] ר' שמעון בן מנסיא אומ' חבל על שמש גדול שאבד מן העולם שאלמלא לא נתקלקל נחש היה לו לכל אחד ואחד מישראל היו לו שני נחשים בתוך ביתו אחד משגרו למערב ואחד משגרו למזרח ומביאים להם סנדליכ' טובים אבנים טובות ומרגליו' וכל כלי חמדה טוב' שבעולם ואין כל בריה יכולה להחזיק אותן

⁶ Text from Hans-Jürgen Becker, ed., *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan: Synoptische Edition beider Versionen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 18, where it is the first of eight columns in a synoptic edition. The printed edition was chosen simply as a representative text. The paragraph divisions are Becker's. The English translation is mine.

and all manner of good things in the world.
No creature would be able to harm them.

[1.55] Not only this, but they would ride them instead of camels or donkeys or asses, and they would transport fertilizer to gardens and orchards.

[1.56] R. Judah b. Bathyra said: The First Adam was sitting in the Garden of Eden while the ministering angels stood before him in the Garden of Eden cooking meat and chilling wine for him. The serpent came and saw them. He perceived his glory and grew jealous of him.

[1.55] ולא עוד אלא שהיו מכניסין אותן תחת גמל תחת חמור תחת פרד ומוציאין זבלים לגנות ולפרדסות

[1.56] רבי יהודה בן בתירה אומר אדם הראשון היה מיסב בגן עדן ומלאכי השרת עומדין בגן עדן לקראתו וצולין לו בשר ומצננין לו יין בא נחש וראה אותן והציץ בכבודו ונתקנא בו

Although this text is relatively late, it embodies many traditions known from Tannaitic and Amoraic literature. First, *Gen. Rab.* 18:6 mentions the serpent's sexual jealousy. He became envious of Adam and Eve when he saw them making love (שראם מתעסקין בדרך הארץ).⁷ The Babylonian Talmud even reports a tradition that the serpent successfully seduced Eve: "Why are the nations contaminated? Because they did not stand on Mount Sinai. When the serpent came to Eve, he injected filth into her. Israel, who stood on Mount Sinai, their filth departed, but those who did not stand on Mount Sinai, their filth did not depart" (*b. Shabbat* 145b–146a; cf. *b. Yevamot* 103b and *b. Avodah Zarah* 22b; cf. 4Macc 18:7–8).⁸ This *logion* has been adduced as proof that the talmudic Sages are aware of a "gnostic" tradition about Satan as the father of Cain.⁹ However, the two constituent elements are missing.

7 Translated from Julius Theodor and Hanoeh Albeck, eds., *Bereschit Rabba mit kritischem Apparat und Kommentar*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Itzkowski, 1912–1936), 1:168. Literally: "He saw them engaging in the custom of the land." The context is a discussion of Gen 2:24, "They were naked and not ashamed."

8 Translated from the Vilna Shas: *Talmud Bavli*, 37 vols. (Vilna: Widow and Brothers Romm, 1880–1886).

9 Nils Alstrup Dahl, "Der Erstgeborene Satans und der Vater des Teufels," in *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen*, ed. W. Eltester and F. H. Kettler (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1964), 70–84 (73); Arnold Goldberg, "Kain: Sohn des Menschen oder Sohn der Schlange?," *Judaica* 25 (1969): 203–21 (212); Jan Dochhorn, "Kain, der Sohn des Teufels: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu 1. Joh 3,12," in *Das Böse, der Teufel und Dämonen (Evil, the Devil, and Demons)*, ed. Jan Dochhorn, Susanne Rudnig-Zelt, and Benjamin G. Wold (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 169–87 (176); Oded Yisraeli, "Cain as the Scion of Satan: The Evolution of a Gnostic Myth in the *Zohar*," *Harvard Theological Review* 109 (2016): 56–74 (60). See, however, Israel Knohl, "Cain: Son of God or Son of Satan?," in *Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Cultural Exchange*, ed. Natalie B. Dohrmann and David Stern (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 37–50 (46–47), who mentions the talmudic tradition but then concludes: "However, the idea that Cain was the son of the snake is absent from early rabbinic literature" (47).

Neither Cain nor the devil are mentioned. The serpent is not identified with the devil, nor is such an identification necessary to make sense of the passage. It does not even state that Eve's union with the serpent was fruitful. The "gnostic" tradition does, however, surface in later Jewish literature, including PRE 21 and, much later, the *Zohar*, which has prejudiced the reading of the talmudic text.¹⁰

Second, *Genesis Rabbah* (*Gen. Rab.* 20:5), the Tosefta (*t. Sotah* 4:17–18), and the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Sotah* 9b) all reverse-engineer the characteristics of the serpent from the curses placed upon him. He desired to be king of the animals (henceforth, he will be the most abhorred of all animals); he desired Eve (henceforth, she will detest him); and he used to walk upright (henceforth, he will crawl on his belly, deprived of limbs). This tradition finds its parallel in ARN–A, cited above. *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* goes on to characterize the serpent as a potential beast of burden and a creature that desired material comforts. In all these respects, the serpent is presented as a mere animal, albeit one that can speak. This is, frankly, no different than what can be deduced from the plain sense of the biblical text.

Even in PRE 13, the serpent is an animal and a beast of burden, although now he is the mount of Sammael, the designation for Satan throughout PRE. *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* 13 opens with Adam demonstrating his superior wisdom by naming the animals, which the ministering angels cannot do. A similar tradition is already found in rabbinic literature (cf. *Gen. Rab.* 17:4), but the sequel is an innovation of PRE. Some of the angels become jealous of Adam and plot against him. Sammael, the leader of these jealous angels, decides to exact revenge on Adam by inciting him to rebel against God. He descends to earth and finds a partner in the serpent. At this point PRE begins to resemble the *Cave of Treasures*.

Cav. Tr. 4:4–12 (BL Add. 25875, ff. 6b–7a)

[4] ויהי סמאל שר הגדול בשמים ושרפים ושש
כנפים והחיות מארבע כנפים וסמאל בשמים
עשרה כנפים מה עשה לקח את הכת שלו וירד
וראה כל הבריות שברא הק' ב'ה' ולא מצא בהם
חכם להרע כנחש שנ' והנחש ערום והיתה דמותו
של נחש כמין גמל ועלה ורכב עליו [...] משל למה
הדבר דומה לאדם שיש בו רוח רעה כל מעשים
שהוא עושה מדעתו הוא עושה או כל הדברים
שהוא מדבר מדעתו הוא מדבר והלא מדעת רוח
רעה שיש עליו כך הנחש כל מעשים שעשה וכל
הדברים שדבר מדעתו שלסמאל

PRE 13 (JTS 3847, f. 95b)

[4] ויהי סמאל שר הגדול בשמים ושרפים ושש
כנפים והחיות מארבע כנפים וסמאל בשמים
עשרה כנפים מה עשה לקח את הכת שלו וירד
וראה כל הבריות שברא הק' ב'ה' ולא מצא בהם
חכם להרע כנחש שנ' והנחש ערום והיתה דמותו
של נחש כמין גמל ועלה ורכב עליו [...] משל למה
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רעה שיש עליו כך הנחש כל מעשים שעשה וכל
הדברים שדבר מדעתו שלסמאל

¹⁰ See Gavin McDowell, "Rabbinization of Non-Rabbinic Material in *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer*," in *Diversity and Rabbinization: Jewish Texts and Societies between 400 and 1000 CE*, ed. Gavin McDowell, Ron Naiweld, and Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra (Cambridge: OpenBook Publishers, 2021), 381–412 (391–403), where I argue that PRE has harmonized the talmudic tradition with the "gnostic" one.

אֵלֶּה הַמַּלְאָכִים הַגְּדֹלִים הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּדוֹשִׁים
 ,וְהַמַּלְאָכִים הַקְּטָנִים הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּדוֹשִׁים ,וְהַמַּלְאָכִים
 [10] הַגְּדֹלִים הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּדוֹשִׁים הַקְּטָנִים הַבְּרִיָּאִים
 הַקְּדוֹשִׁים [11] הַגְּדֹלִים הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּדוֹשִׁים הַקְּטָנִים
 הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּדוֹשִׁים הַגְּדֹלִים הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּטָנִים
 הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּדוֹשִׁים [12] הַגְּדֹלִים הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּטָנִים
 הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּדוֹשִׁים הַגְּדֹלִים הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּטָנִים
 הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּדוֹשִׁים הַגְּדֹלִים הַבְּרִיָּאִים הַקְּטָנִים

[4] When Satan saw Adam and Eve rejoicing in Paradise, the rebel was consumed and inflamed in his jealousy. [5] He entered and dwelt within the serpent. He carried it and flew through the air until the borders of Paradise. [6] For what reason did he enter the serpent and hide himself? [7] Because he knew that his appearance was unsightly, and if Eve had seen his true form, she would have immediately fled before him. [8] It is like how one who is teaching Greek conversation to a bird places a large mirror between himself and it, and thus he begins speaking with it. [9] Consequently, the bird who hears his voice turns to its side and sees its own form within the mirror, immediately reacts with joy, because it thinks that there is its companion speaking with it. [10] Thus it eagerly inclines its ear. [11] And it listens to the words of the one speaking with it, applying itself diligently so that it will learn to speak Greek. [12] Likewise, Satan also entered and dwelt within the serpent. He waited for an opportunity. When he saw Eve alone, he called her name.

Sammael was the great prince in heaven. The Seraphim had six wings, and the Hayyot had four wings, but Sammael had twelve wings. What did he do? He took his band and descended and saw all of the animals which the Holy One, Blessed be He, had created, but he did not find any among them as predisposed to evil as the serpent, as it is written, “The serpent was cunning” (Gen 3:1). The serpent was in the form of something like a camel. Sammael mounted and rode upon it. [. . .] To what can this thing be compared? It is like a man that has an evil spirit within him. All the actions which he does, does he do them from his own will? Or all the words which he speaks, does he speak them of his own will? Is it not the evil spirit that is upon him? Thus it was with the serpent—all the deeds which he did and all the words which he spoke were the will of Sammael.

The cited passage from PRE 13 constitutes the totality of references to Sammael in that work’s account of the fall of humanity. The rest of the chapter focuses exclusively on the serpent and is taken almost *verbatim* from *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, recension B (as discussed in chapter two). The sudden appearance and disappearance of Sammael is a redactional seam. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* has inserted Sammael between two blocks of traditional material: the animal-naming contest and the serpent’s jealousy of Adam. The transition from Sammael to the serpent occurs via a specious parable (“A possessed snake is like a possessed man”), perhaps the most noteworthy similarity between PRE and *Cav. Tr.*, which employs its own questionable comparison (“Tempting a woman is like teaching a parrot”) to explain the dynamic between Satan and the serpent.

The account of PRE reproduces the essential points of the narrative in *Cav. Tr.* The mere presence of the devil in PRE is already significant, although this is far from the only point of contact. The basis of Satan/Sammael's conspiracy against Adam is revenge motivated by jealousy. In both works, Satan's fall is directly tied to the creation of Adam. In *Cav. Tr.*, Satan refuses to worship Adam (*Cav. Tr.* 3:1–7); in PRE, Sammael refuses to accept Adam's superior wisdom. This tradition is at odds with the competing notion of a "War in Heaven," where Satan is cast down for his overweening pride before the creation of Adam (cf. Isa 14:12–14 and Ezek 28:11–19). Finally, Satan is formally distinct from the serpent, who is still just an animal. This last point is far from universal in Christian accounts.

There is no clear association between Satan and the serpent in Second Temple Jewish literature. The Christian tradition exists, in part, to explain how the serpent was able to speak. Second Temple Jewish sources such as *Jubilees* and Josephus had a different explanation. Prior to the Fall, all animals could talk, but Adam's sin stopped their mouths (*Jub.* 3:28; *Ant.* I.41, 50). Christians did piece together their tradition from Second Temple sources, but the prooftexts are ambiguous. Thus, Wisd 2:24 famously declares "through the envy of the devil death entered the world" (φθόνῳ δὲ διαβόλου θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον), but this classic prooftext mentions neither Adam nor the serpent. Furthermore, the earliest Christians allusions to the verse seem to have understood it as a reference to Cain and Abel.¹¹ Hence, *1Clement* 3:4 laments "Each one walks according to the desires of his evil heart, which have aroused unrighteous and impious jealousy—through which also death entered the world" (δι' οὗ καὶ θάνατος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸν κόσμον), before immediately citing the story of Cain and Abel as an example of how "jealousy and envy brought about the murder of a brother" (*1Clement* 4:7).¹²

Theophilus of Antioch (d. ca. 185) offered a similar interpretation in *Ad Autolycum* II.29:

¹¹ Jan Dochhorn, "Mit Kain kam der Tod in die Welt. Zur Auslegung von SapSal 2,24 in 1 Clem 3,4; 4,1–7, Mit einem Seitenblick auf Polykarp, Phil. 7,1 und Theophilus, Ad Autol. II, 29,3–4," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und Kunde der älteren Kirche* 98 (2007): 150–59, makes a similar observation, though he comes to a startlingly different conclusion: that Wisdom refers to the notion that Cain was the son of the devil. I have a different understanding. Cain, called here a "devil," introduced death into the world by killing Abel, the first person to die. Similarly, I understand 1John 3:12 to mean that Cain is a "son of the evil one" by his evil actions (cf. 1John 3:8), not because he was a literal son of the devil as in later literature. This too differs from Dochhorn's interpretation. See his "Kain, der Sohn des Teufels," cited above.

¹² Bart D. Ehrman, ed. and trans., *The Apostolic Fathers*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1:40–43.

When Satan saw that Adam and his wife not only were alive but had produced offspring, he was overcome by envy because he was not strong enough to put them to death; and because he saw Abel pleasing God, he worked upon his brother called Cain and made him kill his brother Abel. And so the beginning of death came into the world (καὶ οὕτως ἀρχὴ θανάτου ἐγένετο εἰς τὸνδε τὸν κόσμον), to reach the whole race of men to this very day.¹³

These examples serve as a reminder that the Greek word διάβολός (which simply means “accuser”) is more flexible than its English derivative, “devil.” Epiphanius of Salamis, for example, believed that the occurrence of διάβολός in John 8:44 (“You are of your father, the devil”) was a reference to Judas and his spiritual father, the liar and murderer Cain (*Panarion* 38.4–5 and 40.5–6).¹⁴

Theophilus does, however, believe that the devil was present in the Garden of Eden, and he alludes to a second popular proof-text in the passage just before the one cited (*Ad Autolyicum* II.28).

The maleficent demon, also called Satan, who then spoke to Eve through the serpent and is still at work in those men who are possessed by him, addressed her as “Eve” because she was at first deceived by the serpent and became the pioneer of sin. He is called “demon” (δαίμων) and “dragon” (δράκων) because he escaped (ἀποδεδρακέναι) from God; he was originally an angel. There is much to say about him, but for the present I am passing over the account of these matters; the statement about him has been given to us elsewhere.¹⁵

This passage alludes to Rev 12:9, “And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan” (RSV). The vision of the woman and the dragon, which occupies the twelfth chapter of Revelation, was commonly cited as a means of identifying the serpent of Eden with the devil. Other early examples are found in the works of Justin Martyr (*Dialogus cum Tryphone* CXXIV.3) and Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* III.23.7). John’s vision of the woman, however, has little to do with Genesis. Over a century ago, Hermann Gunkel indicated that the vision is rooted in Ancient Near East traditions (Babylonian and, unbeknownst to him, Ugaritic) about primordial chaos monsters. He dismissed the traditional association between Rev 12 and the “protevangelium” of Gen 3:15 (“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and hers”).

The greatest similarity is presented further by the Protevangelium (cited by [Daniel] Völter), Gen 3:14–16, where “the woman’s birth pains, increased by her offspring, but, in particular, by the serpent, and the deadly enmity which shall endure between it (the serpent) and the

¹³ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum*, ed. and trans. Robert M. Grant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 72–73.

¹⁴ Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion: Book I (Sects 1–46)*, trans. Frank Williams, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 272–74 and 287–89.

¹⁵ Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum*, 72–73.

woman (and her offspring)” is “the report.” But who might venture to assert that the author actually had the Genesis passage right before his eyes, especially since the differences are greater than the similarities?¹⁶

In a footnote, Gunkel proceeds to enumerate these differences.

There a heavenly woman, *here* the ancestress of humanity; *there* enmity of the dragon against the child; *here* a battle between the offspring of the serpent and the offspring of the woman; the dragon is a monster of the deep, the נחש [serpent], on the other hand, is the ancestor of the serpent species, etc. etc.¹⁷

The key difference, I think, is the last one. The infernal, multi-headed dragon is not a Garden-of-Eden-variety serpent.

All the other potential Second Temple references to the devil in Eden come from the “Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.” The problem is that the date and provenance of many of the Pseudepigrapha are not known. They cannot be used to illuminate the development of Adam traditions without the risk of explaining the unknown by the unknown (*ignotum per aequae ignotum*). Rather, works whose authors and times of composition are securely known—such as most patristic and rabbinic literature—must be used to deduce the origin of the Pseudepigrapha. The problem is especially acute for works that are primarily or exclusively known in Slavonic transmission, where we are often denied the benefit of an outside reference. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23 (Slavonic only), *2 Enoch* 31 (Slavonic and possibly Coptic),¹⁸ and *3 Baruch* 4 and 9 (Slavonic and Greek) all state that Satan or a satanic figure was responsible for the Fall of Adam, but we have few means of dating these texts.¹⁹ Even *1 Enoch* 69:6, which names the otherwise unknown Watcher Gadre’el as the angel who led Eve astray, is not above suspicion. Multiple Aramaic manuscripts were recovered from Qumran, but this verse falls within the *Parables* (or

¹⁶ Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*, trans. K. William Whitney, Jr., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 155. He is referring to Daniel Völter, *Das Problem der Apokalypse nach seinem gegenwärtigen Stande* (Freiburg im Breisgau: J. C. B. Mohr, 1893), 150.

¹⁷ Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos*, 334.

¹⁸ Joost L. Hagen, “No Longer ‘Slavonic’ Only: 2 Enoch Attested in Coptic from Nubia,” in *New Perspectives on 2 Enoch: No Longer Slavonic Only*, ed. A. Orlov, Gabriele Boccaccini, and Jason Zurauski (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 7–34, but see also Christfried Böttrich, “The Angel of Tartarus and the Supposed Coptic Fragments of 2 Enoch,” *Early Christianity* 4 (2013): 509–21.

¹⁹ In Gavin McDowell, “What are the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha?,” in *Regards croisés sur la Pseudépigraphe dans l’Antiquité/ Perspectives on Pseudepigraphy in Antiquity*, ed. Anne-France Morand, Éric Créheux, and Gaëlle Rioual (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023), 65–88, I hesitantly offered obscure references in Origen, *De principiis* I.3.3 and II.3.6 for, respectively, *2 Enoch* and *3 Baruch*, but neither passage is entirely satisfactory as an outside reference.

Similitudes) of *Enoch* (1*Enoch* 37–71), the one section of 1*Enoch* that was not found at Qumran and whose Second Temple provenance is, therefore, open to doubt.²⁰

Origen, whose knowledge and use of apocryphal works is unparalleled in early Christianity, attributed the devil's manipulation of the serpent to a work called the *Ascension of Moses* that was allegedly cited in the Epistle of Jude.

First, a serpent is described in Genesis as having seduced Eve; and in regard to this serpent, in the *Ascension of Moses*, a book which the apostle Jude mentions in his epistle, Michael the archangel when disputing with the body of Moses says that the serpent was inspired by the devil and so became the cause of the transgression of Adam and Eve (*De principiis* III.2.1).²¹

The *Ascension of Moses* is, presumptively, the *Assumption of Moses* uniquely preserved in the fifth-century Latin palimpsest Biblioteca Ambrosiana C 73 inf.²² However, the incomplete text preserved there has no reference to the odd story from Jude 9. Neither Jude nor the palimpsest mentions Adam, Eve, or the serpent. Johannes Tromp ventured that Origen intended to refer to the *Apocalypse of Moses*, that is, the Greek recension of the *Life of Adam and Eve*, but he retracted this position in a later publication.²³ Thus we are still left in the dark about Origen's reference as well as the intended reference of Jude.

The *Life of Adam and Eve* and its diverse versions (including the *Apocalypse of Moses*) provides a crystal-clear attestation of Satan and the serpent colluding to overthrow the First Parents, but, again, the question of date imposes itself. The *Life of Adam and Eve* only appears in history after several centuries of Christian reflection on Genesis 3. One could think of it as a natural outgrowth of the Christian tradition, particularly the later Eastern Christian tradition where Satan and the serpent are separate entities. For example, John Chrysostom (*Homiliae in Genesim* XVI.4)²⁴ and

20 J. T. Milik, ed., *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 89–107, believed that the *Parables* was a Christian composition of the second or third century. Although he won few followers, I think his position merits reevaluation. For other views on this book, see Gabriele Boccaccini, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

21 Origen, *On First Principles*, trans. G. W. Butterworth (Notre Dame: Christian Classics, 2013), 275.

22 Antonio Maria Ceriani, ed., "Fragmenta Parvae Genesis et Assumptionis Mosis ex veteri versione latina," in *Monumenta sacra et profana ex codicibus praesertim bibliothecae Ambrosianae* (Milan: Typis et Impensis Bibliothecae Ambrosianae, 1861), 1:9–64 (55–64).

23 Johannes Tromp, ed. and trans., *The Assumption of Moses: A Critical Edition with Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 270–85; Johannes Tromp, "Origen on the Assumption of Moses," in *Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome: Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honour of A. Hilhorst*, ed. Florentino García Martínez and Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 323–40.

24 John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, trans. Robert C. Hill (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 209 (my emphasis): "Consider from this, dearly beloved, how in

Ephrem the Syrian (*Commentary on Genesis* II.16)²⁵ merely *associate* the serpent and Satan, whereas a Western author like Augustine (*De Genesi contra Manichaeos* II.14.20)²⁶ *identifies* them. The key difference may have been the acceptance of Revelation as a canonical book. Eusebius of Caesarea (*Historia ecclesiastica* III.25) indicated that it was still controversial in the fourth century; Eastern canon lists as late as the *Stichometry of Nicephorus* (ninth century) name Revelation as one of the *antilegomena*.²⁷ Exceptions to this rule are illustrative. Early Greek authors who accepted the authority of Revelation identified the serpent as the devil. Justin Martyr, who knew Revelation (*Dialogus* LXXXI.4), does this multiple times (*Dialogus* XLV.4; C.6; CIII.5; CXXIV.3).²⁸

This approach to the *Life of Adam and Eve* differs sharply from others who have written on this text. Jan Dochhorn, who wrote a commentary on the Greek *Apocalypse of Moses*, maintains that it is a Palestinian Jewish text of the first or second

the beginning none of the wild beasts then existing caused fear either to the man or to the woman; on the contrary, they recognized human direction and dominion, and as with tame animals these days, so then even the wild and savage ones proved to be subdued. But perhaps in this case some may raise a difficulty and seek to find out if the wild animals also shared the power of speech. Not so—perish the thought; rather, people, following Scripture, need to consider the fact that the words came from the devil, who was spurred on to this deception by his own ill-will, while *this wild animal he employed like some convenient instrument* so as to be able to set the bait for his own deception and thus upset the woman first of all, being ever more readily susceptible of deception, and then, through her, man the first-formed.”

25 Ephrem the Syrian, *Selected Prose Works*, trans. Edward G. Mathews and Joseph P. Amar (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 107–8 (emphasis original): “After he spoke of the cleverness of the serpent, Moses turned to write about how that deceitful one came to Eve, saying, *the serpent said to the woman, ‘Did God truly say, ‘You shall not eat of any of the trees of Paradise?’*” (Gen 3:1) As for the serpent’s speech, either Adam understood the serpent’s own mode of communication, or Satan spoke through it, or the serpent posed the question in his mind and speech was given to it, or Satan sought from God that speech be given to the serpent for a short time.”

26 Augustine, *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, trans. Roland J. Teske (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 115–16: “The serpent signifies the devil who was certainly not simple. His cleverness is indicated by the fact that he is said to be wiser than all the beasts. The serpent was not said to be in paradise, though the serpent was among the beasts that God made. For paradise signifies the happy life, as I said above, and the serpent was not present there, because he was already the devil and had fallen from his happiness because ‘he did not stand in truth’ (John 8:44).”

27 Nicephorus of Constantinople, *Opuscula Historica*, ed. Carl de Boor (Leipzig: Teubner, 1880), 134.

28 See Jan Dochhorn, “Der Sturz des Teufels in der Urzeit: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Skizze zu einem Motiv frühjüdischer und frühchristlicher Theologie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Luzifermythos,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 109 (2012): 3–47 (25), who also gives some exceptions (including Theophilus of Antioch, cited above), so it was not inevitable that accepting Revelation as canonical meant one identified the serpent and Satan.

century CE.²⁹ He argues, first of all, that the awkward Greek betrayed someone more familiar with the Hebrew than the Greek Bible. He also found rabbinic parallels in *Genesis Rabbah* (20:10 and 22:9), suggesting Jewish familiarity with the work. Elsewhere, he suggested that *Gen. Rab.* 8:10 was a parody of the angelic veneration of Adam found in most versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve* (but not the *Apocalypse of Moses*).³⁰ Finally, he offered that the *Apocalypse of Moses* drew inspiration from Jewish apocalypses such as *4Ezra* and *2Baruch*, written in the wake of the Second Temple's destruction. John R. Levison, in an admirably even-handed evaluation of the work's provenance, noted the essential weakness of these arguments: the supposed Hebraisms in the text could have been the work of a "biblicizing" Christian as much as a Jew; the text evinces little contact with rabbinic exegesis (I would add that any points of contact, such as the parodic account of angelic veneration, could be a rabbinic reaction to a Christian text); and the apocalypses, while addressing similar concerns about the origin of evil, speak to the universal human condition rather than specifically Jewish issues.³¹ In other words, none of Dochhorn's evidence compels a Jewish provenance.

