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Early Christian Old Testament Exegesis and the Midrash: Origen's Use of Jewish Tradition in His Homilies on Genesis and Exodus

Shira Lander

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partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for Ordination

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Referees, Professors Adam Kamesar and Richard Sarason

Digest

Close scriptural interpretation was not the exclusive province of the Rabbis. Early Christian scholars occupied themselves equally as diligently with Biblical exegesis. Though they often employed similar techniques, their purposes, to the extent that such purposes can be determined, may have been radically different. This thesis explores the points of contact between Origen's Homilies on Genesis and Exodus and Jewish interpretations of the same passages.

The first chapter gives general background information on the Christian exegete's life and works and explores the possible sources upon which Origen would have relied for Jewish exegesis. The second chapter outlines Origen's Biblical hermeneutic and explores the broad similarity of Origen's approach to scripture to that of the rabbis. The third chapter traces parallels in Origen's homilies with Jewish literature and analyzes how he used the traditions to explain apparent difficulties in the text. In addition, the ways in which these solutions are employed, whether similar or dissimilar to the way in which they are used by the Rabbis, and what the usage reflects about the author's Sitz im Leben, are examined. In the fourth chapter, we analyze three prominent parallels which Origen uses to make a homiletical point (where the text is not particularly problematic). The fifth chapter discusses Origen's use of rabbinic interpretation to attack Jewish understanding of

Scripture or to refute claims made against Christianity. Our conclusion answers questions raised in the first chapter, "To what extent did Origen rely on rabbinic and/or Jewish material, and how might he have had access to that material?" Finally, we suggest the benefit of such comparative studies. This comparative study attempts not only to elucidate similarities and differences but also to reveal something about the nature of Christian and Jewish Biblical exegeses themselves.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: "Origen, His Works, and His Sources"

(Including thesis purpose and methodology)

Origen

From the rough sketches of Origen's life mentioned in the sixth book of Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History we might conclude that Origen led quite an interesting and busy existence. Other writers (Porphyry, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Epiphanius, Jerome, Rufinus of Aquileia, and Photius) mention him and his works but none in such detail as Eusebius.[1] The dependability of Eusebius' statements has been analyzed by Pierre Nautin, who sorts out the seemingly uncontrovertible facts from the more legendary elements.[2] As we know from Eusebius' work A Defense of Origen, co-authored by Pamphilus (of which only the first book has survived in Rufinus' translation), Eusebius was quite taken with Origen. His admiration for the man and his thought no doubt influenced the way he depicts Origen in his chronological account of church history. Nevertheless, as Nautin writes, "Eusèbe est un historien honnête," which leads the scholarly consensus to follow Eusebius on many counts.[3]

Born in Alexandria, c. 185, Origen soon distinguished himself as an able student of both religious and secular learning. His father Leonides, Eusebius reports, was his

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[1]F. Prat, CathEnc 11 (1911), 306, and H. Crouzel, NCE 10 (1967), 767.

[2]Pierre Nautin, Origène. Sa vie et son oeuvre (Christianism antique), Paris 1977.

[3]Nautin, 25.

first teacher.[4] According to the church historian this same Leonides was martyred as a Christian in the persecutions of Septimius Severus in 201-202. Nautin believes that the identification of the martyr Leonides with the martyred father of Origen was an oral tradition which Eusebius used to dramatize Origen's commitment to the church.[5] That there is a connection between the father's martyrdom and the son's ascetic zeal for Christianity is apparently reflected in a letter Origen wrote to his imprisoned father.[6] Martyrdom figured prominently in Origen's religious conviction, as he revealed in his Exhortation to Martyrdom. While this work was written some years later (in 235), it may draw on his earlier boyhood exposure to martyrdom as well as the martyrdoms of fellow Christians at the time.[7]

As was often the case after state executions, the Roman government seized all Leonides' property and Origen was forced to seek a means of support.[8] Under the patronage of

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[4]Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica 6. 2. 7.

[5]Nautin, 32. Although this is corroborated by Photius, it appears that Photius merely repeats the tradition from Eusebius, as does Jerome (Photius, Bibliotheca, trans. J. H. Freese, New York 1920, codex 118).

[6]Eusebius, 6. 2. 6.

[7]Eusebius, 6. 28. 1.

[8]T. D. Barnes, "Legislation Against the Christians," JRS 58 (1968), 40-41. The Roman law against being Christian seems to have been reenforced after Septimius Severus' journeys throughout the East.

a wealthy Alexandrian woman, Origen continued his Greek education and began to teach.[9] He encountered pagans both in his study and his teaching. Origen claims that Greek philosophy had value beyond the basic Greek learning (rhetoric, mathematics, and grammar).[10] The influences of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Stoic philosophies are evident in Origen's work.[11]

However, this digression into Greek philosophy was considered heretical by later church members, and it may have contributed to the controversy which arose concerning his ordination.[12] Porphyry, just decades later, attacks Origen for borrowing the Greek allegorical method (and, presumably, for applying it to Jewish Scriptures, Ἰουδαϊκαὶ γραφαί).[13] (Apparently, there was controversy over the

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[9]Eusebius, 6. 2. 13.

[10]Eusebius, 6. 19. 12.

[11]Eugene de Faye, Origen and His Work, trans. Fred Rothwell, New York 1929, 25.

[12]See Eusebius, 6. 19. 4-8, and 23. 4. Origen refers to this himself in Hom in Gen 11. 2: "However, beyond this which we are taught from the Law of God, if we also are in touch with some of these instructions which appear to be on the outside in the world--for example, as the knowledge of literature or the theory of grammar, as geometry or mathematics or even the discipline of dialectic--and we bring over to our purposes all these things which have been sought from without and we approve them in the declaration of our law, then we will appear to have taken in marriage either foreign wives or even 'concubines'" (Origen, Homilies of Exodus and Genesis, trans. Heine, Washington 1982, 171).

[13]Eusebius, 6. 19. 4. According to A. D. Nock, that Porphyry attacks Origen's use of Greek, and not Philonic, allegory reveals the small degree to which Jewish sources were

type of texts to which it was acceptable to apply the allegorical method.)

There is some debate about when Origen left his Greek studies to devote himself entirely to the teaching of Christianity. He began selling his collection of Greek books to support himself, which may perhaps mark this turning point.[14] Regardless of exactly when this occurred Origen was still in Alexandria at the time. Eusebius claims that Origen assumed the position of head of the catechetical school there, but Trigg writes that he "had no position as an official representative of the faith...[yet] many Alexandrian Christians...clearly took Origen much more seriously than they did him [Demetrius, the bishop of Alexandria] or any of his chosen presbyters."[15]

Origen led an ascetic life and, in order to avoid any charges of impropriety with respect to the women who sponsored him, he apparently castrated himself while in Alexandria.[16] Scholars debate the historical accuracy of this account. Chadwick claims that the story had evolved

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used by the Church Fathers (A. D. Nock, "The Loeb Philo," ClR 57 (1943), 78.). However, we tend to agree with de Lange that this simply illustrates the degree to which Philo was accepted, at least by some, as part of the church canon (de Lange, Origen and the Jews, Cambridge 1976, 16).