At the same time, Levison is critical of attempts to pinpoint a Christian provenance based on internal evidence, particularly in the work of Rivka Nir³² as well as Marinus de Jonge and Johannes Tromp.³³ I am in agreement with Levison on the weaknesses of evaluating an apocryphal work's provenance based on internal evidence, which often devolves into essentialist discussion of what a Jew or a Christian can or cannot believe. If early Christian catalogues of heresies are any indication, Christians (and Jews) were apt to believe nearly anything. Although, in the end, Levison seems partial to a Jewish provenance for the work,³⁴ the "default position"

²⁹ Jan Dochhorn, *Die Apokalypse des Mose: Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 149–72.

³⁰ Jan Dochhorn, "The Motif of the Angels' Fall in Early Judaism," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development and Reception*, ed. Reiterer, Tobias Nicklas, and Karin Schöpflin, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 477–95.

³¹ Levison, *The Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 123.

³² Rivka Nir, "The Aromatic Fragrances of Paradise in the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve* and the Christian Origin of the Composition," *Novum Testamentum* 46 (2004): 20–45; Rivka Nir, "The Struggle between the 'Image of God' and Satan in the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61 (2008): 327–39.

³³ Primarily Marinus de Jonge and Johannes Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve and Related Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

³⁴ Levison, *Greek Life of Adam and Eve*, 140–50. He states that the *Apocalypse of Moses* could inform New Testament epistles like Romans and 1John while repeatedly denying direct literary dependence between the two. See also John R. Levison, "1 John 3.12, Early Judaism and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 42 (2020): 453–71.

is to treat the *Life of Adam and Eve* in all its versions as a Christian text, for a simple reason: It is simply unknown outside of Christian transmission.³⁵ The first Jewish work to even engage traditions from the work is. . . *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer*.

The reason for this extended history is to show that the devil in the Garden is a Christian development. *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* is not merely the first rabbinic work to introduce the idea; it is the first *Jewish* work. *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer*'s source for this tradition—which is not at all evident from the text of the Hebrew Bible—could have been a Christian one, although not necessarily the *Life of Adam and Eve* or a related work (such as the *Cave of Treasures*) because the tradition was ubiquitous. Muslims, like Christians, knew of the partnership between Satan and the serpent, even though the serpent never appears in the Qur'ān. In Muslim retelling, the two characters are always distinct. In fact, Muslim writers were apt to add a new character to the drama: the peacock, who first introduces Iblis to the serpent, although the peacock's presence was not an essential element.³⁶ Therefore, PRE could have drawn from numerous sources for its rendition of the Fall, both Christian and Muslim—but not Jewish.

10.2 The Penitence of Adam

Remarkably, the book of Genesis never depicts Adam and Eve as ever showing contrition for their sin. The typically terse narrative progresses from their transgression to their punishment to the lives of their children Cain and Abel. Israel Lévi, in the first major study of Christian elements in PRE, pointed out that rabbinic literature affirms that Adam was offered the chance to repent but did not.³⁷ He drew attention to a passage from *Genesis Rabbah*.

ועתה פן ישלח ידו אמר ר' אבא בר כהנא מלמד שפתח לו הקב"ה פתח שלתשובה ועתה אין ועתה
אלא תשובה היך את אמר ועתה ישראל מה י"י אלהיך שואל מעמך פן אין פן אלא לא

“And now, lest he send forth his hand” (Gen 3:22). R. Abba bar Kahana said: This teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave him an opportunity for repentance. “And now” is not “and

35 For the concept of the “default position,” see: Pierluigi Piovanelli, “In Praise of ‘The Default Position’, or Reassessing the Christian Reception of the Jewish Pseudepigraphic Heritage,” *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 61 (2007): 233–50.

36 Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Thaʿlabī, *ʿArāʾis al-Majālis fī Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ or Lives of the Prophets*, trans. William M. Brinner (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 50–54. For additional sources, see Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muṭarrif al-Ṭarafī, *The Stories of the Prophets*, ed. Roberto Tottoli (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2003), 25 (Tottoli's notes).

37 Israël Lévi, “Eléments chrétiens dans le Pirké Rabbi Eliézer,” *Revue des Études Juives* 18 (1889): 83–89 (87).

now” but “repentance,” as it is written, “And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you,” etc. (Deut 10:12). “Lest” is not “lest” but “no” (*Gen. Rab.* 21:6; cf. the parallel passage in *Num. Rab.* 13:3).³⁸

Similarly, the Buber recension of *Midrash Tanhuma*—a much later midrashic work—records a variant of this tradition (*Tazria* 11). It deduces the tradition from Gen 3:19 instead of Gen 3:22, as in *Genesis Rabbah*.

וכשחזר אצל האדם לא חייבו אלא רמזו לו לעשות תשובה מנין אמר ר' ברכיה בשם ר' לוי שאמר לו בזעת אפיד תאכל לחם עד שובך אין שובך אלא לשון תשובה שנאמר שובה ישראל כיון שלא עשה תשובה טרדו מגן עדן

When God returned to the man [for questioning], he did not yet hold him accountable but hinted that he should do penance. From where do we learn this? R. Berakiah said in the name of R. Levi: He said to him, “By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread *until your return*” (Gen 3:19). This does not mean “your return” but is the language of repentance, as it is written, “Return, O Israel!” (Hos 14:2). Because Adam did not do penance, God drove him from the Garden of Eden.³⁹

Somewhat similarly, a passage from the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Avodah Zarah* 8a, cited in chapter seven), depicts Adam as initially penitent when the first night falls but desists when he realizes this is only the course of nature.

It is Cain, in fact, who first expresses regret for his actions after he learns the penalty for murdering his brother (Gen 4:13–14). According to *Genesis Rabbah*, Adam only understood the power of repentance from the example of his son.

ויצא קין וגו' מאיכן יצא ר' איבו אמר הפשיל דברים לאחוריו ויצא כגונב דעת העיליונים ר' ברכיה בשם ר' אלעזר יצא כמפריס כמרמא בבוראו ר' חננא בר יצחק אמר יצא שמח כמה דתימר יוצא לקראתך וראך ושמח בלבו פגע בו אדם אמר לו מה נעשה בדיןך אמר לו עשיתי תשובה ופישרתי התחיל אדם מטפח על פניו כך היא כח התשובה ולא הייתי יודע מיד עמד ואמר מזמור שיר ליום השבת טוב להודות ליי

“Cain went out,” etc. (Gen 4:16). Where did he go? R. Aibu said: He cast the words behind him, and he went out like one who has stolen knowledge from the heavenly powers. R. Berakiah said in the name of R. Eleazar: He went out like a cloven-hooved animal, like one who deceives his creator. R. Hanina b. Isaac said: He went out in joy, as it is written, “He has gone out to meet you, and he will see you and rejoice in his heart” (Exod 4:14). He met Adam, who said to him, “What has been done about your judgment?” Cain said to him, “I have repented, and I have reconciled.” Adam began beating his face. “Thus is the power of repentance! And

³⁸ Translated from Julius Theodor and Hanoch Albeck, eds., *Bereschit Rabba mit kritischem Apparat und Kommentar*, 3 vols. (Berlin: Itzkowski, 1912–1936), 1:201.

³⁹ My translation from from Salomon Buber, ed., *Midrasch Tanchuma: Ein agadischer Kommentar zum Pentateuch von Rabbi Tanchuma ben Rabbi Abba*, 3 vols. (Vilna: Widow and Brothers Romm, 1885), 3:39 [Hebrew].

I did not know it!" Immediately he stood up and recited the psalm, the song for the day of the Sabbath (Psalm 92): "It is good to confess to the LORD," etc. (*Gen. Rab.* 22:13; cf. *Tanhuma Buber, Bereshit* 25).⁴⁰

When PRE speaks of the penance of Adam, it is diverging—probably consciously—from an established tradition within rabbinic literature. One clue is that PRE is aware of the attribution of Psalm 92 to Adam on the occasion of the first Sabbath. An entire chapter (PRE 18 in the manuscripts; PRE 19 in the printed edition) is dedicated to the exegesis of this Psalm. In this case, Adam composes the psalm after the personified Sabbath intercedes to prevent Adam's execution for his sin. The chapter precedes Adam's observance of the first Sabbath and his act of penance in the river, which finds no parallel in rabbinic literature.

The Christian parallel, in this case, does not come from the *Cave of Treasures*, which does not mention Adam's penance at all. The other Adam books, however, report that Adam immersed himself in a river for an extended period (at least forty days) to atone for his sin. Most versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve* (except the Greek) feature an episode where Adam and Eve perform separate penances in two different rivers: Adam in the Jordan and Eve in the Tigris. Satan, in the guise of an angel of light (cf. 2Cor 11:14), tricks Eve into pre-emptively abandoning her penance. Adam then demands from Satan the reason for his enmity against humanity, and he recounts his fall from heaven after he refused to venerate the newly-created Adam.

The story may not have found its way into the *Cave of Treasures*, but it does appear in the greater *Cave of Treasures* cycle as a part of the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*.

Conflict 20 (Vatican, Arab. 129, ff. 57b–58a)⁴¹

فلما كان الصباح اليوم الثامن قال آدم يا حوي نحن
قد طلبنا أن يهبنا شي من الفردوس فأرسل ملائكته
جاءوا لنا طلبتنا والآن قومي نمضي إلى البحر الماء
الذي نظرناه أولاً نقف نصلي ونصوم ونحن فيه
لعل الرب يتحنن علينا دفعة أخرى إما أن يردنا إلى
الفردوس وإما أن يهبنا شي وإما يعزينا بأرض غير
هذه الأرض التي نحن فيها فأنعمت له حوي وقاموا
خرجوا من المغارة وجاءوا وقفوا على فافة البحر الذي
كانوا يرموا أنفسهم فيه أولاً ثم قال آدم لحوي تعالي

PRE 20 (JTS 3847, f. 105a–105b)

באחד בשבת נכנס אדם למימי גיחון העליונים
עד שהגיעו המים עד צוארו והיה מתענה שבע
שבתות ימים עד שנעשה גופו כמין ירוקה ואמ'
חטאתי וידעו כל הדורות שיש תשובה מיד עשה
תשובה והק'ב'ה' פשט יד ימינו והעביר חטאתו
מעליו שנ' חטאתי אודיעך ועוני לא כסיתי וגמ'
סלה מן העולם הזה ומן העולם הבא

⁴⁰ My translation from Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba*, 1:220.

⁴¹ My translation from Antonio Battista and Bellarmino Bagatti, *Il Combattimento di Adamo: Testo arabo inedito con traduzione italiana e commento* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1982), 65–66 (chapter 20), who print the text of Vatican Arab 129. This corresponds to chapter 32 in Solomon Caesar Malan, trans., *The Book of Adam and Eve: Also Called the Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1882), 34.

انزلي في هذا المكان ولا تطلعي إلى تمام أربعين يوماً حتى آتني إلى عندك وأطلبني من الله بحرقة قلب حتى يغفر لنا وأنا أذهب إلى موضع آخر أنزل فيه وأعمل مثلك ثم إن حوي نزلت كما أمرها آدم وأدم أيضاً نزل إلى الماء ووقفوا يصلوا ويطلبوا من الله أن يغفر دنوبهم ويردهم إلى رتبته الأولى وهكذا قاموا يصلوا إلى تمام خمسة وتلتين يوماً

When it was morning on the eighth day, Adam said: "O Eve! Whenever we asked, [God] gave us anything from Paradise. He sent his angels who brought us what we asked. Now arise, let us go to the sea of water which we first saw [upon leaving Paradise].⁴² Let us stand there and we will pray and fast in it. Perhaps the Lord will be gracious to us once again. Either He will return us to Paradise, or He will give us something, or He will comfort us with a land other than this, the land in which we now live." Eve agreed to this. They stood up and went out from the cave [of treasures] and went and stood on the shore of the sea where they had previously tried to throw themselves in.⁴³ Then Adam said to Eve, "Come, stay in this place and do not leave until forty days have passed, until I come to you. Entreat God with a fervent heart until he pardons us. I will go to another place and stay there and do likewise." Then Eve descended as Adam had commanded her, and Adam also went down to the water. They both stood, and they prayed and entreated God so he would pardon their trespasses and restore them to their original state. Thus, they stood praying until thirty-five days had passed.

On the first day after the Sabbath, Adam entered the waters of the upper Gihon until the water reached his neck. He was fasting there seven Sabbaths of days until his body became like a kind of seaweed (כמין ירוקה). He said, "I have sinned! But all generations will know that there is a possibility of repentance." And so he promptly did penance. The Holy One, Blessed be He, stretched forth his right hand and removed his sin from him, as it is written, "I have sinned! I have made it known to you," etc. (Ps 32:5). It ends: *Selah*, in this world and in the world to come.

⁴² Malan, *The Book of Adam and Eve*, 1–2: "And to the north [of the garden] there is a sea of water, clear and pure to when a man washes himself in it, he becomes clean of the cleanness thereof, and white of its whiteness—even if he were dark. And God created that sea of His own good pleasure, for He knew what would come of the man He should make; so that after he had left the garden, on account of his transgression, men should be born in the earth, from among whom righteous ones should die, whose souls God would raise at the last day; when they should return to their flesh; should bathe in the water of that sea, and all of them repent of [their] sins."

⁴³ This is a reference to an earlier incident where Satan tried to kill the couple. Malan, *The Book of Adam and Eve*, 30: "Then Satan called to Adam and Eve, and said, 'Behold, we go to the sea of water,' and they began to go. And Adam and Eve followed them at some little distance. But when they came

The subsequent chapter describes Satan's deception of Eve in much the same manner as the *Life of Adam and Eve*. Since it has no parallel in PRE, I have not quoted it.

We do not know precisely when the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* was written, only that it existed sometime before the thirteenth century. I have noted in an earlier article the many differences between the *Life of Adam and Eve* and PRE, but there are a few ways that the penitential narrative in PRE 20 more closely resembles the *Life* than the *Conflict*.⁴⁴ First, when Adam enters the river (the Jordan in the *Life*; the Gihon in PRE), he is said to walk until the water came up to his neck (*Life* 7:2: *ad collum in aqua*).⁴⁵ Second, when Adam exits the water, he has become "like a species of seaweed" from the prolonged exposure to the cold water. The *Life* describes Eve's appearance this way when she comes out of the water (*Life* 10:1: *caro eius erat sicut herba de frigore aquae*).⁴⁶ The reason for quoting the *Conflict* instead of the *Life* is because of the conundrum it poses: How did the author of this Arabic text know the *Life of Adam and Eve*, which was never translated into Arabic? The answer to this question is also the answer to how PRE came to know the penitence narrative from the *Life of Adam and Eve*.

Even though the *Life of Adam and Eve* was not available in Arabic translation, Arabic writers were still cognizant of special traditions from this work. The second half of the *Life of Adam and Eve* recounts Seth's quest for the oil of life from the trees of Paradise, his dying father's last request.⁴⁷ A summary description of this legend appears in Muslim literature. Theodore Gluck, in a short study of the treatment of Seth in Islamic literature, mentions three works with the legend.⁴⁸ Two of them, Ibn Qutayba and Pseudo-Mas'ūdī were discussed in the last chapter on the transmission of the *Cave of Treasures*.

to the mountain to the north of the garden, a very high mountain, without any steps to the top of it, the Devil drew near to Adam and Eve, and made them go up to the top in reality, and not in a vision; wishing, as he did, to throw them down and kill them, and to wipe off their name from the earth, so that this earth should remain to him and his hosts alone."

44 Gavin McDowell, "The *Life of Adam and Eve* in *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*," in *La Vie d'Adam et Ève et les traditions adamiques*, ed. Frédéric Amsler et al. (Prahins: Éditions du Zèbre, 2017), 161–70.

45 Jean-Pierre Pettorelli and Jean-Daniel Kaestli, *Vita Latina Adae et Evae*, 2 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 2:772 (from the synopsis at the end). See also Gary A. Anderson and Michael E. Stone, *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 2nd rev. ed. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 9.

46 Pettorelli and Kaestli, *Vita Latina Adae et Evae*, 2:776; Anderson and Stone, *Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 12.

47 For the variety of legends on this theme: Esther C. Quinn, *The Quest of Seth for the Oil of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

48 Theodore Gluck, "The Arabic Legend of Seth, the Father of Mankind" (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 1968), 70–77.

Here is how Ibn Qutayba tells the legend.

أَنَّ آدَمَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ لَمَّا احْتَضَرَ اشْتَهَى قِطْفًا مِنْ قُطُوفِ الْجَنَّةِ فَانْطَلَقَ بَنُوهُ لِيَطْلُبُوهُ لَهُ فَلَقِيَتْهُمْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ فَقَالُوا إِلَى أَيْنَ تُرِيدُونَ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ فَقَالُوا إِنَّ أَبَانَا اشْتَهَى قِطْفًا مِنْ قُطُوفِ الْجَنَّةِ فَقَالُوا أَرْجِعُوا فَقَيِّمُوهُ فَانْتَهَوْا إِلَيْهِ فَقَبَضُوا رُوحَهُ وَغَسَلُوهُ وَخَنَطُوهُ وَكَفَّنُوهُ وَصَلَّى عَلَيْهِ جِبْرِيلُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ خَلْفَ جِبْرِيلَ وَبَنُوهُ خَلْفَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَدَفَنُوهُ وَقَالُوا هَذِهِ سُنَّتُكُمْ فِي مَوْتَاكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ

When Adam, peace be upon him, was dying, he craved fruit from the Garden, so his sons went to seek it for him. The angels met them and asked, "Where are you going, O sons of Adam?" They said, "Our father craves fruit from the Garden." The angels said, "Return, for you have done enough for him." The angels came to him, collected his soul, washed him, embalmed him, and wrapped him in a shroud. Gabriel prayed over him, and the other angels behind Gabriel, and Adam's sons behind the angels. They buried him and said: "This is your custom for the dead, O sons of Adam!"⁴⁹

This statement, incidentally, immediately precedes Ibn Qutayba's citation of Wahb ibn Munabbih regarding Adam's burial in the cave of treasures until the time of the Flood.

An even shorter retelling is found in Gluck's second witness, the *Digest of Marvels* (*Mukhtasar al-Adjā'ib*) or *Akhbār al-Zamān* falsely attributed to al-Mas'ūdī.

ويقال إنه اشتهى قطفاً من عنب الجنة فوجه بعض ولده يسأل له ذلك ممن لقيه من الملائكة فلقبه جبريل عليه السلام فعزاه في أبيه وقال ارجع فإن أباك قد مات

Some say that Adam desired a cluster of grapes from Paradise, and he sent one of his children to ask for it from the first angel that he encountered. Then Gabriel, peace be upon him, met him, consoled him about his father, and said, "Return, for your father is already dead."⁵⁰

Gluck's third witness, Mirkhvand, is a Persian historian of the fifteenth century, which shows, at least, that knowledge of the legend permeated the broader Islamic world and was not just restricted to Arabic letters.

The Muslim narratives, of course, are not exact transcriptions of the quest of Seth. The skeletal retelling of the basic plot suggests an oral transmission rather than a textual appropriation of the tale from the *Life of Adam and Eve*. The story has also been lightly "Islamicized" to provide the aetiology of Muslim burial practices.⁵¹

49 'Abd Allāh b. Muslim ibn Qutayba, *Kitāb al-Ma'ārif*, ed. Tharwat 'Ukāsha (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1960), 19. Older edition: 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim ibn Qutayba, *Handbuch der Geschichte*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1850), 10.

50 Pseudo-Mas'ūdī, *Akhbār al-Zamān*, ed. Khālīd 'Alī Nabhān (Giza: Maktabat al-Nāfidhah, 2013), 79. French translation: Bernard Carra de Vaux, trans., *L'Abrégé des Merveilles* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1898), 83. English translation: Gluck, "The Arabic Legend of Seth," 72–73.

51 See Loren Lybarger, "The Demise of Adam in the *Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*: The Symbolic Politics of Death and Re-Burial in the Islamic Stories of the Prophets," *Numen* 55 (2008): 497–535. He points out (510) that embalming is not an Islamic practice and might be a relic of the story that Adam's body was preserved temporarily on Noah's Ark.

The promise of a future Savior as a substitution for the loss of Paradise, which is the function of the episode in most versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve* (and also the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, which adapts the narrative),⁵² is entirely—and expectedly—absent. Seth, the son of Adam in the image of God (Gen 5:3), is not even named.

Similarly, the account of Adam's penance in PRE has been "Judaized." The penance no longer takes place in the Jordan over a period of forty days, a combination of factors that recalls Jesus' baptism in the Jordan and his subsequent forty-day fast in the desert (Mark 1:9–13 and parallels). Instead, Adam submerges himself in the Gihon, a river of Paradise (Gen 2:13) which is also the water source of Jerusalem (1Kgs 1:1.33.38.45; 2Chr 32:30; 33:14), for a period of forty-nine days, like the forty-nine years of a jubilee. The story of Eve's failed penance is suppressed, with the result that Adam's penance is accepted by God, who pardons his fault. The consequences of Original Sin—and the need for a future redeemer—are no longer in evidence.

We can learn yet another lesson from the Muslim examples. Authors such as Ibn Qutayba and Pseudo-Mas'ūdī drew upon traditions from both the *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Cave of Treasures*. The knowledge of traditionists was not restricted to only one Adam book, even if the Adam books in question could not be found in the same language. Even the books that were in the same language, such as the Arabic versions of the *Cave of Treasures* and the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*, could be found in the same manuscript. This is the case of Mingana Syr. 258, from the University of Birmingham (sixteenth century). Folios 1–87b contain the *Hexameron* of Pseudo-Epiphanius and the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan* until the marriage of Cain.⁵³ Within this section would fall the failed penance of Adam and Eve. The manuscript then shifts to the Arabic *Cave of Treasures* (ff. 87b–146a), which continues the story until the time of Christ.⁵⁴ Therefore, there are oral and even written channels by which one could have become aware of traditions from several Adam books, providing multiple possible avenues for PRE's knowledge of these traditions.

52 Rémi Gounelle, "La Vie d'Adam et Ève et l'Évangile de Nicodème," in *La Vie d'Adam et Ève et les traditions adamiques*, ed. Frédéric Amsler et al. (Prahins: Éditions du Zèbre, 2017), 145–60, convincingly argues that the *Gospel of Nicodemus* took the episode from the Latin version.

53 This corresponds to Book One in the translation of Malan, *The Book of Adam and Eve*. Cain marries at the beginning of Book Two (104), following the death of Abel.

54 Alphonse Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1933–1936), 1:514–15.

10.3 The Burial of Adam

In its narrative of the postlapsarian life of Adam, PRE 20 mentions three different tiers of sacred space. First, there is the Garden of Eden. Second, Adam is expelled “outside the Garden of Eden” (חוץ לגן עדן) but continues to live “on Mount Moriah” (בהר המוריה), the place of his creation, which is “the gate of the Garden of Eden” (שער גן עדן). Third, as his death approaches, Adam decides to build a tomb for himself “outside Mount Moriah” (חוץ להר המוריה). The tomb is the Cave of Machpelah. In rabbinic tradition, this is indeed the grave of Adam (*Gen. Rab.* 58:4.8; *b. Eruvin* 53a), based on exegesis of Qiryat Arba (the “City of Four”), the ancient name of Hebron, where Machpelah is located (*Gen* 23:2). The implication is that Adam is the fourth person—with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—buried in this cave. *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* maintains the tradition regarding Qiryat Arba but does not mention Hebron at all. Its description of the location of Machpelah outside Mount Moriah has led more than one scholar to suggest that the cave is in Jerusalem rather than Hebron.⁵⁵ Either way, PRE has incorporated Machpelah into a new tripartite sacred geography of Eden—Moriah—Machpelah, which is like the triple-layered sacred space of Paradise—the Holy Mountain—Golgotha in the *Cave of Treasures*.

In contrast to PRE, earlier rabbinic texts state Adam was buried in Hebron without mentioning the Garden of Eden or the Temple Mount. For example, *Genesis Rabbah* offers numerous explanations for the name Qiryat Arba, only one of which is that Adam and Eve were buried there along with the three patriarchs and their spouses. The city is identified with Hebron.

ותמת שרה בקריית ארבע ארבעה שמות נקראו לה אשכול וממרא קריית ארבע וחברון ולמה קורא אותה קרית ארבע ארבע שררו בה ד' צדיקים ענר אשכול וממרא ואברהם שמלו בה ד' צדיקים ענר אשכול וממרא ואברהם שנקברו בה ארבעה צדיקים אדם הראשון אברהם יצחק ויעקב שנקברו בה ארבע אימהות חוה שרה ורבקה ולאה על שם בעליה שהן ארבעה ענק וג' בני

“Sarah died in Qiryat Arba” (*Gen.* 23:2). It was called by four names: Eshkol, Mamre, Qiryat Arba, and Hebron. Why did they call it Qiryat Arba? Because four righteous men lived there: Aner, Eshkol, Mamre, and Abraham. Because four righteous men were circumcised there: Aner, Eshkol, Mamre, and Abraham. Because four righteous men were buried there: the first Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because the four matriarchs were buried there: Eve, Sarah,

⁵⁵ For example, Helen Spurling and Emmanouela Grypeou, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 50–54. See also their earlier publication, Helen Spurling and Emmanouela Grypeou, “Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and Eastern Christian Exegesis,” *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia* 4 (2007): 217–43 (232–38). Others will be noted in the discussion below.

Rebekah, and Leah. After the name of its owners, who were four: Anak and his three sons (*Gen. Rab.* 58:4).⁵⁶

A similar tradition appears in the Babylonian Talmud where two rabbis dispute in what manner the Cave of Machpelah (מכפלה) was “doubled” (כפולה).

מערת המכפלה רב ושמואל חד אמר שני בתים זה לפניו מזה וחד אמר בית ועלייה על גביו בשלמא למאן דאמר זה על גב זה היינו מכפלה אלא למאן דאמר שני בתים זה לפניו מזה מאי מכפלה שכפולה בזוגות ממרא קרית ארבע אמר רבי יצחק קרית הארבע זוגות אדם וחווה אברהם ושרה יצחק ורבקה יעקב ולאה

Regarding the Cave of Machpelah, Rav and Samuel disagreed. One said: “Two chambers, one before the other.” The other said: “A house with a second story above it.” In the end, the one who said, “This is above this,” was correct about “Machpelah.” But the one who said, “Two houses, this one before this one”—how is that “doubled”? It was doubled with regard to couples: “Mamre, the City of Four” (*Gen* 35:27). Rabbi Isaac said: The City of Four Couples—Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah (*b. Eruvin* 53a).⁵⁷

Genesis Rabbah has its own tradition about how the cave acquired its name: God had to fold Adam, a man of prodigious size, in half in order to bury him in the cave (*Gen. Rab.* 58:4).

None of these traditions explains the logic behind locating Adam’s grave at Hebron as opposed to anywhere else. For that, one must turn to the Church Father Jerome. He incorporated Adam’s burial at Hebron into the very text of the Vulgate in his translation of Josh 14:15: “Before, the name of Hebron was called Qiryat Arba. Adam, the most great, is interred here among the Anakim” (*Nomen Hebron antea vocabatur Cariat-arbe; Adam maximus ibi inter Enacim situs est*).⁵⁸ Jerome has interpreted “the great man” (האדם הגדול) as a reference to Adam, the first man.

Jerome referred to this tradition again several times in his writings. In his *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim*, Jerome, commenting on Gen 23:2 (the verse cited in *Genesis Rabbah*), he explains that the city is called Qiryat Arba (קרית ארבע) because four (ארבע) people are buried there: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Adam, further indicating that this is stated clearly in the book of Joshua.⁵⁹ The same information is repeated in *Epistula* 108, his description of his friend Paula’s pilgrimage

⁵⁶ Translated from Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabbah*, 2:621–22.

⁵⁷ My translation from the Vilna Shas.

⁵⁸ Latin text quoted from Pieter W. van der Horst, “The Site of Adam’s Tomb,” in *Studies in Hebrew Language and Jewish Culture Presented to Albert van der Heide on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Martinus Ferdinand Jozef Baasten and Reinier Wybren Munk (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), 251–55 (252). The translation is my own.

⁵⁹ Jerome, *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, trans. C. T. R. Hayward (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 56–57.

through the Holy Land, with the important addendum that it was a Jewish tradition: “as the Hebrews say.”⁶⁰ *Genesis Rabbah*, which is more or less contemporary with Jerome, demonstrates the veracity of his statement. It is a Jewish tradition rooted in a midrashic interpretation of the Hebrew text—even though the actual midrash has not been preserved.

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer is both continuous and discontinuous with rabbinic tradition. As in *Genesis Rabbah*, the Babylonian Talmud, and the outside attestation of Jerome, Adam is indeed buried in Qiryat Arba within the Cave of Machpelah. However, the cave is not in Hebron but “outside Mount Moriah,” that is, near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. A later chapter, PRE 36, makes the change explicit and even calls attention to it. The context is Abraham’s reception of the three mysterious visitors (Gen 18). He wants to prepare a calf for them, but the animal runs off.

ורץ אחרי בן הבקר וברח מפניו ונכנס למערת המכפלה ונכנס אחריו וראה שם אדם ועזרו שוכבין על מטותיהן ונרות דולקין עליהן וריח טוב עליהן כריח ניחוח לפ"כ חמד מערת המכפלה לאחות קבר ואמ' לבני יבוס לקנות מהם מערת המכפלה בממכר זהב בכתב עולם לאחות עולם ולא קבלו האנשים עליהם וכי יבוסים היו והלא חתים היו אלא לשם העיר היבוס נקראו היבוסים

He ran after the calf, but it fled before him and entered the Cave of Machpelah. He entered after it and saw there Adam and his helpmate lying on their beds, with lamps burning over them and a sweet smell upon them like the smell of fragrance. Therefore, he desired the Cave of Machpelah as a burial plot. He spoke to the Jebusites about purchasing the Cave of Machpelah from them in exchange for gold and a perpetual deed to this portion of the world, but the people did not accept them. Were they Jebusites? Were they not Hittites? They were called Jebusites after the name of the city Jebus (PRE 36, JTS 3847, f. 127a).

Jebus is the ancient name of Jerusalem, as noted a couple times in the Hebrew Bible (Judg 19:10; 1Chr 11:4). The change is not incidental but intentional. The author of PRE seems to think that Adam was buried in Jerusalem, though not on the Temple Mount.

Before delving further into this topic, a point of clarification is necessary. Despite numerous statements to the contrary in secondary literature, no ancient Jewish tradition, rabbinic or otherwise, has ever claimed that Adam is buried on the Temple Mount. For example, Louis Ginzberg, in his monumental *Legends of the Jews* (first published between 1909 and 1938) states that the Greek recension of the *Life of Adam and Eve* (the *Apocalypse of Moses*), locates the grave of Adam at the place of his creation, which, in rabbinic sources, is unambiguously the Temple Mount.⁶¹ The *Apocalypse of Moses*, however, does not mention the Temple. It says

⁶⁰ John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1977), 50.

⁶¹ Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 1:97–98, n. 137. See y. *Nazir* VII:2, 56b, *Gen. Rab.* 14:8, and PRE 11 and 12.

that Adam was buried in Paradise along with his son Abel (*Apoc. Moses* 40:6). Ginzberg believes this is an error—the scribe intended to write the Temple Mount. In the same work, Ginzberg refers to an oft-repeated tradition in the Palestinian Talmud (y. *Sotah* V:2, 20b; y. *Pesahim* IX:1, 36c; y. *Nedarim* VI:13, 39d–40a; y. *Sanhedrin* I:2, 18d) that at some point the skull of Araunah the Jebusite, from whom David purchased the future site of the Temple (2Sam 24; cf. 1Chr 21), was discovered under the altar. According to Ginzberg, the abbreviation for “Araunah the Jebusite” (אַרְאִי) is in fact a misreading of the abbreviation for “Adam the First” (אָדָם). The basis for this unwarranted emendation is “the widespread legend that Adam was buried in Jerusalem in the place upon which the altar was subsequently erected.”⁶² Both cases require changing the text so that the evidence fits the conclusion.

Victor Aptowitz built upon the claims of Ginzberg. In his 1924 article “Les éléments juifs dans la légende du Golgotha,” he argued that the Christian tradition whereby Adam was created at Golgotha (the site of the crucifixion: Matt 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17) and then buried there is, in fact, transplanted from a Jewish tradition that Adam was created from and then buried on the Temple Mount. The common theme is that Adam was created from the place where he was to be buried, based, ultimately, on exegesis of Gen 3:19.⁶³ Aptowitz cites *Jub.* 3:32 and 4:19, where Adam is expelled to the land of his creation—an otherwise unknown place called Elda—and eventually buried there. He also cites several rabbinic sources stating Adam was created on the Temple Mount. What he is unable to do is connect the two. The closest he comes is a citation of a “Melchizedek fragment” (*2Enoch* 71:35) prophesying that the priest-king will rule in “Ahuzan,” where Adam was created and where he was buried. The provenance of *2Enoch* already poses a problem, but even if one were to grant it a Jewish origin, it would not prove that Adam was buried on the Temple Mount—only that he was buried in Jerusalem (if “Ahuzan” is indeed Jerusalem).

Joachim Jeremias, writing only two years after Aptowitz, accepts it as a fact that Jews once believed Adam was buried on the Temple Mount. According to him, the locale was transferred to Hebron after Jews were barred from Jerusalem following the Bar Kochba revolt.⁶⁴ He later cites the *Life of Adam and Eve*—not only the Greek *Apocalypse of Moses* but the common Latin version—as evidence for the earlier belief.⁶⁵ In the Latin *Life* (45:2), Adam says: “Bury me against the garden of God in the field of his habitation” (*sepelire me contra hortum dei in agro habi-*

⁶² Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 2:1121, n. 32.

⁶³ Victor Aptowitz, “Les éléments juifs dans la légende du Golgotha,” *Revue des Études Juives* 79 (1924): 145–62.

⁶⁴ Joachim Jeremias, *Golgotha* (Leipzig: Verlag von Edward Pfeiffer, 1926), 2 and 21.

⁶⁵ Jeremias, *Golgotha*, 39.

tationis illius). That statement could be reasonably interpreted as referring to the Temple Mount. It is also a gloss. The most recent synopsis makes this thunderously obvious, where the text occurs in the common Latin recension but is absent from all the others, including the Greek, Armenian, Georgian, and the older Latin version discovered by Jean-Pierre Pettoirelli.⁶⁶ For good measure, it is also missing from the Slavonic.⁶⁷

The basic claims of Ginzberg, Aptowitz, and Jeremias find their echoes in studies up to the present day.

Isaiah Gafni in 1987: “The midrash [PRE 20] here appears to echo those apocalyptic works that return Adam (and ultimately bury him) to the very spot of his creation, which was the Temple.”⁶⁸

Joan Taylor in 1993: “It is extremely likely indeed that the Jewish source material in the *Cave of Treasures* would have placed Adam’s burial on Mount Moriah. This placement is well known in Jewish tradition, as L. Ginzberg has shown.”⁶⁹

Pieter W. van der Horst in 2007: “In Judaism, the tradition that finally became dominant was that the place where Adam was buried was the Temple Mount.”⁷⁰

Loren Lybarger in 2008: “According to the Haggadah, the dust for Adam’s formation was taken from the Jerusalem temple’s altar. It is in this place that Jewish legend says Adam was buried.”⁷¹

Alain Le Boulluec in 2011: “Louis Ginzberg has well established the Jewish origin of the tradition according to which Adam was buried at the center of the earth, at the place of the altar of the Jerusalem Temple.”⁷²

Nikolai Lipatov-Chicherin in 2019: “Reflection on the possible resting place of the first man and common ancestor of the human race tended to look for the most holy site regarded as the centre of the world. The Temple in Jerusalem seemed to many Rabbinic authors to be an

66 Pettoirelli and Kaestli, *Vita Latina Adae et Evae*, 2:874–75.

67 Anderson and Stone, *Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 74.

68 Isaiah M. Gafni, “Pre-Histories’ of Jerusalem in Hellenistic, Jewish and Christian Literature,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 1 (1987): 5–22 (13).

69 Joan E. Taylor, *Christians and the Holy Places: The Myth of Jewish-Christian Origins* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 129.

70 Van der Horst, “Adam’s Tomb,” 255.

71 Lybarger, “The Demise of Adam,” 517.

72 Alain Le Boulluec, “Regards antiques sur Adam au Golgotha,” in *Eukarpa: Études sur la Bible et ses Exégètes en hommage à Gilles Dorival*, ed. Mireille Loubet and Didier Pralon (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2011), 355–62 (355). The original French reads: “Louis Ginzberg a bien établi l’origine juive de la tradition selon laquelle Adam aurait été enterré au centre de la terre, à l’emplacement de l’autel du Temple de Jérusalem.”

obvious place, if holiness in the world has a single or major focus rather than being dispersed across many areas.”⁷³

Jordan Ryan in 2021: “Other relatively late rabbinic sources locate the burial of Adam on Mount Moriah (*Midrash Psalms* 92:6; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 43:2; PRE 23:31).”⁷⁴

The thread that connects these claims is a simple category error. Second Temple—and subsequently Christian—literature affirm that Adam returned to the place of his creation. No Second Temple or Christian source ever identifies Mount Moriah as that place. Rabbinic sources maintain that Adam was created on the Temple Mount but was buried elsewhere—and for good reason. Several rabbinic traditions touch upon anxiety over corpse impurity on the Temple Mount. The report of Araunah’s skull under the altar directly engages this fear. The Mishnah (*m. Eduyot* 8:5), the Tosefta (*t. Eduyot* 3:3), and the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Zevahim* 113a–113b) all mention a time when bones were discovered on the Temple Mount, prompting an emergency removal. Yael Fisch compares these passages with an episode recounted in Josephus where Samaritans maliciously scatter bones over the Temple courtyard. The priests were obliged to exclude everyone from the Temple and strengthen security measures (*Ant.* XVIII.29–30).⁷⁵ Such passages show why a tradition about Adam’s tomb on the Temple Mount would never have developed. It would have directly imputed the purity of the Temple.

This brings us—finally—to PRE and *Cav. Tr.* Both works have been marshalled to support the contention that Adam was buried on the Temple Mount. Aptowitzer cites *Cav. Tr.* as the prime example of his “legend of Golgotha,” a Christianized version of an originally Jewish legend.⁷⁶ He also cites PRE as a reflection of this original Jewish version, where Adam was initially buried on the Temple Mount and then later removed to Hebron.⁷⁷ Similarly, Jeremias cites both PRE and *Cav. Tr.* as witnesses to the supposedly ancient idea that Adam was buried on the Temple Mount.⁷⁸ The two works are connected, but not in the way imagined by these

73 Nikolai Lipatov-Chicherin, “Early Christian Tradition about Adam’s Burial on Golgotha and Origen,” in *Origeniana Duodecima: Origen’s Legacy in the Holy Land – A Tale of Three Cities: Jerusalem, Caesarea and Bethlehem*, ed. Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2019), 151–78 (157).

74 Jordan Ryan, “Golgotha and the Burial of Adam between Jewish and Christian Tradition: Text and Monument,” *Scandinavian Jewish Studies* 32 (2021): 3–29. *Midrash Psalms* cites PRE 20 on Adam’s expulsion, while *Pesiqta Rabbati* alludes to PRE 23 (Noah used the altar built by Adam). Neither states that Adam was buried at Moriah.

75 Yael Fisch, “Appendix: Bones in the Temple,” in Tal Ilan and Vered Noam, *Josephus and the Rabbis*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2017), 1:485–92 [Hebrew].

76 Aptowitzer, “La légende du Golgotha,” 148–51.

77 Aptowitzer, “La légende du Golgotha,” 153–54.

78 Jeremias, *Golgotha*, 39.

authors. The *Cave of Treasures* does not merely state that Adam was created at Golgotha and then buried there. There is an intermediary step where Adam lives on a Holy Mountain adjacent to Paradise (see also *Cav. Tr.* 5:18.25; 7:18; 10:6.14; 11:11; 12:8.11.18.19.20; 13:3; 16:13; 17:7.18).

Cav. Tr. 5:14–17 (BL Add. 25875, f. 7b)

[14] סבד נפסא ארנב סעסא קא פיוסעס
אדאעבד ודאסח ופיוסעס ססג חלמ, סוסס
בד קלסע סעסא נעסכא [15] ססבסס ארנב סעסא
ספלוססס וססס חל סססס ופיוסעס
[16] ססססס סססס סס ספלוסס ססס
לס סססססס סס [17] בד אססססס ארנב
סעסא ססססס סבד ססס ארנב וסססס לססס
אסססס וססב קא ספסל פיוסעס וססס
ססססס סלססססס ססס ססס ססססס
סססס ססססס וסססס ססס ססססס וססס
ססססס, סססס סססס ססס

[14] When Adam and Eve left Paradise, its gate (וּדְחָה) was shut. The Cherub stood upon it, carrying a fiery sword. [15] Adam and Eve descended upon a bridge of wind onto the mountain of Paradise (סְרֵיטָה וּפְיוֹסֵס). [16] They found a cave on the summit of the mountain and took shelter within it. [17] Adam and Eve were both virgins. When Adam sought to know Eve, his wife, he took from the borders of Paradise (סְפָלָה) gold, myrrh, and frankincense, and he placed them within the cave. He blessed and sanctified it so that it would be a house of prayer (בֵּית תְּפִלָּה) for him and for his children. He called it the cave of treasures (סְרֵיטָה וּפְיוֹסֵס).

The cave of treasures, where Adam first lives after his expulsion, eventually becomes his tomb. Before that, however, it is a “house of prayer,” a term that invokes the Temple (Matt 21:13 and parallels; cf. Isa 56:7). The Holy Mountain, then, is comparable to Mount Moriah in Jewish tradition. Adam does not remain in the cave of treasures, however. His dying request is to be returned to Golgotha, the center of the earth, from which he was created, which is also comparable to the Temple.

PRE 20 (JTS 3847, f. 104b)

וּגְרַשׁ אֶת הָאָדָם נִגְרַשׁ וַיֵּצֵא אָדָם וַיֵּשֶׁב לוֹ חוּץ
לְגַן עֵדֶן בְּהַר הַמּוֹרִיָּה שְׁשַׁעַר גֵּן עֵדֶן סְמוּךְ לַהֵר
הַמּוֹרִיָּה מִשָּׁם לָקְחוּ וּלְשָׁם הִחְזִירוּ מִמֶּקוֹ שֶׁלָּקַח
שָׁנָי לַעֲבֹד אֶת הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר לִקַּח מִשָּׁם

“He drove forth the man” (Gen 3:24). Adam went forth and settled himself outside the Garden of Eden (חוּץ לְגַן עֵדֶן), on Mount Moriah (בְּהַר הַמּוֹרִיָּה), which is the gate of the Garden of Eden (שְׁשַׁעַר גֵּן עֵדֶן), adjacent to Mount Moriah (סְמוּךְ לַהֵר הַמּוֹרִיָּה), as it is written, “To work the land from which he was taken” (Gen 3:23).

Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer has a parallel passage where Adam prepares his final resting place. His stated goal, however, is to keep his tomb separate from the Temple or any other kind of sacred space.

Cav. Tr. 6:11–13 (BL Add. 25875, f. 8b)

[11] אדם נשכב ופיתח את לבו ופיתח את
 מעיו ופיתח את מעיו ופיתח את מעיו, לפי, כחיה
 חיה [12] אדם נשכב ופיתח את לבו ופיתח את
 מעיו ופיתח את מעיו ופיתח את מעיו, לפי, כחיה
 חיה [13] אדם נשכב ופיתח את לבו ופיתח את
 מעיו ופיתח את מעיו ופיתח את מעיו, לפי, כחיה
 חיה

[11] [Adam said:] “Once I die, embalm me with myrrh, cassia, and stacte, and place my body in the cave of treasures. [12] Those from all your descendants who remain in that time when you will leave this place, the environs of Paradise (עֵדֶן, פֶּדֶן), will take my body with them and they carry it out and lay it in the center of the earth (בְּתוֹךְ הָאֲרֶץ) [13] because there redemption will be effected for me and for all of my children.”

PRE 20 (JTS 3847, f. 105b)

ישב אדם דרש בלבו ואמר כי ידעתי מות תשיבוני
 ובית מועד לכל חי עד שאני בעודי אבנה לי
 בית מלון לרבעי וחצב ובנה לו בית מלון לרבעו
 חוץ להר המריה אמ' אדם הלוחות שהן עתידין
 להכתב באצבע עתידין מי הירדן לברוח מפניהם
 גופו שגבלו שתי ידיו ורוח נשמת פיו שנפח באפי
 ע"א כ"ו שלאח' כן יבואו כל הבריו' ויקחו כל
 עצמותי ויעשו אותם ע"ז אלא הרי אני מעמיק
 את ארוני שלמטה לארץ לפ"כ נקראת מערת
 המכפלה שהיא כפולה מערה לפניו מן המערה
 ושם הוא נתון אדם ועזרו אברהם ועזרו יצחק
 ועזרו ויעקב ועזרו לפ"כ נקראת קרית ארבע זוגות
 ועליהם הוא אומ' יבוא שלום ינוחו על משכבותם
 הולך נבחוהו וגומ'

Adam sat down, searched his heart, and said, “I know you will bring me to death, to the house appointed for all the living (Job 30:23). While I am still in this world, I will build for myself a resting place for my repose.” So he carved out and built a resting place for his repose outside Mount Moriah (חוץ להר המריה). Adam said, “The Tablets [of the Law] that are destined to be written by the finger [of God]—in the future the waters of the Jordan will flee before them (Josh 3). How much greater, then, is the body that His two hands fashioned and the spirit of the breath of His mouth that He breathed into my nose! After my death, all of humanity will come, and they will take all my bones and render unto them idolatrous worship, unless I inter my coffin deep under the earth.” Therefore, it is called the Cave of Machpelah (מערת המכפלה), for it is double (כפולה), a cave before another cave. There was placed Adam and his helpmate, Abraham and his helpmate, Isaac and his helpmate, and Jacob and his helpmate. Therefore, it is called the City of the Four Couples (קרית ארבע זוגות). About them it is written, “He who walks uprightly shall achieve peace; they shall rest on their beds,” etc. (Isa 57:2).

The gradations of sacred space from both works can be illustrated with the following chart (Table 10.1).

Table 10.1: Levels of Sacred Space.

<i>Cave of Treasures</i>	<i>Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer</i>
Paradise	Garden of Eden
The Holy Mountain (Temple and tomb)	Mount Moriah (Temple)
Golgotha (Temple and tomb)	Machpelah (tomb)

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer neatly separates the Temple and tomb, but *Cav. Tr.* combines them. The cave of treasures is both a house of prayer and the tomb of Adam, as is Golgotha. It is clearly modeled on Christian shrines where the relics of saints might be kept, as described by Peter Brown.

One only had to enter any shrine which housed a relic of the saints to find oneself in “a fragment of Paradise.” Incessantly lit, at great expense, with oil lamps made fragrant with aromatic substances, the basilicas of the saints [. . .] stood out in a dark, violent, and malodorous world as places where Paradise could be found on earth.⁷⁹

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer 20 is a thinly disguised critique of the cult of relics, as noted by Adiel Kadari, who even compares the narrative directly to *Cav. Tr.*⁸⁰ He then presses even further.

Nonetheless, in the *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* narrative, Adam’s body remains inaccessible, buried far below in the depths of the earth. This inaccessibility reflects monotheistic sensitivity that negates any expression of rites directed to any other than God Himself, which it views as idolatrous. It would seem, therefore, that the story of Adam in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* is not only reflective of confronting Christian traditions and the rite of saints, a dimension which should not be rejected, it should also be viewed as a metonymy for *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*’s attitude to myth and mythology as a whole. Along with its development of the mythical dimension while weaving short mythical motifs into a broad, developed myth, in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* we also see the mitigating and restraining of radical mythical aspects, which it subordinated to a monotheistic metanarrative.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000*, 10th Anniversary Rev. Ed., (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 162.

⁸⁰ Adiel Kadari, “Interreligious Aspects in the Narrative of the Burial of Adam in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*,” in *Religious Stories in Transformation: Conflict, Revision and Reception*, ed. Alberdina Houtman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 82–103 (87).

⁸¹ Kadari, “Interreligious Aspects,” 93–94.

In other words, PRE is not only critiquing the Christian tradition embodied by *Cav. Tr.* It is also constructing its own counter-narrative, one that imitates but contains perceived dangerous elements of the Christian narrative of the biblical past.

The *Cave of Treasures* did not invent Adam's burial at Golgotha. The concept has a long history, going back to Origen's commentary on Matthew.

For some such tradition has reached me that the body of Adam, the first man, was buried there where Christ was crucified so that "just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all are made alive" (1Cor 15:22) so that at that place, "which is called the place of Calvary, that is the place of the head" (Matt 27:33), the head of the human race found resurrection with all people through the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, who suffered there and arose (*Series Commentariorum* §126).⁸²

In the Greek version of this quotation, preserved only in *catenae*, Origen ascribes this tradition to "the Hebrews."⁸³ Unlike the case of Jerome, there is no external support for this claim in Jewish sources. Origen's statement has sometimes been explained as a reference to Jewish-Christians.⁸⁴ A simpler explanation is that the purported Jewish origin is an invention designed to impute authority to a tradition, like the bogus assertion that the *Gospel of Nicodemus* and other apocryphal works were written in Hebrew. A more charitable reading is that Origen is referring to a Jewish belief that Adam was buried in Jerusalem (but not the Temple Mount), which is poorly documented but at least plausible. Julius Africanus, a contemporary and correspondent of Origen, makes this precise claim: "It is said that Adam was the first to be buried in the ground from which he was taken. And his tomb was in the ground of Jerusalem, according to what is reported in a Hebrew tradition."⁸⁵

Origen's tradition had a long literary afterlife before it began manifesting itself in physical spaces. Lipatov-Chicherin outlines the tradition's influence on Basil of Caesarea, Pseudo-Athanasius, Jerome (who is critical), and Epiphanius.⁸⁶ They are all dependent in some way on Origen's initial report. In the seventh century,

⁸² Origen, *The Commentary of Origen on the Gospel of St Matthew*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 2:740.

⁸³ Spurling and Grypeou *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity*, 72.