[14]Eusebius, 6. 3. 8-9.

[15]J. W. Trigg, Origen. The Bible and Philosophy in the Third Century, Atlanta 1983, 132.

[16]Eusebius, 6. 8. 2.

from "malicious gossip" to an oral tradition, since Origen's interpretation of Matthew 19. 12 certainly eschews the literal one.[17] On the other hand, Nautin maintains that Origen's apparent castration aroused a dispute about his ordination, attested in the letter of Bishops Alexander and Theoctistus.[18]

While in Alexandria Origen did not limit his biblical scholarship to the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Bible preferred by Christians) but included a Hebrew text as well as other Greek versions (no longer extant) in his study of Scripture.[19] While Origen himself may not have known the Hebrew language well,[20] it is clear he felt that the

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[17]Henry Chadwick, Early Christian Thought, Oxford 1966, 67-68.

[18]Nautin, Lettres et écrivains chrêtiens des deuxieme et troisième siecles (Patristica 2), Paris 1961, 121-126. The more convincing interpretation of the bishops' dispute over Origen's preaching is found in Eusebius' own account of the matter in which he quotes a letter from Alexander and Theoctistus, Bishops of Jerusalem and Caesarea: "[Demetrius claims] this had never been heard of, nor taken place up to now--that laymen preach in the presence of bishops...[which is] clearly untrue...It is probable that this happens in other places and that we are unaware of it" (Eusebius, 6. 19. 17-18).

[19]Eusebius, 6. 16. 1.

[20]There is much debate over this issue. Eusebius and Jerome claim that Origen had thoroughly studied Hebrew. But de Lange (and others) point out how this claim need not be based on fact (de Lange, 22-23). Origen's need for a prooftext in his comment on Exodus 25. 2, that we know Israel's offerings to the Tabernacle were "of free-will" because they were solicited "as it seemed good in his heart," seems to support the latter view. Since the well-known hebrew word נדבה itself means "free-will offering," rendering the subsequent clause repetitive, Origen's prooftext is

Hebrew Bible was the place to begin diligent biblical exegesis.[21] Though it is not clear whether Origen depended on the Hebrew Scriptures directly, the character, and indeed the content of some of his interpretations leads us to believe that he used Jewish exegetical traditions (at the very least) indirectly.

There is some difficulty in identifying Origen's Jewish sources from his own work. In his Alexandrian writings he uses the term (ὁ) Ἑβραῖος.[22] This term may refer either to a Hebrew text (like Ἑβραϊκόν) or to a Hebrew-speaking person, perhaps even one of Palestinian origin. Some believe the term was used by Alexandrian Christians to refer to a convert to Christianity of Palestinian origin.[23] However, Origen uses the term οἱ ἀπὸ Ἑβραϊκόν when referring to such converts.[24]

Though it is difficult to trace the chronology of the next period of Origen's life, we do know that he travelled to many parts of the Roman empire and wrote two

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unnecessary. This error clearly derives from the Septuagint's translation (λάβετε) ἀπαρχάς for תרומה. Furthermore, he leaves unaddressed the problem of superfluity, on which he comments in many other places.

[21]Origen, Jo 6. 13 (7) 76, quoted in de Lange, 20.

[22]E.g., Princ 1. 3. 4, and 4. 3. 14. However, for polemical purposes, Origen tends to use Ἰουδαῖοι (de Lange, 30).

[23]Nautin, 417, citing Origen's Hom in Jer 20. 2, 130.

[24]E.g., Origen, Fr in Ps, PG 12. 1057B.

controversial works during this time: On First Principles and Commentary on Genesis. These works were particularly objectionable to Demetrius, who found Origen's allegorical method and some of his exegeses heretical.[25] Either because the conflict with Demetrius intensified or because of another outbreak of persecutions of Christians (under Caracalla in 215), Origen was forced to emigrate to Caesarea. There he found refuge among Demetrius' opponents, Alexander and Theoctistus, who had probably ordained him by 232.[26] Some dispute arose over his ordination, in defense of which Origen wrote a letter claiming that his works had been misconstrued by pagans and that pseudepigraphic, heretical manuscripts had been circulated bearing his name.[27] This controversy in Origen's lifetime may have paved the way for the attitude of later churchmen who declared Origen's works heretical.

In Caesarea Origen devoted himself almost entirely to study, exegesis, and teaching, which he considered to be more important endeavors than liturgical celebrations.[28]

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[25]Nautin, 366-70.

[26]Nautin, 65-70, based on Eusebius, 6. 23. 4, and 6. 26. 1. This alliance supports the former explanation of his departure from Alexandria, that Origen fled because of his differences with Demetrius.

[27]Rufinus, Liber de adulteratione librorum Origenis (PG 17.624A-626B) quoted in Heine, 16.

[28]Antonia Tripolitis, Origen: A Critical Reading, New York 1985, 6. She cites Hom in Lev 5.3, 6.6, 9.1, and 12.7. A similar attitude may be found in SifDev pisqa 41 on Dtn 11.

Despite his preference for academic pursuits, he found time for liturgical preaching as well. Sometime after 238, while in Caesarea, Origen delivered his pentateuchal homilies.

When Decius became Emperor in 249, he began to persecute religious offenders in an attempt to reinstate the preeminence of Roman state religion. He executed the bishop of Rome and imprisoned the bishops of Jerusalem and Antioch, which resulted in their deaths. Origen was imprisoned and tortured in Caesarea. According to Pamphilus, as reported by Photius, the torture culminated in Origen's death.[29] However Photius himself believes a different account of Origen's death:

> others say that he lived till the times of Gallus and Volusianus, and that he died at Tyre in the sixty-ninth year of his age and was buried there. This is the truer account, unless the letters supposed to have been written by him after the Decian persecution are spurious.[30]

Photius' evaluation of the accounts of Origen's death seems accurate not only for the reason he gives, but also because Pamphilus, having written his Apology while he himself was imprisoned under religious persecutions, would seem to have a strong motivation for seeing Origen's life end in a paradigmatic martyrdom.

13, (see also note 135 in this work).

[29]Photius summarizes Pamphilus' Apology for Origen in his Bibliotheca, codex 118.

[30]Photius, codex 118. Perhaps the "others" include the tradition found in Eusebius, 7. 1.

Works

Origen was the first to develop a critical interlinear biblical text, the Hexapla. The six parallel columns contained a Hebrew version, a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew, Aquila's Greek translation, Symmachus' Greek translation, the Septuagint (which Origen marked to indicate divergences from the Hebrew), and the Greek translation of Theodotion.[31] Origen probably enlisted the help of both Jewish and Christian scholars in research and compilation of the Hexapla. Thus Origen may have referred to the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew text when commenting on "the Hebrew." Unfortunately, only fragments of the Hexapla have survived.[32]

Origen's exegetical writings are of three genres: 1) commentary 2) scholia, and 3) homily. We have commentaries, at least in part, on Song of Songs, Matthew, John, and Romans. In these works, Origen uses philological, textual, historical, and etymological techniques combined with theological and philosophical insights to explicate the text. We also know indirectly, from the catalogues and

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[31]He marked the variants as follows: Asterisks in places where the Septuagint (LXX) omitted words or phrases found in the Masoretic text (MT), obeli in places where the LXX had portions not found in the MT (signifying the doubtful authority of the LXX in those passages), and metobeli at the conclusion of the passage noted (Henry Barclay Swete, An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek, Cambridge 1914, 70).