⁸⁴ For, example, Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 185: "In Jewish tradition the tomb of Adam was placed under the rock upon which the second temple was built. The tradition recorded by Origen should therefore be seen as a Jewish 'temple' tradition transferred to Golgotha, which is now seen as the new temple rock. This tradition is attributed to 'Hebrews' (=Jews) by Origen; they could hardly be other than Jewish believers."

⁸⁵ Julius Africanus, *Chronographiae: The Extant Fragments*, ed. Martin Wallraff, trans. William Adler (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 43, n. 1

⁸⁶ Lipatov-Chicherin, "Early Christian Tradition about Adam's Burial," 162–74.

however, an actual chapel of Adam was built under the site of Golgotha.⁸⁷ Only from this era onward do Christian pilgrims report seeing Adam's grave at Golgotha, such as Epiphanius the Monk in the eighth or ninth century.⁸⁸

Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer is therefore not harking back to an ancient tradition about Adam's burial on the Temple Mount. It is reacting to a contemporary Christian belief that first achieved popularity as an oral tradition and then became a pilgrimage site within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a building that had long since become the Christian counterpart to the Jewish Temple.⁸⁹ Given that such sites could attract Jewish pilgrims as well as Christians,⁹⁰ it was necessary for PRE to delineate the true Temple Mount from the mere tomb of Adam.

10.4 The Sacrifice of Abel

In chapter seven, on PRE and *Jubilees*, I indicated that PRE distinguishes itself from earlier rabbinic literature by portraying Adam and his sons as observing Passover. One can now ask why PRE has decided to emphasize the celebration of Passover in the Antediluvian period in the first place. It is linked to the Christian portrayal of Abel and his role in the Christian liturgy, which is itself linked to Passover.

Rabbinic literature before PRE brings up the issue of Abel and Passover at least once. Victor Aptowitz finds in *Gen. Rab.* 22:4 a clue that Cain and Abel may

⁸⁷ Georg Kretschmar, "Festkalender und Memorialstätten Jerusalems in altkirchlicher Zeit," in *Jerusalem Heiligtumstraditionen in Altkirchlicher und Frühislamischer Zeit*, ed. Heribert Busse and Georg Kretschmar (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987), 29–111 (85–86). See further Ryan, "Golgotha and the Burial of Adam," 22–24.

⁸⁸ Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 117: "And in the middle of the Holy City is the holy Tomb of the Lord, and near the Tomb the place of the Skull. There Christ was crucified. Its height is thirty-two steps. And beneath the Crucifixion there is a church, the Tomb of Adam" (*The Holy City and the Holy Places* I).

⁸⁹ Hugh Nibley, "Christian Envy of the Temple," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 50 (1959): 97–123, 229–49.

⁹⁰ See especially the account of the Piacenza Pilgrim, in Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, 85: "From Bethlehem it is twenty-four miles to the Oak of Mamre, the resting-place of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah and also of Joseph's bones. The basilica has four porticoes and no roof over the central court. Down the middle runs a screen. Christians come in on one side and Jews on the other, and they use much incense. On the day following Christ's Birthday, the people of this area celebrate the Deposition of Jacob and David with much devotion, and Jews from all over the country congregate for this, too great a crowd to count. They offer much incense and lights and give presents to those who minister there" (*Travels from Piacenza* 30).

have celebrated Passover, as they do in PRE.⁹¹ The tradition there, however, is very different.

ויהי מקץ ימים ר' אליעזר ור' יהושע ר' אליעזר א' בתשרי נברא העולם ר' יהושע א' בניסן מאן דאמר בתשרי עשה הבל קיים מן החג ועד חנוכה מאן דאמר בניסן עשה הבל קיים מן הפסח ועד עצרת בין כדברי אילו ובין כדברי אילו הכל מודים שלא עשה הבל בעולם יותר מנ' יום

“And it was the end of days” (Gen 4:3). R. Eliezer and R. Joshua disagreed. R. Eliezer said: The world was created in Tishri. R. Joshua said: In Nisan. The one who says in Tishri maintains that Abel lived from Sukkot until Hanukkah. The one who says in Nisan maintains that Abel lived from Passover until Shavuot. Between the two, they agree that Abel was not in the world more than fifty days (*Gen. Rab.* 22:4).⁹²

In this passage, two rabbis debate whether the year begins in Nisan or Tishri. Both rabbis, citing Gen 4:3, presume that Abel was born in one of these months and died at the “end of days” (מקץ ימים), that is, at the end of the season. R. Eliezer states that Abel lived from Sukkot (in Tishri, at the beginning of fall) until Hanukkah (in Kislev, near the end of fall), while R. Joshua states that Abel was born at Passover (in Nisan, at the beginning of spring) and died at Shavuot (in Sivan, near the end of spring). The feasts mark time. The tradition does not imply that Cain and Abel celebrated Shavuot, much less Hanukkah. Furthermore, it is impossible to link the sacrifice of Cain and Abel with Passover based on this tradition.

Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer, then, is introducing something new into rabbinic literature. In PRE 21, Adam not only instructs his son how to offer the Passover sacrifice. He also offers a prophecy that future generations will offer this sacrifice (without, however, explaining its greater import). In this respect, PRE 21 can be compared to Adam’s final instructions to his sons, which occurs on 14 Nisan, the eve of Passover.

Cav. Tr. 6:14–18 (BL Add. 25875, f. 8b)

[14] ארבעה יום, שבעה יום, שבועה וכתב חתם
 ארבעה יום, שבעה יום, שבועה וכתב חתם
 ארבעה יום, שבעה יום, שבועה וכתב חתם
 ארבעה יום, שבעה יום, שבועה וכתב חתם
 ארבעה יום, שבעה יום, שבועה וכתב חתם
 ארבעה יום, שבעה יום, שבועה וכתב חתם
 ארבעה יום, שבעה יום, שבועה וכתב חתם
 ארבעה יום, שבעה יום, שבועה וכתב חתם
 ארבעה יום, שבעה יום, שבועה וכתב חתם
 ארבעה יום, שבעה יום, שבועה וכתב חתם

PRE 21 (JTS 3847, f. 106a)

הגיע לילי יום הפסח קרא אדם לבניו ואמ' להם
 בני בזה היום עתידין בני ישראל להקריב קרבן
 פסחים לבוראם הקריבו גם אתם לפני בוראכם
 והביא קין מיתר מאכלו קליות וזרע פשתן והביא
 הבל מבכורות צאנו ומחלבהן כבשים שלא נגזזו
 בצמר ונתעבה מנחתו שלקין ונתרצית מנחתו
 שלהבל שנ' וישע יי' אל הבל ואל מנחתו

⁹¹ Victor Aptowitzer, *Kain und Abel in der Agada, den Apokryphen, der hellenistischen, der christlichen, und muhammedanischen Literatur* (Vienna: R. Löwit Verlag, 1922), 28–37.

⁹² Translated from Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabbah*, 1:207.

כְּרִיכְתָא דְּמִיכְלָא דְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא
 עֲנִיבָא בְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא [18] בְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא
 בְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא
 בְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא בְּכִנְיָא

[14] [Adam said:] “And you, my son Seth, shall be the governor of your descendants. Guide them in purity and holiness and in all manner of piety and separate yourselves from the generations of Cain the murderer.” [15] When the word spread that Adam was dying, all the descendants of his son Seth gathered together and came before him: Enosh, Kenan, and Mahalalel, they and their wives and their sons and their daughters. [16] He blessed them and prayed over them. [17] The departure of Adam from this world happened in the nine hundred and thirtieth year according to the reckoning from the creation, on the fourteenth moon, on the sixth of the month of Nisan, at the ninth hour on the day of preparation [Friday]. [18] In the very hour the Son of Man delivered his soul to his Father on the cross, so too did our father Adam deliver his soul to his Maker and left this world.

The intersection of PRE and *Cav. Tr.* is not merely the prophecy of future events on the eve of Passover but the foundation of particular cults that anticipate these events. In both cases, Abel plays a paradigmatic role. In PRE, he offers the model Passover sacrifice. In *Cav. Tr.*, although it is not obvious in the above passage, the religion of Seth and his descendants is centered around the commemoration of Abel’s death at the hands of Cain, a different kind of model sacrifice after the manner of the common Christian interpretation of Abel as a type of Christ.⁹³

Although Adam had already established the cave of treasures as a place of worship (*Cav. Tr.* 5:14, 25–27), his final directives become the basis for the religious practices of the Sethites. They observe two rites: 1) They venerate the *body* of Adam (בְּכִנְיָא דְּאָדָם) in the cave of treasures; and 2) They swear on the innocent *blood* of Abel (בְּכִנְיָא דְּחַיְיָ), an echo of the New Testament (Matt 27:4; cf. Matt 23:35), to avoid contact with the Cainites (*Cav. Tr.* 7:8–13).⁹⁴ The two practices are mentioned

The eve of Passover arrived (הַגִּיעַ לַיְלִי יוֹם הַפֶּסַח). Adam called his sons and said to them: “My sons, on this day in the future the children of Israel will offer the Passover sacrifice to their creator. You too shall offer sacrifice before your creator.” Cain brought the remainder of his meal, roasted grain and seeds of flax. Abel brought the firstborn of his flock and the fat of his sheep who had not yet been sheared of their wool. The offering of Cain was abhorred, but the offering of Abel was accepted, as it is written, “And the LORD looked favorably upon Abel and his sacrifice” (Gen 4:4).

⁹³ John Byron, *Cain and Abel in Text and Tradition: Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the First Sibling Rivalry* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 196–204.

⁹⁴ Serge Ruzer, “The Cave of Treasures on Swearing by Abel’s Blood and Expulsion from Paradise: Two Exceptional Motifs in Context,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001): 251–71 argues that

repeatedly throughout the rest of the Antediluvian history (*Cav. Tr.* 7:18–20; 8:13–15; 9:5–7; 10:6–8; 12:11; 13:3–7). After the Flood, Melchizedek reestablishes the cult of Adam at Golgotha and offers bloodless sacrifices of bread and wine (*Cav. Tr.* 23:21; 28:11–12). The proto-Christian religion's emphasis on body, blood, bread, and wine evokes the Eucharist, a rite which is intimately tied to Passover (cf. *Cav. Tr.* 48:9).⁹⁵

Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer presents an inversion of a specifically Christian typology. In PRE, Adam establishes a proto-Jewish, rather than a proto-Christian, cult on 14 Nisan. In both PRE and *Cav. Tr.*, the cult is based on the sacrifice of Abel. Abel's *offering* establishes the precedent for the future celebration of Passover in PRE. By contrast, Abel's *death* becomes a central part of the proto-Christian religion in *Cav. Tr.* The *Cave of Treasures* does not explicitly connect Abel to Passover, but another Christian text does. The *Life of Abel* (4th–6th c.), a hagiographical Syriac work, is the only text before PRE to date the sacrifice of Cain and Abel to Nisan.

How symbols of our Lord were prefigured in the slain Abel! Abel rejoiced as he went with Cain—just as our Lord Jesus, when he said to the Jews: “I am he whom you seek” (John 18:5.8). The day that Abel died was in Nisan, for it is written that Cain offered up a sheaf, and Abel a lamb: Sheaves and lambs are seen at their best only in Nisan; maybe the day was Friday, too, for it was on a Friday in Nisan that his Lord died. And if the time also agreed, then he would resemble the Lord's Son in all things.⁹⁶

In addition to homilies like this, evocation of Abel's acceptable sacrifice and his proto-martyrdom was a recurring feature in Christian liturgy,⁹⁷ including the Syriac

the oath on the blood of Abel is presented as an alternative to the traditional Christian narrative of redemption. The argument is not convincing for two reasons. First, the oath has no connection to salvation in the sense of life after death. It is designed to maintain the sanctity of the community while preserving the memory of Abel. Second, Abel is an overt “type of Christ” in the Christian tradition, beginning with the New Testament (cf. Heb 12:24). The religion of the Sethites is not a divergence from Christianity but a convergence. He pursues this interpretation in Serge Ruzer and Aryeh Kofsky, *Syriac Idiosyncrasies: Theology and Hermeneutics in Early Syriac Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 87–120 (“Chapter Four: The *Cave of Treasures*: Calvary versus Earthly Paradise”), where he and his co-author add that Golgotha is intended as a place of exile and a poor man's imitation of the cave of treasures. I find this reading completely contrary to the message of *Cav. Tr.* 95 In the discussion of the Passion, the author of *Cav. Tr.* is insistent that the Passover is one of those gifts (along with kingship, priesthood, and prophecy) which had been taken away from the Jews (*Cav. Tr.* 50:18–19; 52:17–18; cf. *Cav. Tr.* 43:8–9). Since Jews do, in fact, continue to celebrate Passover, perhaps the author has in mind the Eucharistic practices of his proto-Christian cult.

96 Translation of Sebastian P. Brock, “A Syriac Life of Abel,” *Le Muséon* 87 (1974): 467–92 (473–74).

97 John Hennig, “Abel's Place in the Liturgy,” *Theological Studies* 7 (1946): 126–41.

liturgy,⁹⁸ where, again, it is linked to Passover via the celebration of the Eucharist. *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* therefore appropriates ideas which had only appeared before in Christian literature.⁹⁹

10.5 The Twin Sisters

The idea that the children of Adam married their sisters is ancient, at least as old as *Jubilees*. In *Jubilees*, sexual jealousy plays no role in the death of Abel; he dies before he can marry. In rabbinic tradition, however, Cain's murderous rage against Abel is not merely motivated by the episode of the sacrifice but by a woman. *Genesis Rabbah* 22:7 knows this tradition.

ויאמר קין אל הבל אחיו וגו' על מה היו הדינין אמורים [...] יהודה בר' אמר על חוה הראשונה היו הדינין אמר ר' איבו חוה ראשונה חזרה לעפרה ועל מה היו הדינין אמר ר' הונא תאומה יתירה נולדה עם הבל זה א' אני נוטלה וזה אומר אני נוטלה זה א' אני נוטלה שאני בכור וזה א' אני נוטלה שנולדה עימי ויקם קין וגו'

"Then Cain said to his brother," etc. (Gen 4:8). What were they disputing about? [. . .] Judah b. Rabbi said: They were quarreling about the First Eve. R. Aibu said: The First Eve had returned to dust. Then what were they quarreling about? R. Huna said: An extra twin sister was born with Abel. This one said: "I will take her," and this one said, "I will take her." This one said, "I will take her because I am the firstborn!" This one said, "I will take her because she was born with me!" "Then Cain rose up," etc. (Gen 4:8) (*Gen. Rab.* 22:7).¹⁰⁰

In this account, the brothers have already married two of these sisters. They quarrel over the third, "unclaimed" sister. This motif ties into the greater theme of the section, Cain and Abel's attempt to divide the world between themselves. In *Genesis Rabbah*, Cain and Abel have an equal claim to the third woman. In PRE, however, Cain is jealous of Abel and wishes to take something that is not rightfully his—his brother's wife.

In this regard, the story of the twin sisters of Cain and Abel in PRE is closer to the version found in *Cav. Tr.* than the earlier narrative about twin sisters from *Genesis Rabbah*.

⁹⁸ Sebastian P. Brock, "Fire from Heaven: From Abel's Sacrifice to the Eucharist: A Theme in Syriac Christianity," *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993): 229–43.

⁹⁹ *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Gen 4:3, in turn, follows PRE by presenting Cain and Abel as offering a Passover sacrifice (see chapter four).

¹⁰⁰ Translated from Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabbah*, 1:213–14.

Cav. Tr. 5:18–27 (BL Add. 25875, f. 8a)

[18] מניבד רוגג סנאס כן קאלא סו מנאס
לעסלסס, לללל סללל ענג רוגג לללל
רנללל [19] סכללל סללל לללל סללללל
לללל לללל [20] סללל כללל סללל לללל
לללללל לללל לללל [21] סו זכ ללל
ללל רוגג לללל לללל לללל לללללל, ס
לללללל לללל לללל לללל לללללל
לללל, [22] סללל לללל לללל לללל
לללל לללל לללל לללל לללל, לללל
לללל לללל לללל לללל לללל לללל [23]
סו ענג רוגג לללל לללל לללל לללל
לללל [24] לללל לללל לללל לללל
לללל לללל לללל לללל [25] לללל לללל
לללל, לללל, לללל לללל לללל לללל
לללל לללל לללל לללל לללל לללל
לללל לללל לללל לללל לללל לללל
לללל [26] לללל לללל לללל לללל
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[18] Adam and Eve descended from the Holy Mountain to its foothills below. There Adam knew Eve, his wife. [19] She conceived and bore Cain and his sister Lebuda with him. [20] Again she conceived and bore Abel and his sister Qalimat with him. [21] When the children grew up, Adam said to Eve, “Cain should take Qalimat, she who was born with Abel. Abel should take Lebuda, she who was born with Cain.” [22] Cain said to Eve, his mother, “I shall take my sister, and Abel shall take his sister” because Lebuda was beautiful. [23] When Adam heard these words, he became very angry at him and said, [24] “It is a transgression of the commandment that you marry your sister who was born with you. [25] But the two of you shall take the fruits of the trees and the offspring of the flock. Go to the summit of this Holy Mountain and enter the cave of treasures. Sacrifice there your offerings and pray before God. [26] Then you shall be united with your wives.” [27] It happened that when Adam, the first priest, was ascending

PRE 21 (JTS 3847, ff. 105b and 106a)

[105b] ר' מיאשא אומ' נולד קין ותאומתו אשתו
עמו ונולד הבל ותאומתו אשתו עמו

[106a] ר' צדוק אומ' נכנסה שנאה גדולה בלבו
שלקין על הבל אחיו על שנתרצאת מנחתו ולא
עוד אלא שהיתה תאומתו שלהבל יפה בנשים
וחמד אותה בלבו ואמ' אהרוג את הבל אחי ואקח
את תאומתו ממנו שנ' ויהי בהיותם בשדה ויקם
קין אין שדה אלא זאת האשה שנמשלה בשדה

[105b] R. Miyasha said: Cain was born and his twin sister, his wife, with him. Abel was born and his twin sister, his wife, with him. . .

[106a] R. Zadok said: A great hatred entered the heart of Cain for Abel, his brother, regarding his offering which was accepted. Not only this but the twin sister of Abel was the most beautiful of women, and he desired her in his heart. He said, “I shall kill Abel, my brother, and take his twin sister from him,” as it is written, “While they were in the field, Cain rose up” (Gen 4:8). This is not a field but a woman who is being compared to a field.

the mountain summit with Cain and Abel, his sons, Satan entered into Cain (cf. John 13:27), in order that he might kill Abel, his brother, on account of Lebuda, and also because his sacrifice was rejected and not accepted before God, while the sacrifice of Abel was accepted.

Both passages link the story of the twin sisters with the story of the sacrifice. They also speak of the possession of Cain, when evil (abstract in PRE; personified in *Cav. Tr.*) enters his heart.¹⁰¹ As noted in the previous chapter, the story of the sisters is one of the most frequently recurring motifs from *Cav. Tr.* in Syriac and Arabic literature. It is unsurprising to also find it in PRE, although it is surprising (and also frustrating) that PRE does not name the sisters, which would help identify the origin of its tradition.

The development of the twin sisters tradition from a fraternal spat to Abel as an innocent victim did not develop along religious boundaries but across temporal and geographical ones. Epiphanius of Salamis, writing in the fourth century, knew a story about the sisters like the one in *Genesis Rabbah* (emphasis mine).

People of their sort tell yet another myth, that the devil came to Eve, lay with her as a man with a woman, and sired Cain and Abel by her. That was why the one attacked the other—from their jealousy of each other and not, as the truth is, because Abel had somehow pleased God. Instead they concoct another story and say, “*Because they were both in love with their own sister, Cain attacked Abel and killed him for this reason.*” For as I mentioned they say that they were actually of the devil’s seed (*Panarion* 40.5.3–4).¹⁰²

The germane section here is not the demonic parentage of Cain and Abel but their motive for fighting: a scarcity of resources—in this case, a woman. Abel, who bears the title “righteous” in Christian literature (derived from Matt 23:35), does not appear in the best light in this tradition. On the contrary, in Epiphanius’ version, he is a child of the devil.

The *Testament of Adam*, which existed by the fifth century, is the earliest known source to name one of the twins commonly found in Syriac and Arabic literature. Adam’s prophecy mentions Abel’s former wife, taken by Cain.

[Adam said]: “You have heard, my son Seth, that a Flood is coming and will wash the whole earth because of the daughters of Cain, your brother, who killed your brother Abel out of

¹⁰¹ The same dichotomy can be observed in the discussion of the sexual perversions of the Cainites (see below, section 10.6). In PRE 22, the daughters of Cain are under the sway of the Evil Inclination. In *Cav. Tr.* 11–12, the daughters of Cain are possessed by demons, and Satan rules over them.

¹⁰² Epiphanius of Salamis, *The Panarion: Book One*, 287.

passion for your sister Lebuda, since sins had been created through your mother, Eve. And after the Flood there will be six thousand years (left) to the form of the world, and then its end will come" (*T. Adam* 3:5).¹⁰³

The incomplete nature of the reference suggests that it was a well-known narrative, at least in the East, before it became integrated into *Cav. Tr.* and, from there, all dependent works, of which the most significant is the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, which brought the names of the sisters to the West. In all renditions with the story that uses these names (or variants) for the sisters, Cain is manifestly in the wrong, and Abel is a Christlike protomartyr.

10.6 The Cainites and the Sethites

As noted in chapter seven, PRE 22 understands Gen 6:1–4 literally, where the “sons of God” are divine beings. However, PRE introduces another tradition which comes from the euhemeristic reading of Gen 6. *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* 22 divides the Antediluvian world into the righteous children of Seth and the wicked children of Cain. The distinction between the Cainites and Sethites is not rabbinic. Julius Africanus (d. 240), in his chronicle, is credited with first proposing that the “sons of God” of Genesis were the “sons of Seth” rather than angels.¹⁰⁴ The tradition is widespread in late antique Christian literature, and it has a prominent place in *Cav. Tr.*

Rabbinic tradition also had a euhemeristic understanding of the Fallen Angels, but it differs substantially from the one proposed by Julius Africanus.

ויראו בני האלהים וגו' ר' שמעון בן יוחי קרי להון בני דייניא ר' שמעון בן יוחי מקלל לכל מן דקרי להון בני אלהיא [...] כי טובות הנה אמר יודן טבת כת' משהיו מטיבים אתה לבעלה היה גדול נכנס ובוועלה תחילה הה"ד כי טבת הנה אילו הבתולות ויקחו להם נשים אילו נשואות מכל אשר בחרו זה זכור ובהמה ר' הונא בשם ר' יוסף דור המבול לא נמחו מן העולם עד שכתבו נמומסיות לזכור ולבהמה

“The Sons of God saw,” etc. (Gen 6:2). R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Call them sons of judges. R. Simeon b. Yohai also said: A curse on anyone who calls them sons of the gods! [. . .] “Because they were beautiful” (Gen 6:2). R. Yudan said: “She is beautiful” is written. When they were beautifying a woman for her husband, a noble would enter and sleep with her first, as it is written, “because they were beautiful,” meaning virgins, “and they took for themselves wives,” meaning married women, “from whomever they chose,” meaning

¹⁰³ Stephen E. Robinson, “Testament of Adam: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983–1985), 1:989–95 (994).

¹⁰⁴ Julius Africanus, *Chronographiae*, 48–51.

other men and beasts. R. Huna in the name of R. Joseph: The generation of the Flood was not wiped off the face of the earth until they wrote marriage contracts for men and beasts (*Gen. Rab.* 26:5).¹⁰⁵

In the Christian tradition established by Africanus, the men (“sons of Seth”) are initially virtuous, but they become ensnared by the wiles of the wicked Cainite women. In *Genesis Rabbah*, it is rather the men who are wicked and the women who are their victims.

Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer 22’s distinction between the children of Seth and the children of Cain is a break from rabbinic tradition and resembles the Christian one, as found in works like the *Cave of Treasures*.

Cav. Tr. 7:1–4 (BL Add. 25875, f. 9a)

[1] ויהי אדם שלשים (שנים) ומאת שנה מכאן אתה
למד שלא היה קין לא מזרעו ולא מדמות ולא
כצלמו שלאדם עד שנולד שת והוא היה מזרעו
ומדמותו וכצלמו שלאדם אביו שנ' בדמותו
כצלמו ר' שמעון אומ' משת עלו ונתיחסו כל
דורות שלצדיקים ומקין עלו ונתיחסו כל דורות
שלרשעים ופושעים ומורדים שמרדו ביוצרך
שאמרו אין אנו צריכין לנטפי גשמיד ולא לדעת
דרכיך שנ' ויאמר לאל סור ממנו

[1] Seth became the leader of his people and led them in purity and in holiness. [2] Because of their purity, they received this name which is above all other names, so that they would be called “Sons of God,” they and their wives and their children. [3] Thus they remained on the mountain in all purity and holiness and fear of God. [4] They ascended in place of the rank of demons who fell from heaven, and they were continually praising and worshiping on the foothills of Paradise.

PRE 22 (JTS 3847, f. 106b)

“Adam lived a hundred and thirty years,” etc. (Gen 5:3). From here, you learn that Cain was not of the descendance or the likeness or the image of Adam. When Seth was born, he was of the descendance and the likeness and the image of Adam. R. Simeon said: From Seth arose and were descended all the generations of the righteous, but from Cain arose and were descended all the generations of the wicked and criminals and rebels, who rebelled against their Creator when they said, “We have no need of the drops of your rain or the knowledge of your ways!” As it is written, “They said to God, ‘Depart from us!’” (Job 21:14).

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A more specific parallel between PRE and *Cav. Tr.* can be found in the description of the exhibitionism of the daughters of Cain.

¹⁰⁵ Translated from Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabbah*, 1:247–48.

significant role in the story. The children of Seth remain unsullied by any contact with the Cainite women, yet they die in the Flood anyway.

This is not an innovation or a mistake on the part of PRE. Although *Cav. Tr.* 15 rails against the Watcher tradition, other Syriac writers harmonized the Second Temple and later Christian traditions without seeming perturbed by their content or the contradictions created by their harmonization. Such is the case with a *scholion* of Jacob of Edessa (emphasis mine).

From the tenth *scholion*, when he [Jacob of Edessa] comments about *those giants regarding whom it is written that they were born before the flood to the daughters of Cain*. Some tales about them are recorded and recounted which are fuller than those belonging to the Hebrews. (These relate) that since God wished to destroy them and their wickedness even prior to the total wrath (expressed) by means of the flood, he allowed them to perish through the evil machinations of their (own) minds: They fell upon each other as if waging war, exercising neither reason nor sense [. . .] Thus the destruction of those arrogant and insolent giants—the evil offspring of those who violated their covenant, being those who were *illicitly born from the daughters of Cain*—transgressed in such a manner that many stadia of the earth were rendered putrid by their blood and by the foul discharge from their (rotting) carcasses. Large and mighty heaps of their bones were compiled from the corpses. These things are in accordance with what the tale has said. It happened that the visible signs of this destruction remained evident until the flood (emphasis mine).¹⁰⁶

Apparently, in the thought of Jacob of Edessa, only the Cainite women bore giants. The Sethites did not have this problem (unless they, and not the Watchers, are the fathers of the giants—the *scholion* does not say).

Jacob of Edessa was not alone in this analysis. Michael the Syrian has conserved a passage from Annianus of Alexandria that makes the same exegetical leap of combining the two traditions, though not exactly coherently (emphasis mine).

In that year [the 40th of Iared] the Benai Elohim came down from the mountain Hermon, being in number two hundred. For, seeing that they had not returned to paradise, they were discouraged and so abandoned their angelic way of life, and they were smitten (with a desire for marriage). And they set up a king for themselves, whose name was Semiazos. Concerning these Annianos relates that they came down from the mountain Hermon to their brethren, the children of Seth and Enosh, but these were unwilling to give them any wives, on the grounds that they had transgressed (their) promise. *And so they went to the children of Cain and took wives; and they gave birth to great giants*, that is, plunderers, mighty and renowned assassins, and audacious bandits.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Quoted from John C. Reeves, “Jacob of Edessa and the Manichaean *Book of Giants*?,” in *Ancient Tales of Giants from Qumran and Turfan: Contexts, Traditions, and Influences*, ed. Matthew J. Goff, Loren T. Stuckenbruck, and Enrico Morano (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 199–211 (201).

¹⁰⁷ Quoted from Sebastian P. Brock, “A Fragment of Enoch in Syriac,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968): 626–31 (627), citing Book I, chapter 3 of Michael’s chronicle (discussed in chapter six).

Annianus lived in the fifth century and wrote in Greek, but Michael wrote in Syriac in the eleventh century. He and Jacob are apparently referring to the same tradition, though probably from different sources. The conflated tradition had a certain longevity beyond when one might expect to find such a tradition acceptable. In addition to *Cav. Tr.*, these two Syriac examples serve as potential model for PRE or, at least, demonstrate that traditions about the fallen angels and the Cainites/Sethites were well-known and sometimes harmonized.

10.7 Adam in the Ark

Although *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* does not recount the translation of Adam's body aboard Noah's Ark and its subsequent reburial—the core narrative of *Cav. Tr.*—it does know an obscure motif from the story of the Flood which is primarily found in works dependent on *Cav. Tr.* Genesis mentions three decks of Noah's Ark without further specification (Gen 6:16). Both rabbinic literature and Christian authors proposed different plans for the arrangement of the decks. Helen Spurling and Emmanouela Grypeou have shown that PRE differs from the schemes proposed in *Gen. Rab.* 31:11 and the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Sanhedrin* 108b).¹⁰⁸ *Genesis Rabbah* divides the three decks into 1) waste, 2) clean animals and humans, and 3) unclean animals, while the Talmud proposes 1) waste, 2) animals, and 3) people.

The plan of the Ark in PRE follows neither *Genesis Rabbah* nor the Talmud. Its division of the Ark is identical to the one found in *Cav. Tr.*

***Cav. Tr.* 18:1–6 (BL Add. 25875, f. 17a)**

[illegible]

PRE 23 (JTS 3847, f. 107b)

ומדור כל בהמה וחיה ביציע התחתונה ומדור כל העופות במעלה שניה ומדור כל שקצים ורמשים במעלה שניה ובני אדם במעלה שלישית מכן אתה למד ששלוש מאות וששים וששה מיני בהמה וחיה בארץ וג' מאות וס' וש' מיני עופות בארץ וג' מאות וס' וששה מיני שקצים ורמשים בארץ הרי אלו ביציע התחתונה וכן במעלה שניה ובמעלה שלישית שנ' תחתיים שניים ושלישים תעשה

108 Spurling and Grypeou, “Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and Eastern Christian Exegesis,” 238–42.

כף כל מהלך נקל כלל חכמה
 והכלל כלל חכמה [6] והכלל
 חכמה כלל חכמה חכמה חכמה

[1] Noah's entrance into the Ark was on a Friday in the blessed month of Iyyar [2] on the seventeenth, on the day of preparation. In the morning, animals and cattle entered the into the lower deck. At noon, birds and all manner of reptiles entered into the middle deck. At dusk, Noah and his sons entered the eastern side of the Ark, while his wife and the wives of his sons entered the western side of the Ark. [3] The body of Adam was placed in the middle of the Ark so that all the mysteries of the Church would be depicted in it. [4] Thus, in a church, women are in the west, and men are in the east, so that the men cannot see the faces of the women, and the women cannot see the faces of the men. [5] Thus even in the Ark, the women were in the western side, and the men were in the eastern side. [6] Just as the *bema* [lectern] is in the middle, the body of Adam our father was placed [in the middle].

The dwelling of all the cattle and the other animals was in the lower gallery. The dwelling of all the birds was on the second level. The dwelling of all detestable (שקצים) and creeping things was in the second level, and human beings were on the third level. From here, you learn that 366 types of cattle and other animals were in the land, and 366 types of birds were in the land, and 366 types of detestable and creeping things were in the land. Thus, these were in the lower gallery and also on the second level and also on the third level, as it is written, "You shall make a lower, a second, and a third floor" (Gen 6:16).

In fact, PRE and *Cav. Tr.* have another commonality here that was not pointed out by Spurling and Grypeou. This manuscript of PRE has added "detestable" (שקצים) and "creeping" (רמשים) things to the middle deck, cognate to the reptiles in *Cav. Tr.* 18:2. In almost all other manuscripts of PRE, they (and, sometimes, just the שקצים) are found on the topmost level, with human beings! This is likely the original reading, as evidenced by the schematic division of 366 types of cattle/birds/detestable things right after. Is it possible the scribe of JTS 3847 altered the tradition to conform to the one from *Cav. Tr.*? Or does JTS 3847 preserve the original reading, and all other manuscripts have altered it? Or is there some other explanation?

A major difference between the two accounts is *Cav. Tr.*'s placement of Adam's body in the Ark, dividing the women from the men and turning the Ark into an image of a Syriac church. In fact, I would argue that PRE has replaced Adam's body and its liturgical function with the שקצים, which is not merely a designation for hateful living things but also a term for idols.¹⁰⁹ This is another possible polemic

¹⁰⁹ See Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 157–58, who discusses this term in relation to the pectoral cross worn by Haman in PRE 50.

against the cult of saints. If so, it is a particularly clever polemic. The most famous biblical abomination is the “abomination of desolation” (שִׁקּוּץ מְשׁוּמָה) from the book of Daniel (Dan 11:31, 12:11; cf. Matt 24:15), which signifies the defilement of the Temple. The *Cave of Treasures* associates Adam’s body with sanctuaries, whether in the cave of treasures, within the Ark, or on Golgotha. The single word שקק could be an oblique reference to the cult of Adam in *Cav. Tr.* and, by extension, relics or even the Eucharist. The body of Adam is an abomination—a source of corpse impurity *and* an idol—which *Cav. Tr.* claims to be an object of adoration on its version of the Temple Mount.

Jews (and Muslims) considered veneration of the dead to be a particularly abhorrent aspect of Christianity. The Judeo-Arabic *Polemic of Nestor the Priest*, written about a century after PRE, provides a stark example.

You put your dead in your churches, then you anoint the dead bones and claim to cleanse them by so doing [. . .] You believe that such deeds will get you closer to Paradise, but upon my life! You are falling further away from Paradise, and it is Hell that you will enter, you and all your people! Shame on you, in this world and in the next! How, with such a law and such a creed, can you hold your heads high among the nations? Your obvious purpose is to exhibit your hatred of the Jews, so as to abolish the law of Moses, peace be on him.¹¹⁰

Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer could be providing a polemic along the same lines, although in a much subtler key.

If this explanation does not convince, the similar design of the Ark remains a compelling parallel between PRE and *Cav. Tr.* As Spurling and Grypeou have indicated, this tripartite division ultimately derives from Ephrem the Syrian’s *Hymns on Paradise*, one of the sources of *Cav. Tr.*¹¹¹ The same tradition is transmitted in works based on *Cav. Tr.*, such as the Arabic *Catena* to Genesis.¹¹² However, other Syriac writers, including Theodore bar Koni and Isho’dad of Merv (both East Syrian), proposed completely different divisions for the three decks of the Ark, where reptiles are in the bottom compartment, wild animals in the middle, and humans, tame animals, and birds at the top.¹¹³ This isolates *Cav. Tr.* and dependent sources as a specific stream within Syriac tradition—and *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* within that tradition.

¹¹⁰ Translation of Lasker and Stroumsa, *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest*, 1:77.

¹¹¹ Spurling and Grypeou, “Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer and Eastern Christian Exegesis,” 242.

¹¹² Spurling and Grypeou, “Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer and Eastern Christian Exegesis,” 241. This work was discussed in the previous chapter.

¹¹³ Spurling and Grypeou, “Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer and Eastern Christian Exegesis,” 242.

10.8 Abraham and Melchizedek

Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer places an emphasis on Melchizedek not found in other rabbinic writings. In PRE 8, the author identifies Shem with Melchizedek, as commonly found in rabbinic literature. This identification is reinforced in PRE 27, which claims that Abraham met with Shem, rather than Melchizedek, following the war of the kings (cf. Gen 14:18–20). *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* 29 adds a new episode, not found in older rabbinic literature, where Shem/Melchizedek circumcises Abraham on Yom Kippur. This narrative is both unusual and an unambiguously positive portrayal of the priest-king, whose reception in rabbinic literature is often more reserved.

An example of rabbinic ambivalence towards Melchizedek appears in *Gen. Rab.* 44:7, which addresses the priest-king's encounter with Abraham in Gen 14:18–20. Interestingly, *Genesis Rabbah* presumes the identification of Shem with Melchizedek (see also *Gen. Rab.* 56:10). At no point does *Genesis Rabbah* attempt to explain or justify this identification.

אל תירא אברם ממי נתיירא ר' ברכיה אמר משם נתיירא הה"ד ראו איים וייראו מה איים הללו מסויימים בים כך היו אברהם ושם מסוומים בעולם וייראו זה נתיירא מזה וזה נתיירא מזה תאמר שיש בלבו עלי נתיירא מזה תאמר שיש בלבו עלי שהעמדת רשעים קצות הארץ זה שרוי בקיצו שלעולם וזה שרוי בקיצו שלעולם קרבו ויאתיון זה קרב אצל זה וזה קרב אצל זה איש את רעהו יעזרו זה עוזר את זה וזה עוזר את זה וזה עוזר את זה בברכות ויברכהו ויאמר ברוך אברם וגו' וזה עוזר את זה במתנות ויתן לו מעשר מכל ויחזק חרש זה שם שעשה את התיבה את צורף זה אברהם שצרפו הקב"ה בכבשן האש מחליק פטיש את הלם פעם שהחליק פטישו והלם כל באי העולם בפעם אחת ואומר לדבק טוב הוא אילו אומות העולם שאומרים מוטב לידבק באלוהו שלאברהם ולא בעבודה זרה שלנמרוד ויחזקהו במסמרים חזק אברהם את שם במצוות ובמעשים טובים לא ימוט אברהם

“Do not be afraid, Abram” (Gen 15:1). Of whom was he afraid? R. Berakiah said: He was afraid of Shem. As it is written, “The islands see and are afraid” (Isa 41:5). Just as these islands stand out in the sea, so Abraham and Shem stand out in the world. “And are afraid.” They were afraid of each other. Abraham was afraid of Shem, thinking, “He must harbor resentment against me because I killed his descendants.” Shem was afraid of Abraham, thinking, “He must harbor resentment against me because I brought up wicked descendants.” “The ends of the earth” (Isa 41:5). Each one was situated at the end of the earth. “They drew near and came together” (Isa 41:5). They drew near to each other. “A man and his neighbor will help each other” (Isa 41:6). They helped each other. Shem helped Abraham with blessings: “And he blessed him and said, ‘Blessed are you, Abram,’” etc. (Gen 14:19). Abraham helped Shem with gifts: “And he gave him a tenth of everything.” (Gen 14:20). “The craftsman”—this is Shem, who built the Ark—“strengthens the refiner” (Isa 41:7)—this Abraham, whom the Holy One, Blessed be He, refined in the fiery furnace. “The one who smooths with a hammer encourages the one who smites the anvil” (Isa 41:7), for his hammer smoothed and beat into one path all who come into the world, saying “Joining is good” (Isa 41:7). These are the nations of the world, who say, “It is good to be joined to the God of Abraham and not to the idolatry of Nimrod.” “And he strengthened it with nails” (Isa 41:7).

Abraham strengthened Shem in the commandments and in good deeds, and Abraham did not waver (Isa 41:7). (*Gen. Rab.* 44:7).¹¹⁴

This passage presents Melchizedek (or, rather, Shem) as aligned with the kings Abraham had just defeated to rescue his nephew Lot and other captives (Gen 14). They approach each other apprehensively, like Jacob and Esau later in Genesis (Gen 33), and the exchange of blessings and gifts is recast as a sort of peace treaty. In addition to this, Abraham appears to use the opportunity to draw people to his religion and away from the idolatry of Nimrod (cf. *Gen. Rab.* 38:13). The contrast between Abraham's God and idolatry is drawn out in the verses from Isaiah which *Genesis Rabbah* is interpreting throughout this passage (Abraham is mentioned in the very next verse, Isa 41:8). Shem/Melchizedek, who is consistently portrayed in the Midrash as a just man (cf. *Gen. Rab.* 56:10), also seems to benefit from this religious instruction. If he was good before, he is better now because of Abraham.

Shem/Melchizedek's subservience to Abraham is also found in *Leviticus Rabbah* (25:6) and eventually (and most famously) in the Babylonian Talmud—but with a twist. Shem is not only below Abraham, but he has committed a grievous fault by blessing Abraham before blessing God, an error that costs him the priesthood.

אמר רבי זכריה משום רבי ישמעאל ביקש הקב"ה להוציא כהונה משם שנאמר והוא כהן לאל עליון כיון שהקדים ברכת אברהם לברכת המקום הוציאה מאברהם שנאמר ויברכהו ויאמר ברוך אברם לאל עליון קונה שמים וארץ וברוך אל עליון אמר לו אברהם וכי מקדימין ברכת עבד לברכת קונו מיד נתנה לאברהם שנאמר נאם ה' לאדני שב לימיני עד אשית אויביך הדום לרגליך ובתריה כתיב נשבע ה' ולא ינחם אתה כהן לעולם על דברתי מלכי צדק על דיבורו של מלכי צדק והיינו דכתיב והוא כהן לאל עליון הוא כהן ואין זרעו כהן

R. Zechariah said in the name of R. Ishmael: The Holy One, Blessed be He, sought to bring forth the priesthood from Shem, as it is written, "He is the priest of God Most High" (Gen 14:18). When he [Shem] placed the blessing of Abraham before the blessing of God (המקום),¹¹⁵ He brought forth the priesthood from Abraham instead. It is written, "He blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram before God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth. And blessed is God Most High'" (Gen 14:19–20). Abraham said to him, "Who are they that place the blessing of the servant before the blessing of his master?" Immediately, God gave the priesthood to Abraham, as it is written, "The LORD said to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I set your enemies as a footstool for your feet'" (Ps 110:1). After this, it is written, "The LORD has sworn, and he will not renounce: You are a priest forever according to the order (דברתי) of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4). That is, because of the speech (דיבור) of Melchizedek. Thus, it is written, "He was priest of God Most High" (Gen 14:18). He was a priest, but his children were not priests (*b. Nedarim* 32b; cf. *Lev. Rab.* 25:6).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Translated from Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabbah*, 1:429–30.

¹¹⁵ Literally "the place." This is an epithet for God derived from Esth 4:14: "Deliverance will come to the Jews from another place."

¹¹⁶ My translation from the Vilna Shas.

In PRE 29, however, the ambivalence surrounding Shem/Melchizedek has vanished. The portrayal of Melchizedek is wholly positive, and he plays a new role as Abraham's *mohel*, a role not mandated by Scripture or Tradition. In this new capacity, he resembles the Melchizedek of *Cav. Tr.*, a Christian priest *avant la lettre* who initiates Abraham into the “holy mysteries” (קדושה סודית).

[illegible]

רבן גמליאל אומ' שלח אברהם אבינו וקרא לשם בן נוח ומל בשר ערלתו שלאבינו אברהם ואת ערלת ישמעאל בנו שנ' בעצם היום הזה נמול אברהם וישמעאל בנו מה הוא בעצם היום הזה בגבורת השמש ובחצי היום ולא עוד אלא בעשור לחדש וביום הכפורים ביום הכפורים כת' כל מלאכה לא תעשו בעצם היום הזה ובאברהם כת' בעצם היום הזה הוי אומ' ביום הכפורים נמול אברהם ר' תחנא אומ' ובכל שנה ושנה הק' ב'ה' רואה דס ברתו שלאבינו אברהם ומכפר על עונותיהן של ישראל שנ' כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם וג'

Rabban Gamaliel said: Abraham our father sent and called for Shem the son of Noah. He circumcised the flesh of the foreskin of our father Abraham and the foreskin of Ishmael his son, as it is written, “On the very day (בַּעֲצֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה) Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised” (Gen 17:26). What does “On the very day” mean? During the strength of the sun, in the middle of the day. Not only this but in the tenth month on the Day of Atonement (יּוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים). About the Day of Atonement, it is written, “You shall not do any work on that very day” (בַּעֲצֵם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה) (Lev 23:28). About Abraham, it is written, “On that very

[12] then God spoke with Abraham and said to him, [13] “Your reward is very great because Melchizedek blessed you and shared with you the bread and the wine. I myself will also bless you and greatly increase your posterity.”

day” (Gen 17:23.26). Therefore, he says Abraham was circumcised on the Day of Atonement. R. Tachanah said: Every year the Holy One, Blessed be He, sees the blood of his covenant (דם בריתו) of our father Abraham and pardons the transgressions of Israel, as it is written, “On that day he will pardon you,” etc. (Lev 16:30).

The tradition in PRE stands out for a few reasons. First, it is gratuitous. There is no reason why Shem/Melchizedek should circumcise Abraham. Circumcision is not a priestly prerogative. *Genesis Rabbah*, for example, presumes that Abraham circumcised himself (e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 46:5). Second, circumcision is more frequently associated with Passover than the Day of Atonement. The two are already linked in the Torah: One must be circumcised to eat the Passover meal (cf. Exod 12:43–44). Even more astounding, the prooftext PRE uses to link circumcision to the Day of Atonement, the not especially common phrase “on that very day” (בעצם היום הזה), appears no fewer than three times in the chapter outlining the instructions for the first Passover (Exod 12:17.41.51). While the same phrase appears four times in the prescriptions for the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:21.28.29.30), the exact same argument PRE uses to justify Abraham’s circumcision on Yom Kippur could be made to say that Abraham was circumcised on Passover.

Depicting Shem/Melchizedek as a priest on the Day of Atonement invites immediate comparison to the presentation of Melchizedek in Hebrews who prefigures Christ as a new high priest offering a new sacrifice of atonement. Furthermore, Melchizedek serves as a model for Christian priesthood, especially since his offering of bread and wine (Gen 14:18) was widely interpreted as a prefiguration of the Eucharist. According to Spurling and Grypeou, the first Christian author to make this argument is Clement of Alexandria (d. 215), who simply calls the consecrated food a “type of the Eucharist” (*Stromata* IV.25).¹¹⁷ Similar sentiments are echoed throughout patristic literature in the works of Eusebius, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Jerome, Cyril of Alexandria, and John of Damascus. By means of this typology, the Christian Melchizedek was linked not only to the Day of Atonement but also to Passover, when the rite of the Eucharist was instituted.

The *Cave of Treasures* goes far beyond typological arguments. Melchizedek is not merely a figure of Christian priesthood, he is a literal Christian priest who gives Abraham the Eucharist, effectively making him a Christian as well. This is part of *Cav. Tr.*’s overall argument that the original religion of humanity was a kind of proto-Christianity, which first manifests itself as the Antediluvian cult centered around the veneration of the body of Adam and the blood of Abel. Melchizedek

117 Spurling and Grypeou, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity*, 225.

[illegible]

Marcel Simon, in an article on the Christian portrait of Melchizedek, draws attention to the way that works like *Cav. Tr.* and the Pseudo-Athanasian *Story of Melchizedek*¹¹⁸ radically alter patristic exegesis by interpreting Christian typologies as historical realities.

To consider Pseudo-Athanasius and the *Cave of Treasures* more closely, we recognize here a completely new, and very curious, aspect of Christian exegesis of the Old Testament. Until now—and patristic tradition will remain largely faithful to this method—Christians conceived the relationship between the Old and New Testaments as a parallelism. The Hebrew Bible was interpreted in light of the Gospel as its prefiguration; they recognized in each of its episodes and its institutions a symbolic and provisional sketch of Christian fulfillments: Baptism was prefigured by circumcision; the Paschal Lamb announced the Eucharist; and, in the Bronze Serpent constructed by Moses, they perceived the image of the crucified Christ. *Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet* [The New Testament is concealed in the Old; the Old Testament is revealed in the New]. There is here something like the two faces of a diptych, the one a rough outline, full of shadow, the other brilliant from all the radiance of a definitive light. Israel therefore represents, in the economy of the divine plan, the past, a past that is completely obsolete, but which nevertheless remains (provided that it agrees to stay in the past) venerable and holy. But the authors of our two texts do not stop there. It is not sufficient for them to confine the Jews to the prehistory of redeemed humanity. Rather, they must banish them completely even from this prehistory: The role which they play, that which is universally recognized, is usurped; there is no longer a place for them in the Bible. It now only describes, for those who know how to read it, one sole history, that of the Church Eternal. The diptych gives way to a unique, continuous fresco. Christianity is not merely prefigured in the Old Testament; it is there in its totality with its institutions and its rites.¹¹⁹

118 For an introduction and translation, see Pierluigi Piovaneli, “The Story of Melchizedek with the Melchizedek Legend from the *Chronicon Paschale*,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, ed. Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, and Alexander Panayotov (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 64–84.

119 Marcel Simon, “Melchisédech dans la polémique entre juifs et chrétiens et dans la légende,” *Revue d'histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 17 (1937): 58–93 (84–85). The French original reads: “À considérer de plus près le Pseudo-Athanase et la *Caverne des Trésors*, on y reconnaît un aspect totalement nouveau, et fort curieux, de l'exégèse chrétienne de l'Ancien Testament. Jusqu'alors—et la tradition patristique restera dans l'ensemble fidèle à cette méthode—on concevait la relation entre Ancienne et Nouvelle Alliance comme un parallélisme. La Bible était interprétée, à la lumière

Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer is reacting against this shift in Christian exegesis, rewriting the scriptural story to make Melchizedek emphatically, though anachronistically, Jewish.

In both PRE and *Cav. Tr.*, Shem/Melchizedek pours out the “blood of the covenant” (דם הברית, cf. Matt 26:28) in what can be described as a sacrament of initiation. Nor is this the only point of contact between the two works. The printed edition and several European manuscripts of PRE (3א, 4א, 5א, 6א, 7א) add that in the same place where Abraham was circumcised, “there the altar was built” (שם נבנה (מזבח), that is, Shem/Melchizedek circumcised Abraham on the Temple Mount. This is another gratuitous detail that has its counterpart in *Cav. Tr.* In the Christian work, Melchizedek resides at Golgotha, envisioned as the Temple Mount (*Cav. Tr.* 29:3–8). Therefore, in both works, 1) Melchizedek 2) performs a rite associated with both Passover and the Day of Atonement 3) on the Temple Mount.

The tradition of *Cav. Tr.* is unusual, but it builds on established traditions about Melchizedek which date back to the earliest Christian centuries. In PRE, however, there is no particular reason why Shem/Melchizedek should circumcise Abraham (instead of Abraham circumcising himself), why the circumcision should occur on the Day of Atonement (instead of Passover), or why the circumcision should take place on the Temple Mount. The entire episode, which departs so radically from rabbinic tradition, is explicable in light of its Christian model. In this case, PRE is reclaiming the figure of Melchizedek for Judaism.