[32]See J. Quasten, Patrology, vol. 2: The Ante-Nicene Literature after Irenaeus, Westminster 1953, 44-45.

quotations of later authors and brief fragments, that Origen commented on Genesis, Kings, Psalms, Isaiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, the minor prophets, Luke, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Hebrews, Titus, and Philemon.[33]

Very few of the scholia have been preserved.[34] These were comprised of short explications of problematic passages. Jerome indicates that Origen wrote scholia on Exodus, Leviticus, Isaiah, Psalms 1-15, Ecclesiastes, and John.[35] According to Rufinus' translation of the homilies on Numbers, Origen also wrote scholia on Numbers.

Origen purportedly delivered over five hundred homilies on readings for the entire Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, Kings, Job, Psalms, Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Luke, Matthew, 1 Corinthians, and Hebrews.[36] The sixteen homilies on Genesis and thirteen on Exodus are preserved in Rufinus of Aquileia's Latin translation.[37] However, some Greek fragments of the second Genesis homily, sections 1-2, have been preserved in Procopius and in

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[33]Quasten, 51.

[34]Quasten, 46.

[35]Jerome, Epistle 33.

[36]Quasten, 46-47.

[37]Quasten, 46.

catenae.[38] Fragments of Exodus homily 8, sections 3 and 4 are preserved in the catena on the Octateuch, while fragments of sections 1, 3, and 4 are preserved in Procopius.[39]

These homilies, as we have them, are full texts of sermons, apparently preached as part of the liturgical assembly.[40] However, they do not constitute thematic expositions, or "sermons," as we know them. By and large they consist of close, line-by-line commentaries strung together which culminate in moral lessons extrapolated from the "moral level" of interpretation of a particular verse or verse-part. The homilies end with an interpretation of a final verse which then escalates to an exhortation (or sometimes rebuke), followed by the closing doxology calling upon Jesus Christ our Lord, "to whom belongs glory and sovereignty forever and ever. Amen."[41] These homilies functioned both as passionate exhortations as well as lessons on interpretation of the lection for the congregation.

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[38]Louis Doutreleau, "Le fragment grec de l'homélie II d'Origène sur la Genèse," Revue d'histoire des textes 5 (1975), 13, 19.

[39]W. Baehrens Überlieferung und Textgeschichte der lateinish erhaltenen Origeneshomilien zum Alten Testament (TU 42), Leipzig 1916, 233, cited in Heine, 39.

[40]The opening line of Hom in Ex 4, "We have just heard a most famous story read," indicates that the sermon followed the lection.

[41]Cf. 1 Peter 4. 11.

Scholars do not agree on when these homilies were delivered. The traditional view, that they were written in the last years of Origen's life, is based on a passage in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History. Eusebius comments that Origen did not permit shorthand writers to record his public discourses until he was over sixty years old.[42] Scholars conclude from this that the sermons must have been preached sometime after the year 246.[43] Since Origen probably died around 254, this leaves an eight-year period for his sermonizing activity.

However Nautin believes that Origen delivered these sermons over a three-year period sometime between 238-244.[44] First, using information from a variety of Origen's works, he shows that the preaching cycle must have been a three-year period.[45] Though the parallel is questionable, Nautin believes that homilies were delivered according to a liturgical cycle of readings not unlike a triennial cycle observed by the Jews in Palestine.[46]

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[42]Eusebius, 6. 36. 1.

[43]R. P. C. Hanson, Origen's Doctrine of Tradition, London 1954, 22; Henri Crouzel, Origen. The Life and Thought of the First Great Theologian, tr. A. S. Worrall, San Francisco 1989, 30; and Tripolitis, 115.

[44]Nautin, 405.

[45]Nautin, 401-405.

[46]Nautin, 400-401. The Palestinian "triennial" cycle may not have been fixed during this period and probably varied from one synagogue to another. Furthermore, it seems to have been more of a three-and-a-half year cycle (See B. Z.

According to this calendar, Nautin claims, the entire Old Testament would be read over a three-year period at non-eucharist services on weekdays. Homilies, based on the lection, were preached at every service.[47] On Sunday, in addition to reading from the Gospels and either the Acts or Epistles, a short Old Testament passage was read after which homilies were given. Since we have no basis for assuming Origen preached more than one of these cycles (and they all seem to be given in the same congregation), Nautin argues that Origen's homilies date to some three-year period during his stay in Caesarea.[48]

In trying to fix the date of this three-year period, Nautin rejects Eusebius' comment concerning the shorthand writers and Origen's public speaking.[49] He also rejects

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Wacholder, "Prolegomenon" in J. Mann, The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue v. 1, New York 1971, and J. Heinemann, "The Triennial Lectionary Cycle," JJS 19 (1968), 41-48).

[47]Nautin, 400. In addition, the Gospels were only read at eucharistic services (for the baptized) on Sunday morning and every Wednesday and Friday evenings at the end of the fast on those days.

[48]Nautin, 401.

[49]Nautin dismisses the entire passage as fiction, since the environment at that time would have warranted more allusions to martyrdom and persecution (401-2). There seems to be no other reason to distrust Eusebius, since this story, if it were legend, would appear to have no purpose. Furthermore, though shorthand writing has only been attested in the mid-second century, we assume, since it appears later (from the fourth century on), that it was used in the third century as well. See F. W. G. Foat, "An Old Greek Tachygraph," in JHS 21 (1901), 238-67.

that Joshua Homily 9. 10 alludes to a Decian persecution edict against Christians (245), taking it simply as an allegorization of the Joshua text (9. 1-2).[50] He then dates the homilies based on what he believes is an absolute chronological reference in Origen's homily on Psalm 36 to Septimius Severus (r. 197-211), 'one who ruled thirty years ago': "Vide quis imperavit ante hos triginta annos, quomodo imperium ejus effloruit..."[51] Origen says three other rulers have come and gone since that time (Caracalla, Elagabale, and Alexander), so the homily must have been delivered during the reign of Gordian (238-44). Nautin derives a terminus ad quem from the fact that the Commentary on Song of Songs, which was written in Athens in 245, mentions the homilies on Judges (which Nautin includes in the three-year cycle). Since the Commentaries on the Apostles, which Nautin dates before 243, were probably published at the same time as the delivery of the homilies, and since the Psalms homily was given early in the cycle, he concludes that the homilies as a whole must have been delivered between 238-242.[52]

There are some problems with Nautin's argument. First,

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[50]Nautin, 401-2.

[51]Origen, Hom in Jos 9. 10 (PG 12.1323 A-B).

[52]Nautin, 408. We also might remember that Origen originally came to Caesarea in 215, yet he did not make it his permanent home until around 230 (and he was not ordained until 232; J. W. Trigg, Origen. The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-century Church, Atlanta 1983, 132).

the notion of a three-year cycle even in Judaism is dubious.[53] Whether or not we reject the notion of a three-year cycle, there is still no problem with Eusebius' dating, other than its contradiction of Nautin's interpretation of the Psalm 36 homily's allusion to Severus. But if the allusion refers to Caracalla, then the homily must have been preached during the reign of Decius, three rulers later. This harmonizes the homily reference and Eusebius. In fact, we might find occasional references to the Decian persecutions in the later homilies.[54] Furthermore, the tradition that oral preaching was not to be written down, Origen's earlier attitude according to Eusebius, may reflect the influence of Palestinian Jewish practice or ancient Greek wisdom.[55] We may not be able to

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[53]See note 46, above.

[54]Indeed, one such example can be found in Hom in Gen 7. 3: "Do not suppose that that alone is persecution whenever you are compelled by the madness of the pagans to sacrifice to idols." Several certificates of a Roman commission attest to this specific requirement of sacrifice (Crouzel, 4).

[55]Since the Mishnah prohibits writing on the Sabbath, when synagogue homilies were undoubtedly preached, we can assume that any Jewish traditions which were transmitted in the synagogue were not recorded until sometime later. Thus, the sheer act of recording sermons (even were they preached on Sunday) might have been uncomfortable for either former Jews or prospective converts. Perhaps the Jewish attitude toward exegesis as an oral endeavor would have been an even stronger influence. (Though the פתיחתאות which have been preserved in midrashic collections are not transcriptions of actual sermon texts, they do "have a pattern which clearly reflects the live sermon...the proem is basically a rhetorical, not a literary form; it was intended for an actual audience and presupposed an auditory impact" (Joseph Heinemann, "The Proem in the Aggadic Midrashim. A form-critical study," Studies in Aggadah

determine the date of the homilies more precisely than the early part of the third century, which is sufficient for our purposes.

Very few of the homilies are preserved in Greek. We do, however, have the Latin translations of Rufinus, who rendered Origen's Genesis and Exodus homilies between 403-405. In his translation of Origen's Commentary on Romans, made in 406, he writes that these were all translated for Heraclius.[56] But we might suspect another motive in Rufinus' translations. At the end of the fourth century the first Origenistic crisis erupted. Along with those of Evagrius, Origen's works came under attack of heresy.[57] Rufinus may have undertaken these translations to defend Origen's works from the charge. In so doing, he may have edited the texts, as Jerome claimed.[58] In his preface to the translation of On First Principles, Rufinus himself openly explains his methodology, which includes dogmatic

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and Folk-literature (ScrHie 22), eds. J. Heinemann and Dov Noy, Jerusalem 1971, 101). This issue is debated by scholars. See note 61 below.)

[56]Heine, 29.

[57]At the Constantinople Synod of 543, the heresy of Origenism was anathematized. Justinian I issued an edict Liber adversus Origenem (NCE 10 (1967), 773-74). Quasten even suggests that many of Origen's original works were lost due to his heretical status within the later church (Quasten, 43).

[58]De Lange, 4. Indeed, there are several studies comparing the Greek fragments with Rufinus' translation which demonstrate a significant degree of variance. See Heine, 35 and de Faye, 34-36.

harmonization of Origen with the view Rufinus held to be "orthodox."[59]

In addition he claims to have made stylistic changes, according to the appendix to his translation of Origen's Commentary on Romans, also prepared for Heraclius:

> We expended a very great effort in the other works which we translated into Latin at your urging, or more precisely, exacting the task of daily work [sic], since we wished to fill out those things which Origen delivered extempore in the lecture room of the Church, where his purpose was not so much explanation as edification. This we did in the homilies or short speeches on Genesis and Exodus...We have undertaken, therefore, the task of filling out what was lacking, lest questions attacked and forsaken, his common homiletical style, produce repulsion in a Latin reader...[60]

The sparseness of what Rufinus here describes as Origen's "common homiletical style" in the homilies might be attributed to their having been recorded in shorthand or redacted by intermediate editors.[61]

Scholars doubt not only the faithfulness of Rufinus'

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[59]Heine, 34-35.

[60]PG 14.1291-94 (Heine, 36).

[61]Jewish parallels to this phenomenon may be found in פתיחתאות, though this issue is debated by scholars. Heinemann, Mann, and Wacholder uphold the view that פתיחתאות were originally public sermons, while Sarason and Porton maintain that פתיחתאות are essentially "redactional constructions." Cf. Heinemann and Wacholder (as cited in note 46); Jacob Mann, The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue 1, Cincinnati 1940; Richard Sarason, "The Petihtot in Leviticus Rabba: 'Oral Homilies' or Redactional Constructions?," JJS 33 (1982), 557-567; Gary Porton, "Defining Midrash," in The Study of Ancient Judaism v. 1: Mishnah, Midrash, Siddur, ed. Jacob Neusner, New York 1981, 55-92.

translations to Origen's original texts, but also the accuracy of the original Greek upon which he, and others, relied. Rufinus seemed to have made corrections in both directions: to restore texts which had been emended by pagans and heretics to what he felt was Origen's original intent; and ridding Origen's writings of any theologies which were objectionable to the presiding Bishops. Since there was so much debate surrounding Origen's theology, we can hardly expect that his texts were transmitted without any alteration. Apparently texts were adjusted to meet the needs of whomever got hold of them; even in his own time, Origen is purported to have complained about such textual falsification.[62]

In any case, while the versions we have may be abbreviated, harmonized, expunged of heretical references, clarified, and paraphrased, they are all we have, and we must deal with them as best we can. In the homilies on Genesis and Exodus, however, there are not sufficient Greek fragments to make a general statement about the accuracy of Rufinus' translation. There is some indication that they were less altered than Origen's other works: comparing Rufinus' translation with the parallel Greek fragments of the Homily on Noah's Ark, it is evident that Rufinus has made additions. However, it has been demonstrated that these interpolations were based directly on Origen's own

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[62]Rufinus, PG 17.624A-626B.

comments elsewhere.[63] We will follow the methodology of de Lange and Nautin, trusting Rufinus unless there is some doctrinal reason to suspect censorship. In general, Chadwick sums it up best: "The voice is the voice of Origen, even though the hands are the hands of Rufinus."[64]

Sources

De Lange writes:

> Origen stands, historically, in the transitional period, when the Christian symbolism had already become highly developed, but before the triumph of Christianity had brought about the final break between the Christian and Jewish traditions.[65]

Because Origen was so situated, his work is valuable in the study of the interpenetration of Judaism and Christianity. Though he was a Greek-speaker, and it has been shown that his knowledge of Hebrew was scanty at best (perhaps he could read it as well as a seminarian with one year of Old Testament Hebrew), he probably "had no more difficulty...in gaining access to the traditions and writings of the Rabbis than if they had been written in Greek, no more difficulty,

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[63]Heine, 40 and Doutreleau, 44 on Hom in Gen 2. 1. Though Rufinus elaborates the Greek paraphrase of Genesis 7. 16-17, his comments derive completely from what Origen writes just two sentences earlier.