10.9 The Navel of the Earth

One of the recurring themes in PRE is the centrality of the sanctuary on Mount Moriah, which is identified as the “navel of the earth” (טבור הארץ). *Pirqe de-Rabbi*

de l'Évangile, comme sa préfiguration; on reconnaissait, dans chacun de ses épisodes et de ses institutions, une esquisse symbolique et provisoire des réalisations chrétiennes: le baptême était en figure dans la circoncision; l'agneau pascal annonçait l'eucharistie; et dans le serpent d'airain érigé par Moïse on voyait l'image du Christ crucifié. *Novum Testamentum in Vetere Latet, Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet*: il y avait là comme les deux faces d'un diptyque, l'une ébauchée et pleine d'ombre, l'autre brillante de tout l'éclat d'une lumière définitive. Israël représentait ainsi, dans l'économie du plan divin, le passé, un passé définitivement révolu, mais qui restait cependant, pourvu qu'il consentît à ne pas se survivre, vénérable et saint. Mais les auteurs de nos deux écrits ne s'en tiennent pas là. Il ne leur suffit pas de confiner les Juifs dans la préhistoire de l'humanité rachetée. Bien plutôt faut-il les bannir de cette préhistoire même: le rôle qu'ils y jouent, et qu'on leur reconnaît communément, est usurpé; il n'y a plus, dans la Bible, de place pour eux. Elle ne retrace, pour qui sait la lire, qu'une seule histoire, celle de l'Église éternelle. Le diptyque fait place à une fresque unique et continue. Le christianisme n'est pas seulement préfiguré dans l'Ancien Testament, il y est avec toute la réalité de ses institutions et de ses rites.”

Eliezer 11–12 claim that Adam was created at the Temple Mount. According to PRE 31, Abraham bound Isaac at Mount Moriah (cf. Gen 22:2) on an altar that had previously been used by Noah (PRE 23) and Abel (PRE 21). Finally, PRE 35 states that Jacob's vision of the ladder (cf. Gen 28) occurred at Mount Moriah. All of these traditions appear *in nuce* in earlier rabbinic tradition (e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 14:8; 34:9 55:7; 69:7). Curiously, neither *Genesis Rabbah* nor the Babylonian Talmud nor any other early rabbinic source identifies the Temple Mount as the “navel of the earth.” It is, however, a prominent feature of the depiction of the Temple Mount within *Cav. Tr.*, where it is identified with Golgotha.

At the outset, it should be stated that the idea of the Temple Mount as the center of the world dates to the Second Temple period. Philip Alexander shows that *Jubilees* conceives of Mount Zion (*Jubilees*' designation for the Temple Mount) as the “navel of the earth.”¹²⁰

ידע כי גן עדן קודש קודשים ומשכן אלוהים הוא והר סיני באמצע המדבר והר ציון באמצע טבור הארץ שלושתם זה נגד זה לקדושה נבראו

[Noah] knew that the Garden of Eden is the Holy of Holies and the dwelling place of God. And Mount Sinai is in the midst of the wilderness, and Mount Zion is in the middle of the navel of the earth. The three of them were created one against the other as holy places (*Jub.* 8:19).¹²¹

Alexander goes on to cite *Tanhuma Buber*, *Qedoshim* 10 as the *locus classicus* of the idea's resurgence within rabbinic literature.

כשם שהטיבור הזה נתון באמצע האיש כך ארץ ישראל טיבורה של עולם שנאמר יושבי על טבור הארץ ארץ ישראל יושבת באמצעיתו של עולם וירושלים באמצע ארץ ישראל ובית המקדש באמצע ירושלים וההיכל באמצע בית המקדש והארון באמצע ההיכל והאבן שתיה לפני ההיכל שממנה הושתת העולם

Just as this navel is placed in the center of a man, so is the Land of Israel the navel of the world, as it is written, “Dwellers of the navel of the earth” (Ezek 38:12). The Land of Israel sits in the middle of the world, and Jerusalem is in the center of the Land of Israel, and the Temple is in the center of Jerusalem, and the sanctuary is in the middle of the Temple, and the Ark is in the center of the sanctuary, and the Foundation Stone, from which the world was founded, is before the sanctuary.¹²²

¹²⁰ Philip S. Alexander, “Jerusalem as the Omphalos of the World: On the History of a Geographical Concept,” in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 104–19 (104). Alexander's translation.

¹²¹ Cana Werman, *The Book of Jubilees: Introduction, Translation, and Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 2015), 244; James C. VanderKam, ed., *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text* (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 54.

¹²² My translation from Buber, *Midrasch Tanchuma*, 3:78.

The attestation of the idea is unequivocal. The problem is the date of *Midrash Tanhuma*. The printed recension of *Midrash Tanhuma* incorporates text *verbatim* from PRE. The Buber recension, from which Alexander quotes, is a European reworking of earlier *Tanhuma* material.¹²³ The *Tanhuma* literature consists of more than these two collections. It was a dynamic genre that reached its height at the turn of the millennium. Some *Tanhuma* material could be older than PRE, although all the *Tanhuma* collections now in existence (the printed and Buber recensions, *Pesiqta Rabbati*, *Exodus Rabbah* II, *Numbers Rabbah* II, *Deuteronomy Rabbah*, *Midrash Hadash al ha-Torah*, among others) postdate PRE.

In Tannaitic and Amoraic literature, however, the motif is distinguished by its absence. The Foundation Stone (אבן שתייה) mentioned at the culmination of the *Tanhuma* passage first appears in rabbinic literature beginning with the Mishnah (*m. Yoma* 5:2), but the reference to the stone there, as the place marking the former location of the Ark of the Covenant, is, in the words of Alexei Sivertsev, “purely technical and antiquarian.”¹²⁴ The Tosefta adds the important proviso that the Foundation Stone was so-called because the whole world was founded upon it (*t. Yoma* 2:14). The idea is further developed in both Talmuds (*y. Yoma* V:3, 42c; *b. Yoma* 54b). None of these texts, however, equates the Foundation Stone with the navel of the world—not merely the starting point for the world’s creation but its actual center. The identification of the two only becomes explicit in the *Tanhuma* passage.¹²⁵

On the subject of talmudic literature, the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Sanhedrin* 37a), interpreting Song 7:3, states that the “navel” spoken of in this verse is the Sanhedrin, who convened “in the navel of the world” (בטיבור של עולם). The statement is ambiguous. Does the navel refer to the Temple, Jerusalem, or the whole land of Israel? It certainly does not refer to the Holy of Holies where the Foundation Stone was located, which was exclusively reserved for the high priest on Yom Kippur.

¹²³ See Marc Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature: Studies in the Evolution of the Versions* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2003), 4* (English summary): “The mention of the Ticinus river in the reworking of the messianic peroration indicates that the Buber version of the *Tanhuma* was edited during the early Middle Ages in the Western Roman Empire, most likely in Northern Italy, and subsequently circulated almost exclusively in Ashkenaz.” See also Arnon Atzmon and Ronit Nikolsky, “Let Our Rabbi Teach Us: An Introduction to *Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature*,” in *Studies in the Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature*, ed. Arnon Atzmon and Ronit Nikolsky (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 1–17 (4): “[*Tanhuma Buber*] probably reflects the reality of Lombard Italy.”

¹²⁴ Alexei M. Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 66.

¹²⁵ Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology*, 65–74; Felix Böhl, “Über das Verhältnis von Sheti-ja-Stein und Nabel der Welt in der Kosmogonie der Rabbinen,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 124 (1974): 253–70.

Even more striking is *Genesis Rabbah*, which shares several traditions with PRE regarding the Temple Mount but never once refers to the navel of the earth or the Foundation Stone. The best way to illustrate their differences is to quote the relevant passages side by side. In the first place, there is the matter of Adam's creation. Both *Genesis Rabbah* and PRE affirm that Adam was created at the Temple Mount (also called the "pure place" or the "place of his atonement"), but it is only in PRE that this place is also the navel of the earth (טבור הארץ).

Genesis Rabbah 14:8¹²⁶

מִן הָאֲדָמָה ר' בְּרִיָּה ור' הֶלְבֹּי בִּשְׁם ר' שְׁמוּאֵל
הִזְקִין מִמָּקוֹם כִּפְּרָתוֹ נִבְרָא הָיִךְ מֵה דָּאֵת אָמַר
מִזְבַּח אָדָמָה תַּעֲשֶׂה לִּי אָמַר הַקָּב"ה הִרִינִי בֹרְאוֹ
מִמָּקוֹם כִּפְּרָתוֹ וְהִלּוּי יַעֲמֹד

"From the earth" (Gen 2:7). R. Berekiah and R. Helbo in the name of R. Samuel the Elder: He was created from the place of his atonement, as one reads in Scripture: "You will make for me an altar of earth" (Exod 20:24). The Holy One, Blessed be He, said, "Behold! I shall create him from the place of his atonement (מִמָּקוֹם) —may it help him to endure!"

PRE 11 and 12 (JTS 3847, ff. 93a and 94a)

[PRE 11] גָּבַל וּלְשׁ עֶפְרוֹ שְׁלֹאֲדָם הָרֵאשׁוֹן בְּמָקוֹם
טְהוֹר וּבִטְבוֹר הָאֶרֶץ רָקְמוּ וְתִכְנֶנּוּ וְלֹא הִיָּתָה בּוֹ
נִשְׁמָה שֶׁנִּי יִפָּח בְּאַפִּי נִשְׁמַת רוּחַ חַיִּים

[PRE 12] בְּרָאוֹ בְּמָקוֹם קָדוֹשׁ בְּמָקוֹם בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ

[PRE 11] He formed and kneaded the dust of the First Adam in a pure place, in the navel of the earth (בְּמָקוֹם טְהוֹר וּבִטְבוֹר הָאֶרֶץ). He stood him up and set him straight, but breath was not yet in him, so it is written, "He breathed into his nose the breath of the spirit of life" (Gen. 2:7).

[PRE 12] He created him in the holy place, in the place of the Temple.

Additionally, both *Genesis Rabbah* and PRE establish that there was a continuity of cult from the earliest times. That is, Adam was not only created on the Temple Mount, but he sacrificed there. *Genesis Rabbah* only mentions the sacrifice of Adam in the course of describing the sacrifice of Noah. *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* offers a similar recapitulation of earlier sacrifices (cf. PRE 21).

Genesis Rabbah 34:9¹²⁷

וַיַּעַל עֹלֹת בְּמִזְבֵּחַ ר' אֱלִיעֶזֶר בֶּן יַעֲקֹב א' עַל
מִזְבַּח הַגָּדוֹל שֶׁבִּירוּשָׁלַם שֶׁשֶּׁם הַקָּרִיב אָדָם הָרֵאֶה
שׁוֹן וְתִיטֵב לִי"י מִשׁוֹר פֶּר מִקְרִין מִפְּרִישׁ

"And he offered a burnt offering on the altar" (Gen 8:20). R. Eliezer b. Jacob said: On the great altar in Jerusalem where the First Adam sacrificed. "And it shall please the LORD more than a horned bull with divided hooves" (Ps 69:32).

PRE 23 (JTS 10484, f. 28a)

וּבִנָּה אֶת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הָרֵאשׁוֹן שֶׁהִקְרִיבוּ עָלָיו קַיִן וְהָבֶל
וְהִקְרִיב עֹלֹת אַרְבַּע שָׁנִי וַיִּבֶן נֹחַ מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה

He [Noah] rebuilt the first altar, upon which Cain and Abel sacrificed, and he himself offered up four burnt offerings, as it is written, "And Noah built an altar to the LORD" (Gen 8:20).

¹²⁶ Translated from Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba*, 1:132.

¹²⁷ Translated from Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba*, 1:317.

For PRE, I have quoted from JTS10485 (Friedlander's manuscript; Eleazar Treitl's 5א) instead of JTS 3847, which simply reads "He built an altar and sacrificed four burnt offerings" (ובנה מזבח והקריב עולות ארבע). It is possible that this shorter reading is the original one.

Whatever the case, all versions of PRE 31 identify Abraham's altar as the same used by Adam, Cain, Abel, and, yes, Noah, marking the Temple Mount as the place of Abraham's sacrifice. Similarly, *Genesis Rabbah*, following a tradition that goes back to the Hebrew Bible, identifies the mountain in "the land of Moriah" (Gen 22:2) with Mount Moriah—the Temple Mount—in Jerusalem (2Chr 3:1) through playful associations between the toponym "Moriah" and other words associated with Temple worship.

Genesis Rabbah 55:7¹²⁸

לך אל ארץ המורייה ר' חייא רבה ור' ינאי
חד אמר למקום שהורייה יוצאה לעולם וחרנה
אמר למקום שיראה יוצאה לעולם דכוותה ארון
ר' חייא רבה ור' ינאי חד אמר למקום שאורה
יוצאה לעולם וחרנה אמר למקום שהמורא יוצא
לעולם דכוותה דביר ר' חייא ור' ינאי חד אמר
למקום שהדיבר יוצא לעולם וחרנה אמר למקום
שהדבר יוצא לעולם אמר ר' יהושע בן לוי שמשם
הקב"ה מורה על אומות העולם ומורידם לגיהנם
ר' שמעון בן יוחי א' למקום ראוי כנגד בית המק-
דש ר' יודן בן פלייא אמר למקום שהיה מראה לך
ר' מנחם אמר לאתר מרותא דעלמא רבנין אמ'
למקום שהקטרת קריבה היך דאת אמר אלך לי
אל הר המור

PRE 31 (JTS 3847, f. 118b)

ויבן שם אברהם את המזבח הוא המזבח שהקריב
בו אדם הראשון הוא המזבח שהקריב בו קין והבל
הוא המזבח שהקריב בו נח

"Go to the land of Moriah" (מורייה) (Gen 22:2). R. Hiyya the Great and R. Yannai disagreed. One said: To the place where instruction (הורייה) goes out to the whole world. The other said: To the place where pious fear (יראה) goes out to the whole world. Concerning the Ark (ארון), R. Hiyya the Great and R. Yannai also disagreed. One said: To the place where light (אורה) goes out to the world. The other said: To the place where holy awe (מורא) goes out to the world. Concerning the inner sanctuary (דביר), R. Hiyya the Great and R. Yannai again disagreed. One said: To the place where the Divine Word (דיבר) goes out to the world.

"And Abraham built the altar there" (Gen 22:9). This is the altar where the First Adam sacrificed. This is the altar on which Cain and Abel sacrificed. This is the altar on which Noah sacrificed.

128 Translated from Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba*, 2:590–92.

The other said: To the place where plague (דבר) goes out to the world. R. Joshua b. Levi said: From there, the Holy One, Blessed be He, shoots forth (מורה) the nations of the world and makes them descend into Gehenna. R. Simeon b. Yohai said: To the place that corresponds (ראוי) to the Temple. R. Judan b. Palya said: "To the place where he was appearing (מראה) to you." R. Pinhas said (in Aramaic): To the place of universal dominion (מרותא). The rabbis collectively said: To the place where incense is offered, as it is written, "I will go myself to the mountain of myrrh (מור)" (Song 4:6)

The next tradition is only approximative and serves to illustrate the differences between the two texts. When Rebekah is pregnant with Jacob and Esau, she is said to have gone somewhere "to inquire of the LORD" (Gen 25:22). Both sources are circumspect about where, exactly, she went.

Genesis Rabbah 63:6¹²⁹

ותלך לדרש את י"י וכי בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות היו באותן הימים והלא לא הלכה אלא למדרש של [שם ו] עבר אלא ללמדך שכל מי שהוא מקביל פני זקן כאילו מקביל פני שכינה

"She went to inquire of the LORD" (Gen 25:22). Were there synagogues (בתי כנסיות) and schools (בתי מדרשות) in those days?! Rather, she did not go anywhere except to the school of [Shem and] Eber. This teaches you that anyone who receives the presence of an elder is like one who receives the presence of the Shekhinah (פני שכינה).

PRE 32 (JTS 3847, f. 120a)

ר' יהודה אומ' עשרים שנה היתה רבקה עקרה ולאחר עשרים שנה לקח את רבקה והלך לו להר המוריה שנעקד והתפלל עליה ונעתר לו שנ' ויעתר יצחק ליי' לנכח אשתו והיו הבנים מתגברים במי' עיה כגבורי כוח בקרבה שנ' ויתרוצצו הבנים בקר' בה והגיעה נפשה למות והלכה לה להתפלל במקום שהרת שנ' ותלך לדרוש את יי'

R. Judah said: Rebekah was barren for twenty years. After twenty years, he [Isaac] took her and went to Mount Moriah, where he had been bound (להר המוריה שנעקד), and he prayed over her. God hearkened to him, as it is written, "And Isaac entreated the LORD concerning his wife" (Gen 25:21) And the children were fighting in her womb like two fierce warriors within her, as it is written, "The children were quarrelling within her" (Gen 25:22). Her soul was near unto death. Therefore, she went to pray in the place where she had become pregnant (שהרת והלכה לה שהרת במקום), as it is written, "She went to inquire of the LORD" (Gen 25:22).

¹²⁹ Translated from Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba*, 2:684.

In *Genesis Rabbah*, Rebekah goes to the academy of Shem and Eber, a rabbinic conceit designating the first *Beit Midrash*, where Isaac and Jacob studied. It is never mentioned in PRE.¹³⁰ Its location is undisclosed. Shem, who is identified with Melchizedek, presumably lived in Jerusalem, but it does not follow that the academy was located here. For example, a modern tradition locates the ancient site of the academy within the “Cave of Shem and Eber” in Safed.¹³¹

In PRE, however, Rebekah goes back to pray “in the place where she had become pregnant” (במקום שהרת), which, contextually, if surprisingly, is the Temple Mount. Other manuscripts retain this meaning without implying that Rebekah and Isaac had sex in the sacred precinct. The printed edition states that Rebekah went to pray “in a pure place” (במקום טהור), language that is used of the Temple in PRE 11. Most manuscripts in the *א* family emend the text less egregiously to “in the place where she went,” (במקום שהלכה) meaning Mount Moriah, where she had prayed with Isaac.

Finally, both *Genesis Rabbah* and PRE place Jacob’s vision (Gen 28) on the Temple Mount.

***Genesis Rabbah* 69:7¹³²**

ויירא ויאמר מה נורא המקום הזה ר' לעזר בשם ר' יוסי בן זמרא הסולם הזה עומד בבאר שבע ושיפיעו מגיע עד בית המקדש מה טעם ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וגו' ויירא ויאמר מה נורא המ' קום אמר ר' יהודה בר סימון הסולם הזה עומד במקדש ושיפיעו מגיע עד ביתאל מה טעם ויירא ויאמר וגו' ויקרא שם המקום ההוא ביתאל

PRE 35 (JTS 3847, f. 125a–125b)

בן שבעים שנה היה יעקב בלכתו להר המוריה והיתה הבאר מהלכת עמו מבאר שבע ועד הר המוריה מהלך שני ימים והגיע לשם בחצי היום

לקח יעק' שתים עשרה אבנים מאבני המזבח שנ' עקד יצח' אביו עליו ולן שם ושם אותן מראשותיו באותו המקום להודיעו שעת' לעמוד ממנו שנים עשר שבטים ונעשו כולן אבן אחת להודיעו שע' תידין להיות כולן גוי אחד בארץ שנ' מי כעמד ישראל גוי אחד בארץ

שב יעקב ללקוט את האבנים ומצא אותן אבן אחת שנ' ויקח את האבן אשר שם מראשוֹ תיו וישם אותה מצבה באותו המקום מה עשה הק' ב'ה' נטה רגל ימינו וטבע את האבן עד עמקי תהומות ועשה אותה סניף לתהומות כאדם שהוא עושה סניף לכופח לפ"כ נקראת אבן שתיה ששם טבור הארץ ומשם נמתחה כל הארץ ועליה היכל יי' שנ' והאבן הזאת אשר שמת יי' וגו'

¹³⁰ For other references, see *Gen. Rab.* 45:10 and 56:11 and the Palestinian Targumim (*Fragment, Neofiti, Pseudo-Jonathan*) to Gen 24:62 and 25:27. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* has an additional reference in Gen 22:19.

¹³¹ Linda Kay Davidson and David Martin Gitlitz, eds., *Pilgrimage: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2002), 548–49.

¹³² Translated from Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba*, 2:796.

"Jacob was afraid and said: 'How awesome is this place!'" (Gen 28:17). R. Lazar in the name of R. Yosi b. Zimra said: This ladder stood in Beer Sheba, but its slope reached until the Temple (בית המקדש). What is the proof? The verse "And Jacob went out from Beer Sheba," etc. (Gen 28:10) is followed by the verse "And he was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place!'" (Gen 28:17). R. Judah bar Simon said: This ladder stood on the Temple Mount (מקדש), and its slope reached until Bethel. What is the proof? The verse "And he was afraid and said," etc. (Gen 28:17) is followed by the verse, "He called the name of that place Bethel" (Gen 28:19).

Jacob was seventy years old when he went to Mount Moriah, and the well went with him from Beer Sheba. He walked two days until Mount Moriah and arrived in the middle of the day. . . .

Jacob took twelve stones from among the stones of the altar where his father Isaac was bound, and he spent the night there. He placed them at his head in the same place to make it known that in the future twelve tribes would come from him. And they were made one stone to make known that in the future all of them would be one nation in the land, as it is written, "Who is like your people, O Israel? One people in the land" (1Chr. 17:21). . . .

Jacob returned to collect the stones and found that they had become one stone, as it is written, "And he took the stone from his head, and he established a pillar there on the very spot" (Gen 28:18). What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do? He planted his right foot, and the stone sank until the depths of the abyss. He made it the base of the abyss, just as a man makes a base for a stove. Therefore, it was called the "Foundation Stone" (אבן שתיה), for there is the navel of the earth (טבור הארץ), and from there was drawn out the whole world, and upon it is the Temple (היכל) of the LORD, as it is written, "This stone which I set up," etc. (Gen 28:22).

Genesis Rabbah attempts to harmonize the geographical references in the biblical text (the cities of Beer Sheba and Bethel) with a tradition that associates Jacob's vision with the Temple (see also *b. Sanhedrin* 95b and *b. Hullin* 91b). The ladder of ascending and descending angels was slanted, and it either began or ended at the Temple Mount, without contradicting the biblical data that Jacob began his journey in Beer Sheba and spent the night in Bethel. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* dispenses with the tension between text and tradition and simply moves the entire vision to Mount Moriah, apparently understanding "Bethel," literally "house of God" (בית אל), as a designation for the Temple Mount rather than the name of a city.

Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer uses the term "navel of the earth" (טבור הארץ) for the second time here, acting as an *inclusio* encompassing all the traditions about the Temple Mount and its altar beginning with PRE 11. The Foundation Stone also

makes an appearance.¹³³ In fact, PRE 35 is recounting the very origin of the Foundation Stone, formerly the ancient altar on the Temple Mount, which Jacob consecrates in what Steven Daniel Sacks called an act of co-creation with the deity—the world was not truly complete until this moment.¹³⁴ While *Genesis Rabbah* gathers an assortment of traditions attesting a continuity of cult on the Temple Mount, PRE tells a cosmogonic myth where the original altar sits on the navel of the earth, is sanctified through its use by the patriarchs across generations, and eventually becomes the pillar of all creation.

This new valorization of Mount Moriah in PRE is directly comparable to the depiction of Golgotha in *Cav. Tr.* The *Cave of Treasures* explicitly identifies Golgotha as the “center of the earth” (כְּחֵץ הָאֲרֶץ). This occurs in the very first allusion to Golgotha, at the moment of Adam’s creation. The passage is analogous to PRE 11 and 12.

Cav. Tr. 2:15–18 (BL Add. 25875, f. 5a)

[15] סִבַּח פִּי וְשָׁמַיִם וְאֶרֶץ וְכָל בְּרִיָּה
[16] וְכָל חַיָּה וְכָל נֶפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים
וְכָל מַלְאָכָיו וְכָל אֲנָשִׁים וְכָל בָּנֵי אָדָם
וְכָל מַלְאָכָיו וְכָל אֲנָשִׁים וְכָל בָּנֵי אָדָם
וְכָל מַלְאָכָיו וְכָל אֲנָשִׁים וְכָל בָּנֵי אָדָם
וְכָל מַלְאָכָיו וְכָל אֲנָשִׁים וְכָל בָּנֵי אָדָם
וְכָל מַלְאָכָיו וְכָל אֲנָשִׁים וְכָל בָּנֵי אָדָם

[15] He stretched himself and rose at the center of the earth (כְּחֵץ הָאֲרֶץ) [16] and placed his two feet on the very place where the cross of our Redeemer was set (because Adam was created in Jerusalem). [17] There he put on the garments of royalty, and a crown of glory was placed upon his head. [18] There he was made king, priest, and prophet.

PRE 11 and 12 (JTS 3847, ff. 93a and 94a)

[PRE 11] גָּבַל וְלֹשׁ עֲפָרוֹ שֶׁלֹּאֲדָם הָרָאשׁוֹן בְּמָקוֹם
טְהוֹר וּבִטְבוֹר הָאָרֶץ רָקְמוֹ וְחִיכְנוּ וְלֹא הִיָּתָה בּוֹ
נִשְׁמָה שֶׁנִּי וַיִּפָּח בְּאַפִּיו נִשְׁמַת רוּחַ חַיִּים
[PRE 12] בְּרָאוּ בְּמָקוֹם קָדוֹשׁ בְּמָקוֹם בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ

[PRE 11] He formed and kneaded the dust of the First Adam in a pure place, in the navel of the earth (בְּמָקוֹם טְהוֹר וּבִטְבוֹר הָאָרֶץ). He stood him up and set him straight, but breath was not yet in him, so it is written, “He breathed into his nose the breath of the spirit of life” (Gen. 2:7)

[PRE 12] He created him in the holy place, in the place of the Temple.

In both works, Adam is created in Jerusalem, at the earth’s center—in one case the Temple Mount, in the other Golgotha.

¹³³ The Foundation Stone first appears in PRE 10—the story of Jonah—who sees it below the Temple while traveling the depths of the abyss.

¹³⁴ Steven D. Sacks, “The Foundation Stone: Reflections on the Adoption and Transformation of ‘Primordial Myth’ in Rabbinic Literature,” in *Interpretation, Religion and Culture in Midrash and Beyond: Proceedings of the 2006 and 2007 SBL Midrash Sections*, ed. Rivka Ulmer and Lieve M. Teugels (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2008), 25–37. See also Rachel Adelman, “Midrash, Myth, and Bakhtin’s Chronotope: The Itinerant Well and the Foundation Stone in *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer*,” *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 17 (2009): 143–76.

A seemingly minor parallel is that Rebekkah, in both works, consults God about her pregnancy by going to the Temple Mount, whether that is Golgotha (the abode of Melchizedek) or Mount Moriah.

Cav. Tr. 31:5–6 (BL Add. 25875, f. 27a–27b)

[5] סבד סמ"ס רבסמס כ" עמ"ס עמ"ס חל"ס
זמ"ס לזמ"ס סלמסס [6] סבד סמ"ס חל"ס
סמ"ס לזמ"ס סלמסס ס"ס חל"ס סמ"ס לזמ"ס
זמ"ס חל"ס סלמסס סמ"ס חל"ס סמ"ס לזמ"ס
סמ"ס חל"ס סלמסס סמ"ס חל"ס סמ"ס לזמ"ס
סמ"ס חל"ס סלמסס סמ"ס חל"ס סמ"ס לזמ"ס
סמ"ס חל"ס סלמסס סמ"ס חל"ס סמ"ס לזמ"ס

[5] When Isaac was sixty years, old Rebekah conceived Esau and Jacob. [6] She was in anguish, so she went before Melchizedek, who prayed over her and said to her: "Two peoples are in your womb, and two nations will emerge from your womb, that is to say, they will go forth from your belly. One nation shall prevail over the other; and the older will be subjected to the younger; that is, Esau will be subjected to Jacob (cf. Gen 25:23).

PRE 32 (JTS 3847, f. 120a)

ר' יהודה אומ' עשרים שנה היתה רבקה עקרה
ולאחר עשרים שנה לקח את רבקה והלך לו להר
המוריה שנעקד והתפלל עליה ונעתר לו שנ' ויעתר
יצחק ליי' לנכח אשתו והיו הבנים מתגברים במי'
עיה כגבורי כוח בקרבה שנ' ויתרוצצו הבנים בקר'
בה והגיעה נפשה למות והלכה לה להתפלל במקום
שהרת שנ' ותלך לדרוש את יי'

R. Judah said: Rebekah was barren for twenty years. After twenty years, he [Isaac] took her and went to Mount Moriah, where he had been bound (להר המוריה שנעקד), and he prayed over her. God hearkened to him, as it is written, "And Isaac entreated the LORD concerning his wife" (Gen 25:21) And the children were fighting in her womb like two fierce warriors within her, as it is written, "The children were quarrelling within her" (Gen 25:22). Her soul was near unto death. Therefore, she went to pray in the place where she had become pregnant (והלכה), as it is written, "She went to inquire of the LORD" (Gen 25:22).

The *Cave of Treasures* shares with *Genesis Rabbah* the idea that Rebekkah went to an intermediary and did not contact God directly. In *Genesis Rabbah*, however, it is not clear that Rebekkah went to the Temple Mount, while this is the only option in *Cav. Tr.* and PRE. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* states it flatly, while in *Cav. Tr.* Shem instructs Melchizedek never to leave Golgotha (*Cav. Tr.* 23:20), and Melchizedek refuses to do so when invited by other kings (*Cav. Tr.* 30:5). Even Abraham only meets Melchizedek when God summons him to his mountain habitation (*Cav. Tr.* 28:8). When Rebekkah goes to Melchizedek in *Cav. Tr.*, she is going to Golgotha, that work's equivalent of the Temple Mount.

The last point of comparison is the vision of Jacob's ladder.

Cav. Tr. 31:11–19 (BL Add. 25875, ff. 27b–28a)

[11] סבד סמ"ס רבסמס כ" עמ"ס עמ"ס חל"ס
זמ"ס לזמ"ס סלמסס [12] סבד סמ"ס חל"ס
סמ"ס לזמ"ס סלמסס ס"ס חל"ס סמ"ס לזמ"ס
זמ"ס חל"ס סלמסס סמ"ס חל"ס סמ"ס לזמ"ס
סמ"ס חל"ס סלמסס סמ"ס חל"ס סמ"ס לזמ"ס
סמ"ס חל"ס סלמסס סמ"ס חל"ס סמ"ס לזמ"ס
סמ"ס חל"ס סלמסס סמ"ס חל"ס סמ"ס לזמ"ס

PRE 35 (JTS 3847, f. 125a–125b)

בן שבעים שנה היה יעקב בלכתו להר המוריה
והיתה הבאר מהלכת עמו מבאר שבע ועד הר
המוריה מהלך שני ימים והגיע לשם בחצי היום

on it were the ministers unto Zechariah, Mary, the Magi, and the shepherds. [18] The Lord who was standing on the top of the ladder was he who would stand on the head of the cross (כעצב גי לכתר) and descend into Sheol to save us. [19] When God showed to blessed Jacob the cross of Christ through the ladder (ומעט ומעטא כד שכלא), the angels, the descent of the Messiah for our salvation, the Church [by] the house of God, and the altar by the stone, and the offerings by the tithes, and anointing by the oil, Jacob descended again to the East, where God would show him baptism.

the base of the abyss, just as a man makes a base for a stove. Therefore, it was called the “Foundation Stone” (אבן שתיה), for there is the navel of the earth (טבור הארץ) and from there was drawn out the whole world, and upon it is the Temple (היכל) of the LORD, as it is written, “This stone which I set up,” etc. (Gen 28:22).

Unlike the earlier passages, *Cav. Tr.* fails to specify where, exactly, Jacob is spending the night. The appearance of the cross is not merely a typological interpretation of the ladder but something God showed to Jacob, a possible hint that Jacob is dreaming where the future cross was to stand—and that the “altar” (מזבחה) is the altar of Melchizedek on Golgotha. This is how the Georgian version has interpreted the passage (emphasis mine).

When the cross of Christ appeared to blessed Jacob, the angel announced to him the Good News of the coming from highest heaven of our God, Jesus Christ. The house of God, this is the Church. The stone which he had for a pillow, *this is the holy Golgotha* and the anointing of oil, and Jacob’s descent to the East was so that God could show him baptism there.¹³⁵

This interpretation, unfortunately, does not appear in the extant Arabic versions. The *Book of the Rolls* follows the Syriac text.¹³⁶ Likewise, Mingana Syr. 258 (f. 118) reflects the Syriac, where the stone signifies “the altar.” Neither Mingana Syr. 32 (f. 120a) nor Borgia Arab. 135 (f. 249b) have the dream or its interpretation. In both cases, the narrative skips from Jacob’s departure to his arrival at Laban’s abode, as in the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*.¹³⁷ The Georgian version, however, is drawing out something implicit in the original, that *Cav. Tr.*’s Jacob is anointing the altar on Golgotha, much as PRE’s Jacob consecrates the Foundation Stone.

¹³⁵ Translated from the French of Jean-Pierre Mahé, trans., *La Caverne des Trésors: Version Géorgienne* (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 56: “Et quand la croix du Christ apparut au bienheureux Iak’ob, l’ange lui annonça aussi la bonne nouvelle de la venue du haut du ciel de notre Dieu, Jésus-Christ. Et la maison de Dieu, c’est l’église, et la pierre (qu’il avait pour) chevet, c’est le saint Golgota et l’onction d’huile; et la descente de Iak’ob vers l’orient, c’est pour que Dieu lui montrât là-bas le baptême.”

¹³⁶ Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *Apocrypha Arabica*, *41 (translation: 42). See also Bezold, *Die Schatzhöhle*, 2:161.

¹³⁷ Malan, *The Book of Adam and Eve*, 184.

Therefore, in every place where Golgotha or the cross is mentioned or alluded to in *Cav. Tr.*, there is a corresponding reference to Mount Moriah in PRE. As we will see below, this is true even in the case of Golgotha's primary function: as the site of Jesus' crucifixion. Even in the case of the one apparent exception, the story of Adam's reburial, PRE describes the location of Adam's tomb in relation to Mount Moriah—in defiance of earlier traditions—even if the text does not place his final resting place on the Temple Mount.

The gradual transfer of aspects of the Temple to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—a complex that included Golgotha—is well-documented.¹³⁸ The secondary literature draws upon the same selection of primary sources. Eusebius, in the *Life of Constantine*, calls the newly uncovered tomb the “holy of holies” (*Vita Constantini* III.28).¹³⁹ In his *Praise of Constantine*, he even calls the edifice a temple: “In the Palestinian nation, in the heart of the Hebrew kingdom, on the very site of the evidence for salvation, he outfitted with many and abundant distinctions an enormous house of prayer and temple sacred to the Saving Sign, and he honored a memorial full of eternal significance and the Great Savior's own trophies over death with ornaments beyond all description” (*De laudibus Constantini* IX.16).¹⁴⁰

Egeria, the late fourth-century Spanish pilgrim, describes the yearly festival of the dedication of the church, the Encaenia, and directly compares it to the ded-

¹³⁸ In addition to Hugh Nibley, “Christian Envy of the Temple,” cited above, see: John Wilkinson, “Jewish Influences on the Early Christian Rite of Jerusalem,” *Le Muséon* 92 (1979): 347–59, reprinted in John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*, rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 1981), 298–310, as “Jewish Influences on the Jerusalem Liturgy;” Georg Kretschmar, “Festkalender und Memorialstätten Jerusalems in altkirchlicher Zeit,” in *Jerusalem Heiligtumstraditionen in altkirchlicher und frühislamischer Zeit*, ed. Heribert Busse and Georg Kretschmar (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987), 81–111 (“Exkurs: Tempel und Golgotha”); Joshua Schwartz, “The Encaenia of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Temple of Solomon and the Jews,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 43 (1987): 265–81; Bianca Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem: Representations of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium* (Freiburg: Herder, 1987), 83–84; Robert Ousterhout, “The Temple, the Sepulchre, and the Martyrion of the Savior,” *Gesta* 29 (1990): 44–53; Robert Louis Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 93–99; Joshua Prawer, “Christian Attitudes towards Jerusalem in the Early Middle Ages,” in *The History of Jerusalem: The Early Muslim Period, 638–1099*, ed. Joshua Prawer and Haggai Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1996), 311–47; Rivka Gonen, *Contested Holiness: Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Perspectives on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jersey City: KTAV Publishing House, 2003), 123; Yaron Z. Eliav, *God's Mountain: The Temple Mount in Time, Place, and Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 180–86.

¹³⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Life of Constantine*, trans. Averil Cameron and Stuart George Hall, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 133.

¹⁴⁰ Eusebius, *In Praise of Constantine: A Historical Study and New Translation of Eusebius' Tricennial Orations*, trans. H. A. Drake (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 101.

ication of Solomon's Temple in the book of Chronicles (*Itinerarium* 48.2): "And this is found in the holy Scriptures that this day of the Encaenia is when holy Solomon also, having completed the house of God that he had built, stood before the altar of God and prayed, as it is written in the books of Chronicles (2Chr 5:1–7:9)."¹⁴¹ Earlier, she witnessed the presentation of two relics related to ancient Israelite kingship—the horn of anointing and the ring of Solomon—on Good Friday, alongside the true cross (*Itinerarium* 37.3).¹⁴² The ring, in particular, could refer to legends about Solomon's employment of spirits to construct the Temple.¹⁴³

The testimony of later pilgrims shows the continued transfer of effects from the Temple to Golgotha. The sacrifice of Isaac—which, unlike the burial of Adam, is clearly attested in numerous Jewish sources to have occurred on the Temple Mount¹⁴⁴—was now said to have transpired at Golgotha, as attested by the *Breviarius* (a short guidebook for Latin pilgrims),¹⁴⁵ Theodosius,¹⁴⁶ the Piacenza Pilgrim,¹⁴⁷ and Adomnan of Iona's account of Arculf's pilgrimage.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, Adam's creation, said to have occurred on the Temple Mount in the fifth-century *Genesis Rabbah*, now

141 Egeria, *Journey to the Holy Land*, ed. and trans. Paul Frederick Bradshaw (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 97.

142 Egeria, *Journey to the Holy Land*, 81.

143 Ousterhout, "The Temple, the Sepulchre, and the Martyrion of the Savior," 47. Sources recounting Solomon's mastery over demons are legion. See, for example, the *Testament of Solomon* and *b. Gittin* 68a–68b. The Bordeaux Pilgrim also alludes to this legend. See Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 156.

144 In addition to 2Chr 3:1 and *Gen. Rab.* 55:7, see *Jub.* 18:13 and Josephus, *Ant.* I.224. Even the Targumim (*Onqelos*, *Pseudo-Jonathan*) to Gen 22:2 translate the Hebrew "land of Moriah" as the "land of worship." *Neofiti* and the *Fragment Targum* explicitly identify the location of the sacrifice as the Temple Mount (Gen 22:14).

145 John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1977), 60: "There Abraham offered Isaac his son as a sacrifice in the very place where the Lord was crucified" (*Breviarius*, Recension A, 2).

146 Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, 65: "In the city of Jerusalem by the Sepulchre of the Lord is the Place of a Skull. There Abraham offered his son as a sacrifice, and because it is a hill of rock, it was on the hill itself—at its foot, to be exact—that Abraham made the altar. Above the altar rises the hill; one climbs to the top of it by steps. There the Lord was crucified" (*Topography of the Holy Land*, 7).

147 Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, 83: "From the Tomb it is eighty paces to Golgotha; you go up on one side of it by the very steps up which our Lord went to be crucified. You can see the place where he was crucified, and on the actual rock there is a bloodstain. Beside this is the altar of Abraham, which is where he intended to offer Isaac, and where Melchizedek offered sacrifice" (*Travels from Piacenza*, 19).

148 Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, 97: "And between these two churches [the Church of Calvary and the Basilica of Constantine] comes that renowned place where the patriarch Abraham set up an altar, and arranged a pile of wood on it, and took up his drawn sword to sacrifice Isaac his son" (*The Holy Places*, I.6.2).

occurs on Golgotha in the sixth-century *Breviarius*.¹⁴⁹ In one case, we can observe the transfer occur across two different pilgrimage accounts separated by centuries. The Bordeaux Pilgrim, the first person to have left us an account of their travels to the Holy Land (ca. 333), mentions seeing the blood of Zechariah who had been killed within the Temple precincts (2Chr 24:20–22; cf. Matt 23:35),¹⁵⁰ but in the *Breviarius* the blood of Zechariah has moved to Golgotha.¹⁵¹ The *Breviarius*, like *Cav. Tr.*, is astoundingly naïve in terms of geography. It directs pilgrims' attention to the place where Jesus drove the money changers from their tables—right outside the Holy Sepulchre!¹⁵²

Christians also referred to the Holy Sepulchre and Golgotha specifically as the “center” or “navel” of the world, appropriating a title that had once been used of the Temple Mount in the Second Temple period. Cyril of Jerusalem, the bishop of the city from 350–386 CE—approximately the time between the death of Eusebius and the arrival of Egeria—makes such a reference in his catechetical lectures (*Catecheses* XIII.28).

He stretched out His hands on the Cross to encompass the ends of the world; for this Golgotha is the very center of the earth. This is not my saying; it is a prophet who has said: “You wrought salvation in the midst of the earth” (Ps 74:12).¹⁵³

Similarly, Sophronius, the patriarch of Jerusalem at the time of the Arab conquest of Jerusalem, specifies Golgotha as the navel of the earth in one of his poems.

And prostrate, I will venerate
The Navel-point of the earth,
That divine Rock in which was fixed the wood
Which undid the curse of the tree (*Anacreontica* 20.29).¹⁵⁴

149 Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, 59–60: “And going from there into Golgotha there is a great court where the Lord was crucified [. . .] There Adam was formed” (*Breviarius*, 2). The sentence is in both recensions.

150 Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 156–57: “And in the sanctuary itself, where the Temple stood which Solomon built, there is marble in front of the altar which has on it the blood of Zacharias—you would think it had only been shed today.”

151 Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, 60: “In front of this Tomb [of Jesus] is the altar where Holy Zacharias was killed, and his blood dried there” (*Breviarius*, Recension A, 3).

152 Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, 60: “From there [the Basilica of St. Constantine within the Holy Sepulchre] you go to the basilica where Jesus found people buying and selling doves and drove them out” (*Breviarius*, Recension A, 3).

153 Cyril of Jerusalem, *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Volume 2*, trans. Leo P. MacCauley (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1970), 22.

154 Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, 91.

Not every Christian identified Golgotha itself as the navel of the earth. Adomnan, citing the same psalm as Cyril of Jerusalem, instead identified the midpoint as a column north of the Holy Sepulchre, where the true cross had once restored a dead man to life.¹⁵⁵ He is still, however, identifying the center of the earth with reference to Christian holy sites and not the Temple Mount.

The latest of these sources are contemporary with *Cav. Tr.* and constitute a dominant Christian tradition that persisted until the time PRE was written. As in *Cav. Tr.*, the “increase” of Golgotha meant the corresponding “decrease” of the Temple Mount. Typical of this attitude is the sixth-century Madaba Map, where Jerusalem is the center of the world, and the Holy Sepulchre is the center of Jerusalem—but there is no Temple Mount at all.¹⁵⁶ Mount Moriah is no longer in competition with the Christian holy sites. It has disappeared.

Sivertsev has pointed out that, in response to this erasure, the Ark of the Covenant/Foundation Stone acquired the same political and cosmological significance as the Cross/Golgotha.¹⁵⁷ He cites as an example one version of the Hebrew apocalypse (in fact, several apocalypses) known as the *Signs of the Messiah*. In the version called the *Signs of Simeon bar Yohai* (not to be confused with the *Secrets of Simeon bar Yohai*), the seventh and eighth signs recount how the king of Edom (the Roman emperor) brought his crown to the Temple Mount, placing it on the Foundation Stone. It is then taken by the Messiah b. Joseph.

וישב מלך אדום פעם שנייה לירושלים ויבוא בהיכל ויקח את עטרת הזהב אשר על ראשו וישם אותה על אבן שתייה ואומר רבונו של עולם כבר החזרתי מה שלקחו אבותי ויהיה בימיו צרה האות השמיני מוציא נחמיה בן חושיל ומשיח בן יוסף את העטרה שהשיב מלך אדום לירושלים ויצא שם נחמיה בכל העולם

[The Seventh Sign.] The king of Edom will return to Jerusalem a second time and will come to the Temple. He will take the crown of gold which is on his head, and he will place it on the Foundation Stone, saying, “Master of the World! I have now returned what my ancestors took.” Thus it will be in the days of distress.

The Eighth Sign. Nehemiah b. Hushiel and the Messiah b. Joseph will take out the crown which the king of Edom returned Jerusalem. The fame of Nehemiah will go out into the whole world.¹⁵⁸

155 Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, 99.

156 On this map, see Herbert Donner, *The Mosaic Map of Madaba: An Introductory Guide* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1992).

157 Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology*, 74–77.

158 My translation from Michael Higger, *Halachot ve-Haggadot* (New York: Debei Rabbanan, 1933), 115–23 (121) [Hebrew]. Compare the translation of John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005),

Sivertsev notes that this is an imitation of an episode in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. In chapter fourteen, the Last World Emperor, having defeated all of Christendom's earthly enemies, places his crown on the cross at Golgotha, where it is assumed into heaven. The episode signifies the return of imperial authority to God (who had bestowed it upon Rome in the first place) and immediately precedes the birth of Antichrist and the end of the world. In the Jewish narrative, the Messiah b. Joseph is reclaiming the rightful kingship that Rome had usurped.

The *Signs of Simeon bar Yohai* was written at about the same time as *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* and already shows a Jewish reaction to Christian narratives about the centrality of Golgotha. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* can be conceived along similar lines. The entirety of PRE glorifies the site of the Temple to the exclusion of competing cult sites. The immediate target appears to be Christianity, which had appropriated traditions related to the Jewish Temple and applied them to Golgotha. Two other competing traditions should be kept in mind. First, Islam also employed Temple traditions for its central shrine. The most notable example is the sacrifice of Ishmael, which occurs immediately after Abraham and Ishmael build the Ka'ba.¹⁵⁹

Second, the Samaritans emphasize Mount Gerizim (their Temple Mount) as the site of important events from the age of the patriarchs. The collection of hymns known as *Memar* (or *Tibat*) *Marqah*, compiled from the fourth century onwards, maintains that Abraham offered Isaac on Mount Gerizim and that all the patriarchs worshiped there. The hymnist says of the altar on Gerizim: "The great prophet Moses arranged it, Adam laid its foundations, and Noah completed its building, Abraham sat there, Isaac honored it, and Jacob strengthened it, and Joseph the king guarded it with faith" (IV.77).¹⁶⁰ *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* is Judaism's contribution to a discourse in which the central cult site is the locus of all the major events in sacred history. Still, Christianity seems to hold pride of place as the primary target of PRE's counter-history, as the final example will show.

113–14, from a different source: Arthur Marmorstein, "Les Signes du Messie," *Revue des Études Juives* 52 (1906): 176–86.

159 Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 105–51. He also notes competing traditions within Islam where Abraham sacrifices Isaac in Jerusalem. The location of the sacrifice, in fact, determines which son was sacrificed. He quotes al-Mas'ūdī as stating: "If the sacrifice occurred in the Hijāz, it was Ishmael, because Isaac never entered the Hijāz. If the sacrifice took place in Syria, then it was Isaac, because Ishmael did not enter Syria after he was taken from there" (137).

160 Abraham Tal, ed., *Tibāt Mārqa, The Ark of Marqah: Edition, Translation, Commentary* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 429. For earlier editions see Zeev Ben-Hayyim, ed., *Tibat Marqah: A Collection of Samaritan Midrashim* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1988) [Hebrew], and John Macdonald, *Memar Marqah: The Teachings of Marqah*, 2 vols. (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1963).

10.10 The Wood of the Cross

The *Cave of Treasures* ends with a life of Christ, covering his birth and his death. Curiously, even this section of the document has a parallel in PRE. In later Jewish tradition, Haman, the villain of the story of Esther, is a cipher for Jesus. Chapters 49–50 of PRE, occupying a climactic position in the overall arc of the book's sacred history, retells Esther with a focus on Haman. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* 49 begins with the genealogy of Haman. Esther and Mordechai do not enter the story until PRE 50, which recounts Haman's downfall. The nature of Haman's death is very different from the biblical book. He is hanged on a beam drawn from his own house—a beam, PRE clarifies, that came from the Holy of Holies. In *Cav. Tr.*, Jesus is likewise crucified on wood from the Temple, the very poles that once carried the Ark of the Covenant.

There are three respects in which Haman resembles Jesus. The first is the manner of their deaths. According to Esth 7:10, the king's servants “hanged Haman on the wood he had prepared for Mordechai” (וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת־הָמָן עַל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־הֵכִין לְמֹרְדֵּכַי). Greek sources already identify this vague form of execution and its instrument with the cross and crucifixion. In the Septuagint (Esth 7:9), the king orders that Haman be crucified (σταυρωθήτω), while Josephus' rendition of Esth 7:10 reads: “And the king immediately ordered that Haman be hanged on that very cross (ἐξ ἐκείνου τοῦ σταυροῦ) to die” (*Ant.* XI.267).¹⁶¹ The semantic range of the Hebrew word תלה includes crucifixion. For example, Deut 21:23, “The hanged one (תלוי) is cursed by God,” made famous by Paul's application of the verse to Jesus (Gal 3:13), is translated in *Targum Onqelos* as “the one who has been crucified” (אֲצִטְלִיב). The other Targumim (*Neofiti*, *Pseudo-Jonathan*) offer similar translations using the root צלב, “to crucify.” The word תלה is routinely used to describe the manner of Jesus' death in Hebrew literature, such as in the many versions of *Toledot Yeshu*.¹⁶²

Nowhere is this connection more evident than in an Aramaic Byzantine *piyyut* for Purim (seventh century?) where Haman interrogates several biblical villains: Nimrod, Pharaoh, Amalek, Sisera, Goliath, Zerah the Ethiopian (2Chr 14:8–14), Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar. Between Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, Haman interviews an anonymous individual whose identity is nevertheless clear.

¹⁶¹ Flavius Josephus, *Josephus in Nine Volumes*, trans. Henry St. John Thackeray et al., 9 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926–1965), 6:422.

¹⁶² See Sarit Kattan Gribetz, “Hanged and Crucified: The Book of Esther and *Toledot Yeshu*,” in *Toledot Yeshu (“The Life Story of Jesus”) Revisited: A Princeton Conference*, ed. Peter Schäfer, Michael Meerson, and Yaacov Deutsch (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 159–80, and Gavin McDowell, “The Alternative Chronology: Dating the Events of the Wagenseil Version of *Toledot Yeshu*,” in “*Toledot Yeshu*” in *Context: The Jewish “Life of Jesus” in Ancient, Medieval, and Modern History*, ed. Daniel Barbu and Yaacov Deutsch (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 59–80.