[64]Chadwick, JThS 10 (1959), 25.

[65]De Lange, 116.

that is to say, than any Greek-speaking Jew."[66]

Since no rabbinic material has been preserved for us in Greek within the traditional rabbinic canon, we have the problem of knowing how Greek-speakers, like Origen, would have had access to rabbinic biblical exegetical traditions. The exchange between Church and Synagogue per se is not clear, though Origen clearly sees his own people, the Christians, as quite distinct from the Jews.[67] It seems highly unlikely that any substantive exchange would have occurred in the course of public debates.[68] However, such debates may have been the impetus behind Origen's exploration into rabbinic exegesis and may have prompted him to undertake the task of the Hexapla. He writes to Africanus that, in undertaking that work,

> I have tried to take account of all the Jewish editions, [so] we ought not to find ourselves quoting for controversial purposes texts which are not in their copies, and conversely, we shall be able to use texts in their copies even if they are not in ours.[69]

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[66]De Lange, 22-23. There is no indication that rabbinic traditions were actually recorded, apart from what is found in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Tannaitic midrashim. De Lange's analogy calls into question the degree to which Greek-speaking Jews had access to rabbinic exegesis, of course.

[67]See Hom in Gen 3. 2, 4, 7; 7. 6; and 9. 2.

[68]Lee Levine, Caesarea Under Roman Rule, Leiden 1975, 83, citing Origen, Cels 1. 45 (PG 11. 743a) and 1. 55 (PG 11. 762b).

[69]Origen, "Epistle to Africanus," 5 (Roberts, Alexander, and Donaldson, James, eds., The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Translations of The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325, 4, New York, 1903, 387).

We might also bear in mind that Rabi Hoshaya flourished at the same time as Origen.[70] We do not know of any formal exchange between either their students or the teachers, but it is possible that there was some contact.[71] But we do have evidence even in Origen's own sermonizing that the walls which separated churchgoers from synagogue-goers were not so solid.[72] The competition for proselytes (and especially dedicated members) was still raging in the third century.[73] Thus, Origen may have relied on his contact with Jewish visitors to his church for some Jewish exegetical insights.

It also seems that after the first century the libraries of Alexandria and Caesarea contained Judaeo-Hellenic texts of the previous four centuries. This body of material may have played a role in third century attempts to understand the Bible.[74] This literature was not transmitted by later Rabbis who chose Hebrew and Aramaic as the preferred language for scriptural exegesis. Much of it,

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[70]Levine, 88.

[71]De Lange, 28.

[72]Cf. Hom in Lev 5. 8 (GCS 6. 349. 4-5), Comm Ser in Mt 16 (GCS 11. 29-31), and Sel in Ex 12. 46 (PG 12. 285).

[73]Levine, 81-83.

[74]For example, in Cels 4. 51, Origen refers to "the writings of Aristobulus" (Origen, Contra Celsum, trans. H. Chadwick, Cambridge 1965, 226). Eusebius adds Demetrius to this list (Eusebius, 6. 13. 7).

however, was preserved by the Church.[75] Such documents include The Letter of Aristeas, "*biblical versions*, the Septuagint, Aquila, Theodotion, etc.; *Greek books* and *supplements (complements) to the Bible...'historical' writings*, Demetrios, Eupolemus, Artapanus, Aristeas, Jason of Cyrene, etc.," works preserved by Alexander Polyhistor later copied by Clement and Eusebius (containing the "native lore" of Graeco-Jewish writing before the Common Era), and biblical exegesis in Philo and Josephus.[76]

Josephus and Philo of Alexandria are the only authors of this type whose works have been preserved in any great quantity. This is due to the efforts of the Church Fathers. When Origen cites Josephus by name, it is clear that Origen does not view him as part of the church.[77] However, it seems that Origen himself regarded Philo as part of the Church's heritage.[78] In Against Celsus he refers to his source, which appears to be Philo (since a parallel interpretation is found in Philo), as 'one of our

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[75]Wacholder, Eupolemus, New York 1974, 58, n. 22.

[76]R. Bloch, "Methodological Note for the Study of rabbinic Literature," trans. W. S. Green with W. J. Sullivan, Approaches to Ancient Judaism v. 1, Providence 1978, 57, and Wacholder, 44-48, respectively.

[77]Origen, Cels 1. 47 (ANF 4, 416). Beyond this, Josephus is only quoted in those homilies which have been wrongly ascribed to Origen (Michael E. Hardwick, Josephus as a Historical Source in Patristic Literature Through Eusebius, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Dissertation 1987, 83-92).

[78]De Lange, 16.

predecessors.' Though this reference is not explicit, he cites Philo by name in other places in that work, 4. 51, and 6. 21.[79] Many of Origen's exegeses parallel those of Philo, whose works we assume he had in writing. However, since Philonic interpretations are also found in other authors of Origen's time, it is possible that a Christian intermediary source popularized the Philonic traditions (making them both more accessible and more acceptable; those would have been preserved in Greek Christian writings of an earlier period, i.e., New Testament, Justin, Ireneus, Clement). Since Philo reproduces traditions which were popular among Greek-speaking Jews, it is quite possible that Alexandrian Christians also would have appropriated these traditions. Where there are traces of other Jewish exegetical traditions in Origen's work not found in Philo (or the New Testament, an obvious source of Jewish traditions for Origen), our task is more difficult, since we have no precise dating of rabbinic traditions.[80]

It is also possible that Greek-speaking Jews continued to produce literary works in Greek after the end of the

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[79]In Cels 6. 21 he writes, "Philo also composed a book about this ladder, which is worthy of intelligent and wise study by those who wish to find the truth" (Cels, Chadwick, 334). Also in Comm in Mt 15. 3 (cited in de Lange, 148, note 7.)

[80]Even though the Mishnah was certainly redacted by the early third century (c. 200), it is not clear that Origen would have had access to it as a document. Even if he had, he probably would not have been able to understand it.

first century of the common era (in Caesarea). Though the discourse of the Rabbis was originally in Aramaic and Hebrew, the dissemination of rabbinic exegesis (in addition to law and lore) in the context of the public Jewish community might well have been in the vernacular Greek.[81] There is evidence that after the second century some Jews relied on a Greek translation for liturgical purposes.[82] It seems quite natural that homiletical material based on the Greek reading would itself have been generated in Greek.[83] But this theory, while suggestive, is speculative at best.[84]

Where Origen's exegesis is paralleled in rabbinic

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[81]S. Liebermann, "How Much Greek in Jewish Palestine?" Biblical and Other Studies, ed. Altmann, Cambridge 1963, 131.

[82]See m. Meg 1. 8, and p. Meg 1. 9, where, according to R. Simeon b. Gamaliel, the only acceptable language for ספרים, besides Hebrew, was Greek. In Caesarea, apparently, this ruling was accepted quite literally (per m. Sot 7. 1). P. Sot 7. 1 contains a debate over the reading of the עמש in Greek in second/third century Caesarea. This practice is also attested in Tertullian Apologia 18.