סבר את בגרמך דאת צלב לגרמך ואנא שותף עימך
 סמיר על קיס ודמותי במרקוליס מצייר על קיס
 סמרי על קיס ובשרי לטופח נקיס ובר נגיד בקיס
 סכיף באיסקוטוס מן אתא זיניטוס וקרן יתי כריסטוס

You think yourself/That you were crucified (צלב) alone/Yet I shared it with you.
 Nailed to a beam/As my image, for idolatry/Is painted on wood.
 They nailed me to a tree /My flesh lacerated by blows/The son of a carpenter
 Afflicted by the scourge/Born of a woman/They called me Christ (כריסטוס)! (ll. 85–88)¹⁶³

The contents of the *piyyut* help contextualize the imperial prohibition of burning Haman in effigy on the grounds that the image too closely resembles a crucifix (*Codex Theodosianus* 16.8.18). The resemblance was apparently intentional.

The second point of resemblance is the time of their deaths. The book of Esther explains the origin of the festival of Purim in the month of Adar, but most of the story takes place eleventh months earlier, in Nisan, at the time of Passover. This is already a subtext of the biblical book. Haman casts the lots on 13 Nisan (Esth 3:12), and the central portion of the book (Esth 3–7) takes place over the next five days, when Esther calls for a three-day fast (Esth 4:6) and then invites the king and Haman to dinner on two successive nights (Esth 5:4–8). The biblical book never calls attention to this fact, but rabbinic literature does, including the Babylonian Talmud, which, with PRE, observes that Esther's fast would interfere with the observance of Passover.

b. Megillah 15a¹⁶⁵

ויעבור מרדכי אמר רב שהעביר יום ראשון של
 פסח בתענית ושמואל אמר דעבר ערקומא דמיא.

PRE 50 (JTS 3847, f. 148b)

ולא מצאת איש אחד נאמן לשלוח אל מרדכי
 ואמרה היא בעצמה לבוא אל מרדכי שנ' ותאמ'
 אסתר להשיב אל מרדכי אמרה לו לך כנס את
 כל היהודים וצומו עלי ואל תאכלו ואל תשתו
 שלשת ימים לילה ויום אמ' לה מרדכי והלא יום
 השלישי יום הפסח הוא אמרה לו זקן שביהודים
 אם אין ישר' למי הוא הפסח שמע מרדכי ועשה
 ככל אשר צוה אסתר שנ' ויעבר מרדכי מה לשון
 ויעבר מרדכי שעבר על מצות הפסח

¹⁶³ My translation from Michael Sokoloff and Joseph Yahalom, eds., *Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Poetry from Late Antiquity: Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1999), 216 [Hebrew]. For another translation of this passage with analysis, see Ophir Münz-Manor, "Carnavalesque Ambivalence and the Christian Other in Aramaic Poems from Byzantine Palestine," in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Robert Bonfil et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 829–43.

¹⁶⁴ My translation from the Vilna Shas.

“And Mordechai traversed” (ויעבר). Rav said: Rather, he *transferred* (העביר) the first day of Passover to a fast day. Samuel said that he crossed a stream of water.

She could not find anyone trustworthy to send to Mordechai, so she convinced herself to go to Mordechai, as it is written, “Esther spoke and replied to Mordechai, she said to him, ‘Go, gather all the Jews and fast on my behalf. Neither eat nor drink for three days and nights’” (Esth 4: 15–16). Mordechai said to her: “Isn’t the third day the day of Passover?!” She said to him, “Elder of the Jews, if there is no Israel, for whom is Passover?” Mordechai understood and did everything that Esther commanded. It is written, “And Mordechai traversed” (Esth 4:17). What is the meaning of “And Mordechai traversed” (ויעבר)? Rather, he *transgressed* (עבר) the commandments of Passover.

Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer goes so far as to document on what specific date each event occurs. Esther’s first banquet occurs on the eve of 15 Nisan, meaning that the fast transpired from 13–15 Nisan. The second banquet, when Esther unmasks Haman and he is hanged, occurs on 16 Nisan.¹⁶⁵ These dates concord with chapter 29 of *Seder Olam Rabbah*, the rabbinic account of biblical chronology: “On 13 Nisan, Haman wrote letters to destroy and to kill and to exterminate all the Jews. On 16 Nisan, they hanged Haman on the tree” (בשלישה עשר בניסן כתב המן ספרים להשמיד) (להרוג ולאבד את כל היודים בששה עשר בניסן חלו את המן על העץ).¹⁶⁶

The sixteenth of Nisan is not the Jewish Passover, but it is the Christian one—Easter—if one follows (like *Cav. Tr.*) the Johannine calendar, where Jesus is condemned and crucified on the day of preparation, 14 Nisan, and not a day later as in the Synoptic Gospels. The resurrection therefore takes place on 16 Nisan. Clemens Leonhard cites Eutychius of Constantinople (d. 582 CE), who writes in his *Sermo de Paschate et de Sacrosancta Eucharistia*: “Therefore, Christ’s church also celebrates his holy resurrection, which happened when the sixteenth (day) began. Having driven out the fourteenth of the moon, she (the church) also does not any more celebrate together with the Jews.”¹⁶⁷ The date of Haman’s death is not incidental but has elements of anti-Christian polemic.

¹⁶⁵ The printed edition says 17 Nisan. This is an error (*zayin* for *waw*), since it dates the previous banquet to 15 Nisan.

¹⁶⁶ Translated from Chaim Milikowsky, ed., *Seder Olam: Critical Edition, Commentary, and Introduction*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi Press, 2013), 1:319 [Hebrew].

¹⁶⁷ Clemens Leonhard, *The Jewish Pesach and the Origins of the Christian Easter* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 153.

The third point of resemblance is a connection to “Edom.” Haman is genealogically related to Edom, that is, Esau (Gen 36:1). Haman is an “Agagite” (Esth 3:1), commonly interpreted as a descendant of the Amalekite king Agag, killed by the Israelite king Saul (with some reluctance) in 1Sam 15. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* tells Agag’s story twice, first in PRE 44, in conjunction with Amalek’s attack on Israel in Exod 17, and again at the beginning of PRE 49, to introduce Haman. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* directly ties Haman to Amalek, the grandson of Esau (Gen 36:12).

In fact, PRE goes even further and connects Haman to Rome, commonly designated in rabbinic literature with the cipher “Edom.”¹⁶⁸ According to PRE 49, the prophet Samuel issued a prayer that protected Israel from the attacks of the “children of Agag.” It is then followed by the story of the Roman emperor Titus, the destroyer of the Second Temple, who was brought low by a single gnat (cf. *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan-B* 7; *b. Gittin* 56b). It is one of the very few times that PRE introduces narrative material that does not originate from the Hebrew Bible, the only other examples being the prologue (PRE 1–2) and the story of Resh Laqish in PRE 43. The implication by association is that Haman anticipates the tribulations of Israel under Rome.

“Edom” does not merely designate pagan Rome but also the Christian empire. According to PRE 50, Haman has an “embroidered image” (צלם מרוקם) stitched onto his clothes, forcing everyone who bows before him, as per the biblical story (Esth 3:2), to commit idolatry (עבודה זרה). For this reason, Mordechai refuses to honor Haman. Elliott Horowitz speculates that this image is none other than the cross: “The author of this late midrash transforms Haman into a Christian bishop who proudly wears upon his chest the sign of the cross [. . .] And, although the midrashic author apparently resided in Umayyad Palestine, he nonetheless felt the need to link the ancient enemy of the Jewish people with the central symbol of Christianity.”¹⁶⁹ I would go further and argue that Haman is not merely a Christian bishop but a type of Christ.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ The classic essay on this subject is Gerson Cohen, “Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought,” in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 19–48. See also Helen Spurling, “The Biblical Symbol of Edom in Jewish Eschatological and Apocalyptic Imagery,” in *Sacred Text: Explorations in Lexicography*, ed. Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala and Angel Urbán (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 271–98.

¹⁶⁹ Horowitz, *Reckless Rites*, 157–58.

¹⁷⁰ Previous scholarship identified the portrait of Jonah in PRE 10 as a parodic “type of Christ.” See Rachel Adelman, “Jonah through the Looking Glass: *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer*’s Portrait of an Apocalyptic Prophet,” *Arc: The Journal of the School of Religious Studies* 39 (2011): 79–92, recapitulating ideas she first introduced in *The Return of the Repressed: Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 211–58. See also Katharina E. Keim, *Pirquei deRabbi Eliezer: Structure, Coherence, Intertextuality*, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 184–90.

Jesus is not connected to Edom through any inherent quality but because of events that transpired centuries after his death: the conversion of the Roman emperor to Christianity. For this reason, the Babylonian Talmud says that Jesus is “close to the government” (*b. Sanhedrin* 43a).¹⁷¹

והתניא בערב הפסח תלאוהו לישו והכרוז יוצא לפניו מ' יום קודם שהוא יוצא ליסקל על שכישי
והסית והדיח את ישראל כל מי שיודע לו זכות יבא וילמד עליו ולא מצאו לו זכות ותלאוהו בערב
הפסח אמר עולא ותסברא בר הפוכי זכות הוא מסית הוא ורחמנא אמר לא תחמול ולא תכסה עליו
אלא שאני ישו דקרוי למלכות הוה

It was taught: On the eve of Passover, they hanged Jesus. The crier went out before him forty days prior [saying], “He is going to be stoned because of witchcraft, incitement, and leading Israel astray. Anyone who knows a reason to acquit him should come forward and make it known on his behalf.” But they did not find a reason to acquit him and hanged him on the eve of Passover. Ulla said: How could you even consider that this son of perversion was innocent? He was an inciter! The Merciful One states: “You shall not pity and you shall not protect him” (Deut 13:9). But Jesus was different because he was close to the government.

Note that this one talmudic passage combines all three commonalities between Jesus and Haman: the manner of their deaths, the timing, and a connection to Rome.

The one respect in which PRE departs from previous depictions of Haman is the origin of his gallows. In fact, it contradicts Scripture. Instead of Haman being hanged on gallows he has already prepared for Mordechai, a new beam is pulled out of his own house, in accordance with a law recorded in the book of Ezra. It is this novelty which brings PRE into contact with *Cav. Tr.*

Cav. Tr. 50:20 and 53:6.13 (BL Add. 25875, ff. 46a–46b, 49a, and 49b)

[50:20] וצוה המלך לתלותו על העץ באותה השעה מה
עשה אליהו ז"ל נדמה לחרבונה אחד מסריסי
המלך אמ' לו אדוני המלך יש עץ אחד בביתו
שלהמן מבית קדש הקדשים גבהו חמשים אמה
מנ' שהוא מבית קדש הקדשים שנ' ויבן את בית
יער הלבנון מאה אמה ארכו ועשרים אמה רחבו
ושלשים אמה קומתו וצוה המלך לתלותו עליו
לקיים מה שנ' התנסב אעא מן וזקף יתרמי עלוהי
ולקח המלך את כל אשר להמן ונתן למרדכי ואס-
תר לקיים מה שנ' עלי יתעביד על דנא

PRE 50 (JTS 3847, ff. 149b–150a)

והתניא בערב הפסח תלאוהו לישו והכרוז יוצא לפניו מ' יום קודם שהוא יוצא ליסקל על שכישי
והסית והדיח את ישראל כל מי שיודע לו זכות יבא וילמד עליו ולא מצאו לו זכות ותלאוהו בערב
הפסח אמר עולא ותסברא בר הפוכי זכות הוא מסית הוא ורחמנא אמר לא תחמול ולא תכסה עליו
אלא שאני ישו דקרוי למלכות הוה

¹⁷¹ See Thierry Murcia, *Jésus dans le Talmud et la littérature rabbinique ancienne*, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 435–42.

[53:6] ܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ
ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ
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[53:13] ܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ

[50:20] When the sentence was handed down by Pilate concerning the death of our Lord, they [the Jews] hurried and entered the Temple (ܡܕܢܐ) and brought out from there those wooden beams of the Ark (ܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ). They constructed the cross of Christ (ܡܕܢܐ ܕܡܕܢܐ) from them. In truth, it was fitting for them that those beams that once carried the Covenant should now carry the Lord of the Covenant.

[53:6] When he [Nicodemus] brought down the body of our Lord from the cross (ܡܕܢܐ), the Jews ran and took the cross (ܡܕܢܐ) and introduced it back into the Temple because it was the wooden beams of the Ark.

[53:13] His cross was [made from] wood from the Temple.

The king ordered to hang him on the gallows at that very instant. What did Elijah, of blessed memory, do? He changed his appearance into Harbonah, one of the king's servants. He said to him, "My lord, the king, there is a particular tree in the house of Haman from the house of the Holy of Holies (בית קדש הקדשים), fifty cubits tall." From where do we learn it was from the house of the Holy of Holies? It is written, "He built the house of the Forest of Lebanon, a hundred cubits long and [fifty] cubits wide and thirty cubits high" (1Kgs 7:2).¹⁷² The king ordered to hang him upon it, in order to fulfill what has been written, "A beam shall be taken from [his house], and he shall be hanged (זקף) upon it" (Ezra 6:11). The king took all that belonged to Haman and gave it to Esther and Mordechai to fulfill what has been written, "For my sake it shall be done for this" (Ezra 6:11).

Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer justifies its strange tradition through a prooftext referring to house of the Forest of Lebanon, "Lebanon" often being a shorthand for the Temple.¹⁷³ A second prooftext comes from the Aramaic portion of Ezra (the decree of Darius), which uses the word זקף ("to raise up") to describe the punishment for anyone who would interfere with the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. This word is rare in the Bible. Apart from Ezra, it only appears in a pair of Psalms (145:14; 146:8). In Aramaic, including Syriac, it is a common word that not only means "to elevate or lift up" but "to crucify." It is directly cognate to the word used for the cross (ܡܕܢܐ) in the *Cav. Tr.* passage cited above. The introduction of the prooftext is also unusual. Instead of a standard introduction such as שְׁנֵאמַר, literally "as it is said" (but often translated "as it is written"), PRE states that the king wanted to "fulfill" (לְקַיֵּם) the

¹⁷² The text erroneously reads "twenty," against the biblical text and—more importantly—the very sense of the passage!

¹⁷³ Geza Vermes, "Lebanon – The Historical Development of an Exegetical Tradition," in *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 26–40.

decree of his predecessor, after the fashion of the Scripture fulfillment passages throughout the Passion narratives (e.g., John 19:24.28.36).

Turning to the *Cave of Treasures*, it is important to note that the key verse, *Cav. Tr.* 50:20, is not found in every version. In Arabic versions, it is not in the *Book of the Rolls* or the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*, although the Ark is present in all three Garshuni manuscripts (Mingana Syr. 32, ff. 142b–143a; Mingana Syr. 258, f. 139a–139b; Borgia Arab. 135, f. 271b). The scribe of Mingana Syr. 258, f. 138b has even written the word “Ark” (ܐܪܚܐ) in large letters across the top margin, signifying its importance. The Ark tradition is also missing from the Georgian version, which I discussed in chapter eight, concluding that references to the Ark were, for some reason, removed. Given the popularity of a work like the *Book of the Rolls*, this means a large percentage of manuscripts do not mention the tradition. However, manuscripts such as Mingana Syr. 258 could have more than one work from the *Cav. Tr.* cycle, in this case the *Conflict* and an Arabic translation of the primary version of *Cav. Tr.*

As for its meaning, the Ark tradition underlines the connection between Jesus and the Temple, recalling Paul’s comparison of Christ to the “mercy seat” (Rom 3:25). It does not make much sense from a historical perspective, but from the perspective of *Cav. Tr.*’s “historicized typology,” it is perfectly coherent. Following the Epistle to the Hebrews, *Cav. Tr.* understands the death of Jesus in sacerdotal terms. Hebrews argues that Jesus, though not a levitical priest, is nevertheless a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek who brings his own blood into the heavenly sanctuary as an offering (Heb 9:11–12). In *Cav. Tr.*, Jesus stands in continuity with a literal order of Melchizedek, who maintained the proto-Christian cult of Adam at Golgotha. Jesus’ blood is even physically transported into the earthly sanctuary, emphasizing the connection between the death of Jesus and the sacrifice for the Day of Atonement. The identification of the cross of Christ with the Ark of the Covenant underscores the continuity between the Old and the New Covenants as well as the continuity between the Jewish Temple and the Church of the Anastasis that, in the Christian *imaginaire*, replaced it. The cross is, functionally, the Ark of this new, Christian Temple.

In Christian typology, the Ark of the Covenant was most often a symbol of Christ’s human nature or of Mary, the mother of Jesus—both, like the Ark, vessels housing the divine presence.¹⁷⁴ Comparison between the Ark and the cross was

174 For patristic examples of this typology, see Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought*, trans. Thomas Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 102 (Athanasius), 114 (Ephrem the Syrian), 163–64 (Gregory of Nazianzus), 174 (John Chrysostom), 207 (Jerome), 247–48 (Cyril of Alexandria), 374 (Isidore of Seville), and 408 (John of Damascus). I have omitted less familiar authors from this list.

rare, although there is a certain resemblance between them. Both, for instance adorned the rock believed to be the “navel of the earth,” making the two objects extensions of the polemical discourse surrounding Mount Moriah and Golgotha. They both also harbored the mystical presence of God, serving as his “footstool,” either as a divine throne in the inner sanctum of the Temple or as the support of a dying body. As portable property, they could also serve as battle standards, and it is this aspect which inspired George of Pisidia, a poet in the court of Heraclius (r. 610–641), to draw a polemical comparison between them. On the occasion of the Byzantine emperor Heraclius’ restoration of the true cross to Jerusalem in 629, following a lengthy war with Persia in which the cross was captured, George wrote a poem in celebration, including the line, “The cross above you [i.e., standing on Golgotha] appeared to your enemies as a new Ark, yet more powerful than the Ark” (*In restitutionem S. Crucis*, ll. 73–74).¹⁷⁵

On the whole, though, the identification of the Ark and the cross in *Cav. Tr.* is the germ of a new myth rather than part of an ongoing tradition. A medieval legend of the wood of the cross, extremely popular in Latin and translated into several European vernaculars, connects the wood of the cross to numerous events in the history of Israel. The most developed version, called *Post peccatum Adae* (“After the sin of Adam,” the first words) is a direct sequel to the *Life of Adam and Eve*, where Seth brings the seeds of the tree out of Paradise instead of the oil of life.¹⁷⁶ The tree subsequently becomes the rod of Moses and part of the Temple before it serves its ultimate purpose as the cross of Christ. Different accounts in different languages (Latin, Slavonic, Greek, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Armenian, in addition to European vernaculars) subtract or add episodes, but they all feature the wood of the cross as part of the Temple.¹⁷⁷

The proliferation of legends about the wood of the cross provoked its own Jewish response independently of *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer*. In *Toledot Yeshu*, the notorious Jewish parody of the Gospel literature, Jesus is hanged on a cabbage stalk.¹⁷⁸ Christian polemical literature about *Toledot Yeshu* will sometimes specify that this

175 My translation from George of Pisidia, *Poemi I. Panegirici Epici*, ed. and trans. Agostino Pertusi (Ettal: Buch-Kunstverlag, 1959), 228.

176 For a recent translation, see Stephen C. E. Hopkins, “The Legend of the Holy Rood Tree,” in *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures, Volume 2*, ed. Tony Burke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 145–59.

177 See Gavin McDowell, “La Gloire du Liban viendra chez toi (Is 60,13) : À l’origine de la légende du bois de la croix,” *Apocrypha* 29 (2018): 183–201, and the bibliography cited there.

178 Michael Meerson and Peter Schäfer, eds., *Toledot Yeshu: The Life Story of Jesus*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 1:96–100.

cabbage grew in the Temple.¹⁷⁹ The inner logic of the cabbage tradition has long puzzled scholars, but it could be tied to the Christian belief that the wood of Jesus' cross was once part of the Temple. The Hebrew word for cabbage (כרוב) is identical to the word for Cherub (כרוב), as in the figures adorning the Ark of the Covenant.¹⁸⁰ Dating the various versions of *Toledot Yeshu* and its traditions is a particular challenge, but it seems clear that PRE and *Toledot Yeshu* spring from the same impulse: to provide a counter-narrative to Christian beliefs about the wood of the cross.

If the *Cave of Treasures* places the wood of the cross in the Holy of Holies, then *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* takes it back out. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer*'s modification of earlier Jewish tradition can be understood as a polemic against Christian triumphalism. The *Cave of Treasures* is representative of the Christian perspective: It presents the death of Jesus as the moment of the abolition of Jewish ordinances and the transfer of priesthood, kingship, prophecy, and even Passover (i.e., the Eucharist) to Christianity (e.g., *Cav. Tr.* 52:14–19; 54:3). The very Ark of the Covenant is appropriated as the central Christian symbol, an object of both Jewish fascination and revulsion.¹⁸¹ In PRE 50, the beam from the Holy of Holies is removed from the “House of Haman.” Presumably, it returns to its rightful place. The very next chapter, PRE 51, describes a new heaven and a new earth but also the construction of the eschatological Temple and the restoration of those observances that the death of Christ allegedly abolished.

In fact, the placement of Esther in the overall design of PRE reflects the function of the Passion in *Cav. Tr.* Both stories occupy the climactic positions of their respective works and represent the anticipated culmination of sacred history.¹⁸² In *Cav. Tr.*, the story of Christ is principally anticipated by the story of Adam, including his burial at Golgotha. In PRE, the story of Esther unites two recurring themes, the dual significance of Passover and the Temple Mount throughout sacred history. According to PRE, the celebration of Passover dates to the time of Adam and was

179 See, for example, Raymond Martini's rendition of *Toledot Yeshu* in Meerson and Schäfer, *Toledot Yeshu*, 1:177: “And this is not a miracle because every year one such cabbage springs up in the Sanctuary, and one hundred pounds of seed fall from it.”

180 See Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, “On Some Early Traditions in *Toledot Yeshu* and the Antiquity of the ‘Helena’ Recension,” in “*Toledot Yeshu*” in *Context: The Jewish “Life of Jesus” in Ancient, Medieval, and Modern History*, ed. Daniel Barbu and Yaacov Deutsch (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 43–58 (54–57), who devises an additional pun involving the Hebrew and Aramaic words for lettuce and the Syriac term for “mercy seat.”

181 For other examples of Jewish attitudes to the cross from PRE until the end of the Middle Ages, see Horowitz, *Reckless Rites*, 149–85.

182 Although the final chapter of PRE returns to the story of Moses, it is less a continuation of the earlier chapters than an independent homily on slander.

practiced by the patriarchs until the time of Moses. Likewise, Adam worshiped on the Temple Mount, and his example was followed by Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The death of Haman on a beam from the Holy of Holies in the wake of Passover is not just an incidental polemic against Christianity but a summary of the work's major themes. Ironically, Haman's death, like the death of Jesus, is also a moment of redemption. It might not be too much to call the story of Esther the "Jewish Gospel."

10.11 Conclusion

The foregoing examples demonstrate *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer's* broad knowledge of traditions found in the *Cave of Treasures*. Some of these traditions, such as the introduction of Satan into the Garden of Eden, were widespread and found in numerous Christian and Muslim works written in Greek, Syriac, or Arabic. Others, however, were restricted to *Cav. Tr.* and dependent works, such as the specific tripartite division of Noah's Ark. In either case, *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* demonstrates the fluidity with which such traditions crossed religious boundaries. It also illustrates how people living within a given region could understand the history of Israel in a similar way, regardless of religion. The same phenomenon was observed in the second part of this study, where the Jews of Europe adopted the same traditions from *Jubilees* as their Christian neighbors.

Although many of these traditions are also found in Muslim literature, they often take the form of an anti-Christian counter-narrative in PRE. In the *Life of Adam and Eve* and the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*, Adam's (failed) penance is the prelude to the promise of a future redeemer; in PRE, Adam's penance succeeds, and his sin is forgiven. In *Cav. Tr.*, the burial of Adam becomes the establishment of a proto-Christian cult based on the veneration of his remains; in PRE, Adam plans his burial specifically to avoid such a cult. In *Cav. Tr.*, Abel is a type of Christ, whose blood acquires religious significance; in PRE, he is a pious Jew who observes Passover. In *Cav. Tr.*, Adam is placed in the center of Noah's Ark; in PRE, the Ark does not contain the body of Adam but rather "abominations." In *Cav. Tr.*, Melchizedek gives Abraham the Eucharist; in PRE, he circumcises the patriarch. In *Cav. Tr.*, Golgotha is the navel of the earth; in PRE, it is Mount Moriah. In *Cav. Tr.*, Jesus is hanged on wood from the Temple; in PRE, it is Haman. For every thesis, there is an antithesis. Only the widespread traditions about Satan, the twin sisters, and the Cainites and Sethites do not fit into this schema.

This examination not only reveals that *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* knew traditions from the *Cave of Treasures* but also the reason why PRE would adopt so many non-rabbinic traditions: They served a polemical and an apologetic purpose. The

reformulated traditions strengthened the author's own religious identity while denigrating the religion of his opponents. Although PRE frequently departs from established rabbinic tradition, the traditions of PRE favor important markers of Jewish identity, e.g., the centrality of the Temple, circumcision, Passover, and aniconism. The new traditions subsequently became widespread in rabbinic writing of the Middle Ages. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* is an example of the construction of Jewish identity against Christianity and Islam. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer*, rather than marking an invasion of foreign traditions, represents the invention of rabbinic tradition.