[83]While we know from the Mishnah (Meg 2. 1) that a מתורגמן would translate the Torah reading in pericopes to aid the congregation's comprehension of the lection, in general, hearing the translation did not fulfill one's halakhic obligation (see p. Meg 2. 1). However, one who reads a Greek version to a Greek speaker has fulfilled his obligation to read, while the Greek speaker who has heard a Hebrew reading has fulfilled his obligation to hear.

[84]Furthermore, these traditions arise out of the diaspora, and not from Palestine, where rabbinic activity flourished most in the third century. However, R. Bloch wrote, "...Hellenistic Judaism [from the third century B.C. through the first century] was much more oriented towards Palestine than is generally thought" (Bloch, 57).

literature, even in later Jewish collections of material, we will attempt to determine whether a particular tradition can be traced to an earlier period (via attribution). Its appearance in later midrashic collections indicates either that it is rooted in an earlier tradition that was not preserved in other collections, or that it developed later, possibly in response to Christian exegesis (which may have originated with Origen).

Of course the possibility exists that parallel exegetical traditions arose coincidentally. We will be aware that this possibility exists especially when two communities living side by side in an identical external environment are both deeply dedicated to the understanding of the true meaning of the same Scripture.

Further, we will try to determine how these approaches differ and how traditions are used; whether they are appropriated lock, stock and barrel, or used apologetically to defend attacks launched by pagans, or polemically against Jews as part of the debate between ἡ Ἐκκλησία and ἡ Συναγωγή (as is often the case in Against Celsus), or (simply) as a passing witness to a historical situation (typology).[85] Towards this end it will be important to remember that Origen uses a Greek version of the Bible for his commentary (and Rufinus, in his translation, the Latin version), and though he sometimes uses Aquila, which was

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[85]R. P. C. Hanson, Allegory and Event, London 1959, 7.

preferred by the Jews, he most often relies on the Septuagint as his official Bible.[86] Thus, though Jewish parallels will reflect a similar content, they usually will not correspond exactly to Origen's exegesis.

Our ultimate goal is to determine to what extent the Greek Christian scholar Origen had access to modes of exegesis and exegetical traditions of Alexandrian, and, perhaps, Palestinian Jewry. While keeping in mind the larger background of the Graeco-Roman world, we will attempt to place in their religious and cultural context those aspects of Origen's interpretation which have parallels in Jewish tradition.

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[86]De Lange, 5, 15.

Chapter Two: "Origen' Hermeneutic for Biblical Exegesis"

The goal of exegesis, for both Origen and the Rabbis, was to make sense of a biblical passage in their own historical and religious context, or, in the case of homilies, in the context of the life of a congregation. Origen appropriates both legal and non-legal rabbinic exegeses wherever he can put them to work for his own homiletical purposes, without regard to this particular distinction. Though the distinction between הלכה and אגדה was formally important to the Rabbis, Origen probably was not aware of the subtleties in the distinction apart from the traditional Church polemic against Jewish legalism.[87] Rather, since Origen works within his own hermeneutical categories, we will follow his categories in our discussion.

The enterprise which brings Origen and the Rabbis to the same arena is scriptural interpretation. This *process* of close scriptural exegesis led each to seek out the meaning(s) of text, verse by verse, word by word, dot by dot--by means of a prescribed hermeneutic (or set of hermeneutical principles). Unlike many of his Christian counterparts, Origen often found meaning in the literal

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[87]See BerR 30. 14, where study is grouped into the three categories of מדרש, הלכה, ואגדה. Origen's polemics against legalism are generally restricted to the New Testament's categories of circumcision, dietary laws, Sabbath observance, and appointed festivals. He actually speaks well of Jewish adherence to the law (Cf. Cels 2. 1, 5. 6, and Philoc 1. 18).

interpretation of text. Thus Origen, even in his homilies, is engaged in an exegetical process broadly similar to that of the Rabbis. This is evident from his own comments about his method and his "exegetical techniques."[88]

Some Origen scholars have overlooked the more technical aspect of Origen's exegesis in favor of his allegorical approach to Scripture.[89] Yet, Origen did not leave the letter of the law behind so readily. Nor was he prepared to give allegorical interpretations not tied to Scripture.[90] In fact, there are many specific areas in which Origen's interpretive process, his hermeneutical principles, are similar to those of the Rabbis.[91]

In this chapter we will demonstrate how Origen, like

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[88]Origen usually uses close linear scriptural exegesis to explicate the lection, as he proves by pointing out the exception in Hom in Ex 4.1, where he gives a brief survey of the passage.

[89]See especially de Faye (cf. note 109 below).

[90]In Hom in Gen 1. 17 Origen says, "And lest we appear to you to bring these things forth from our own understanding rather than from the authority of the divine Scriptures, go back to the book of Numbers..." (Heine, 70).

[91]We are not claiming that, simply because Origen's techniques parallel rabbinic tradition, he borrowed his exegetical methods directly from the Rabbis--certainly both drew on the deep exegetical tradition of the culture at large. However, since they apply the techniques to the same Scripture, often with the same results, we must keep their methodology in mind so we do not err in over-reading a parallel exegesis and so we do not lose sight of the profound similarity of their endeavors (which increases the chances of Origen's understanding rabbinic exegesis). The case is similar to the parallels between Philonic exegeses and rabbinic literature.

the Rabbis, pays close attention to scriptural details and that he is interested in the literal aspect of the text. These points support the premise of the ensuing chapters, namely, that given the above two facts, it is quite logical that Origen would have been interested in Jewish exegesis.

The general principle that there is more than one interpretation for a scriptural verse is evident in both Jewish and Christian traditions.[92] For the Rabbis, this results in serial collections of interpretations of a single verse in the aggadic realm, while also leaving that same verse available for any number of halakhic proofs. While for Christian exegetes, though the same opportunity for multiple meanings theoretically exists, orthodoxies soon develop, and there is a great amount of controversy over the "correctness" of an interpretation.[93] In both traditions, however, water signifies the abundance, or multiplicity, of God's word.[94] Though the metaphor itself is prevalent

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[92]Cf. b. San 34a, p. San 4. 2, Irenaeus, Haer, 2. 27. 3, and Clement Str, 1. 28.

[93]E.g., "literal" interpretations are unacceptable and certain types of elaboration are denigrated as "silly fables."

[94]Joh 4. 13-5, 6. 47, 1 Cor 10. 4, Ned 81a, Taan 7a, SifDev pisqa 48 on Dtn 11. 22, in a series of expositions on Prov 5. 15-16: R. Simeon b. Menassia says, "'Drink waters out of your own cistern, and running waters out of your own well. [Let your springs be dispersed abroad and courses of water in the streets].' Drink the waters of your Creator [playing on the similarity of 'cistern' and 'creator'], and do not drink contaminated water and be drawn after the teachings of heresy. R. Aqiba says...teachings of Torah are compared to water. Just as water goes on forever, so teachings of the Torah are compared to water, as it is said, "For they are life to those

from early on in the two traditions, Origen almost automatically associates any water with Christ, much like the rabbinic association with Torah:[95]

> If there is anyone who, when he reads Moses, murmurs against him, and the Law which has been written according to the letter is displeasing to him because it seems incoherent in many things, Moses shows him the rock which is Christ and leads him to it that he may drink from it and quench his thirst. But this rock will not give water unless it has been struck, but when it has been struck it brings forth streams.[96]

Perhaps the most well-known parallel is the dictum of the school of R. Ishmael, found in the Talmud:

> The house of R. Ishmael taught: My child, if this evil spirit (יצר הרע) tempts you, take him to the house of study. If he turns out to be a rock, he will dissolve (נמוח); if iron, he will explode (נתפוצץ), as it is written in Scripture, "Indeed my word is like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer it shatters the rock (Jer 23. 29)." If a rock, he will dissolve, as it is written in Scripture, "Ahoy! Anyone who is thirsty, come to water! (Is 55. 1)" and it says, "Water erodes rocks (Job 14. 19)."[97]

This image is evident in Philo as well, from which, perhaps,

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who find them (Prov 4. 22)" (Neusner, trans., Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation, 1, Atlanta, 1987, 158-59; [] his). This may well be the tradition Origen attacks in Hom in Gen 7. 5.

[95]E.g., MekhY on Ex 15. 11, b. San 34a and Taan 4a. The instances are too numerous to list completely. There are numerous occurrences of the metaphor elsewhere in the Genesis and Exodus homilies: Hom in Gen 7. 5-6, 10. 2, 5, 13. 2, Hom in Ex 4. 6, 7. 1, 5.

[96]Hom in Ex 11. 2 (Heine, 356-7).

[97]B. Qid 30b. Cf. also b. San 34a, which records the same tradition, but is more explicit about the multiplicity of meanings for a scriptural verse.

Origen derives his particular use of the metaphor.[98]

In Origen, then, we find the same automatic use of this metaphor about the well-spring rock and God's Word as in Philo and rabbinic literature. Furthermore, each took the metaphor to stand for the multiplicity of meanings in Scripture.

The rabbinic principle that each word, each letter, and even each diacritical mark of the Torah is meaningful and bears explanation, generally associated with Rabbi Akiba, is expressed by the maxim: לא ריברה תורה בלשון בני אדם.[99] Similarly Origen notes that: "...the divine Scripture has made use of the most cautious language" to show that one might overlook the mysteries contained in the text if one were not properly attuned to the peculiarities of biblical language, in contradistinction to the language of everyday

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[98]"'Here I stand before thou wast, on the rock in Horeb.' (Ex 17. 6), which means, 'This I, the manifest, Who am here, am there also, am everywhere, for I have filled all things. I stand ever the same immutable, before thou or aught that exists came into being, established on the topmost and most ancient source of power, whence showers forth the birth of all that is, whence streams the tide of wisdom.' For I am He 'Who brought the fountain of water form out the steep rock,' as it says elsewhere (Dtn 8. 15)" (Philo, Som 2. 221-22; The Loeb Classical Library, trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, 5, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1929, 543). The same image, along with the sating with manna, is paralleled in All 2. 86 and Det 115.

[99]This principle is only a reconstruction based on the dispute between R. Akiba and R. Ishmael, since R. Ishmael held that ריברה תורה בלשון בני אדם (Cf. BerR 53. 15 and SifBam pisqa 112).

discourse.[100] Origen believes that in order to understand the Scriptures properly, one needs "circumcized ears."[101] He instructs his congregants, "Observe each detail which has been written. For, if one knows how to dig into the depth, he will find a treasure in the details...."[102] Furthermore, he writes that some of us cannot comprehend the principle of "divinity of Scripture, which extends to the whole of it, on account of the inability of our weakness to discover in every expression the hidden splendour of the doctrines veiled in common and unattractive phraseology."[103]

Origen expresses this approach to biblical interpretation yet another way: "I, believing in the words of my Lord Jesus Christ, do not think that one 'iota or one point' in the Law and prophets is void of mysteries...."[104] The Rabbis have expressed this view in a series of midrashim.[105] Yet another tradition about

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[100]Hom in Gen 1. 17 (Heine, 71).

[101]Hom in Gen 3. 5 and 4. 3. Origen believes that the very words themselves were written by God: "...the words of God are not the compositions of men" (Origen, Princ 4. 1. 6, trans. Crombie).

[102]Hom in Gen 8. 1 (Heine, 136).

[103]Origen, Princ, 4. 1. 7.

[104]Hom in Ex 1. 4. The reference "iota or one point" is to Mt 5. 18 (Heine, 231).

[105]See the midrash about R. Akiba in b. Men 29b and b. Shab 89a, in which Moses, upon ascending the heights of Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah, challenges God's adorning the

King Solomon emphasizes the significance of every single letter of Torah, no matter how small. The story tells that when heaven found out that the King wanted to eliminate one letter of Torah, the letter yod brought the King to trial. The book of Deuteronomy testified against the King, claiming that such an act would render the book invalid. God utters a peremptory verdict, exclaiming, "Go! Soon Solomon will be invalid, and a hundred like him, but no yod (tittle) of yours will ever be invalidated!"[106] The rabbinic understanding of Scripture clearly underlies the Christian approach articulated in Mt 5. 18, which Origen adopted both literally and seriously.

Like the rabbinic principle of the significance of everything in Torah, Origen's similar interpretive technique appears to be quite self-conscious, as he introduces his comments with "What does the addition appear to mean?" or "But it does not seem to me superfluous that mention is made..." or "As if x were not sufficient, it [the text] adds

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"jots and tittles" atop the letters of the Torah. God responds that a future scholar will expound on them, whereupon Moses is allowed a glimpse into the future. He sees R. Akiba explaining the ornamentation of the letters, which baffles him. Yet, when Akiba cites Moses (via the oral law) as the authority for such inferences, the perplexed Moses is relieved. See also WaR 19.2, p. San 2. 6, ShemR 3. 7, b. Shab 103b-104a, p. Hag 2. 1, WaR 9. 23, b. Pes 50a, BerR 12. 6, 18. 21, and 47. 1, PesR 21. 12,

[106]WaR 19. 2; Also in ShemR 6. 1 (which has the alternate, קוץ של) and p. San 2. 6.

y."[107] The most involved formulation is in his Amalek sermon:

> It might, perhaps, appear that it was superfluous to say x. It would have been sufficient to say y. What need was there to add x? The addition is not superfluous...[108]

This principle, much like the rabbinic treatment of דכך שהוא שכנוי (doublings in the text are not redundant), is used in Hom in Gen 3. 3, 6. 3, 8. 4, 12. 2, Hom in Ex 6. 1, 13, and 11. 2.

In addition to these interpretive principles which pay close attention to textual detail, Origen articulated an entire philosophy of hermeneutics. This threefold hermeneutic, which he enumerated as a plan for his commentaries as well as for exegesis in general, has been largely misunderstood by previous authors.[109] Origen

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[107]Heine, 92, 124, and 285, respectively. In order to highlight the formal argument, "x" and "y" replace substantive discussion in the text.

[108]Hom in Ex 11. 2 (Heine, 356).

[109]Bigg, The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, New York 1886, 131. We support Bigg's understanding of Origen's "real and natural sense of the Bible [in which he] himself saw clearly that this is the foundation of everything" (131-32). De Faye, on the other hand, misinterprets the role of literalism in Origen's hermeneutic: "His scorn of the literal sense of the text knows no bounds. As a rule, it is only for conscience sake that he mentions it. He is quite aware that he cannot ignore it altogether, but he is not sparing in his criticisms of it. He is continually proving either that this meaning contradicts other passages of the Scriptures, or that it is improbable, even absurd, or--a thing far more serious in his eyes--that it implies a notion of God and His providence, which is unworthy of Him and might justly be regarded as impious...because the Jews rely on the literal meaning of the Messianic passages in the Old Testament that they refuse to

mentions this hermeneutic in his treatise on Scripture preserved in the first chapter of the Philocalia. Origen writes that the Bible is to be interpreted on three levels: literal, moral, and mystical. He illustrates this with the metaphor of a tripartite division of the human being: body [ἡ οἱονεὶ σαρκή, σώμα], soul [ψυχή] and spirit [πνεύμα]. Origen claims the second two levels are derived from Paul, who, in explaining Dtn 25. 4, gives a moral exegesis, and orders the apostles to seek wisdom in a mystery.[110] Thus, writes Origen, Paul finds mystical significance in the incidents of Exodus and Numbers.[111]

Origen, however, believes in *three* levels of interpretation, which he roots in Prov 22. 20 (Septuagint): Καὶ σὺ δὲ ἀπόγραψαι αὐτὰ σεαυτῷ τρισσῶς, εἰς βουλὴν καὶ γνῶσιν ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς καρδίας σου (And you, record them three times with counsel and knowledge for yourself...).

Hanson judged this to be a mis-translation of the Hebrew on the part of the Septuagint (and therefore a naive exegesis on Origen's part).[112] However, it seems that

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believe in Christ (de Faye, 49-50)." De Faye overstates his case, and ignores the subtle differences between Origen's use of stock anti-literalist rhetoric and serious biblical exegesis.

[110]Origen, Philoc, 1. 13, trans. George Lewis, Edinburgh 1911, 14.

[111]1 Cor 9. 9-10 and 2. 7-8.

[112]Hanson, Allegory, 235. He writes: "And he tries to support this view by a reference to Prov 22. 20 f., where in the first verse the LXX, for 'Have I not written unto thee

Origen not only understood the nuance of the Septuagint translation, but was also able to play on the word τρισσῶς in the verse in the same manner as the Rabbis. While no variants are attested for Prov 22. 20 (in the Hexapla), the Greek versions do not agree on the translation of the same word in 1 Sam 20. 12 and Ez 16. 30. The fact that the כתיב reads שלשום while the קרי is שלישים indicates that the Hebrew word was itself problematic.

Origen reiterates his commitment to the three levels of scriptural interpretation in his *homily* on Noah's Ark, where he connects the levels of the ark to this threefold hermeneutic:

> For the literal meaning which preceded is placed first as a kind of foundation at the lower levels. This mystical interpretation was second, being higher and loftier. Let us attempt, if we can, to add a moral exposition as the third level.[113]

A. Cleveland Coxe has suggested that Origen derived his hermeneutic from Clement. Clement discusses hermeneutic in his Miscellanies 1. 9, where he professes the importance of bringing secular knowledge to understand Scripture. Scripture must be understood, he writes, by means of a two-fold dialectic, questions and answers.[114] To support his claim, Clement quotes Prov 22. 20, yet the text reads διισσῶς

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excellent things?', wrongly renders 'Have I not written unto thee a triple way?' (τρισσῶς)."

[113]Hom in Gen 2. 1 (Heine, 85-86).

[114]Precedent for this position can be found in the Classical tradition. Cf. Plato, Phaedrus 263.

instead of τρισσῶς (in addition to other slight grammatical variations). The text Clement quotes does not correspond to any Septuagint version we know of, so it is possible he was misquoting from memory.[115]

Clement returns to the subject in Miscellanies 1. 28, yet there he advances a four-fold method of interpretation. He begins with the Mosaic law, delineating the categories of history, ethics, physical science, and metaphysics.[116] At the end of the exposition, Clement concludes that there are four [τετραχῶς] levels of interpretation for all Scripture. These presumably correspond to the four mentioned in the beginning, yet only three are listed: symbolic, moral, and prophetic. The problem in this text has been resolved in light of Origen, rather than in its own context, seeing a threefold hermeneutic rather than taking the text at face value (with a phrase missing).[117]

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[115]Another possibility is that he relied on a variant manuscript which has simply not been preserved. This is supported by Hom in Lev 10. 2: "Tamen quoniam dives est sermo Dei et secundum sententian Salomonis non simpliciter, sed et dupliciter et 'tripliciter describendus in corde est', temptemus etiam nunc addere aliqua ad ea, quae dudum pro viribus dicta sunt, ut ostendamus, quomodo 'in typo futurorum' etiam hic unus hircus Domino oblatus est hostia et alius 'vivus' dimissus est" (GCS 29, 442-43). Since elsewhere Origen clearly understands the verse to mean three-fold, and not two-fold (Hom in Num 1. 2, 9. 7, Hom in Jos 21. 2, and Princ 4. 2. 4), the reference here to "dupliciter" seems to be from another source, or it may simply be a transition from "simpliciter" to "tripliciter." See note 118.

[116]He seems to derive these from Stoic categories and the threefold Aristotelian model.

[117]A. Cleveland Coxe (ANF 2, 341, note 4).

Thus, if Origen did borrow his hermeneutic from Clement, he would not only have had to adapt it from either two or four levels of meaning to three, but, in addition, he would have had to emend Clement's Proverbs text.[118] This leads us to conclude that not only might there have been problems surrounding the Greek translation of the Proverbs verse itself, but that Origen did not rely on Clement either for his hermeneutic or for his exegesis of Prov 22. 20 (and that Clement was not aware of the Hebrew version of this verse, where Origen might have been).

The word τρισσῶς appears in the Septuagint five other times, where it translates the hebrew השלישית (the third day), שלטת (domineering, having mastery) and שלש פעמים (thrice).[119] The usual translation of these Hebrew words in the Septuagint is τρίτη, ἐξουσία or ξενία, and τρίς, whereas שלשום and שלישים are translated as τριτῶς. It is possible that Origen's knowledge of Greek alone led him to read τρισσῶς as "thrice," since that is its literal meaning. Or, perhaps he had some knowledge of Jewish interpretation of the word.

Further on in the passage of the Noah's Ark homily

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[118]Unfortunately, Clement does not quote the verse elsewhere. However, there are three other places where Origen gives the same interpretation of the verse, clearly indicating that he knew the verse to read τρισσῶς and not δισσῶς (cf. Hom in Num 9. 7, Hom in Lev 10. 2, and Hom in Jos 21. 2).

[119]1 Sam 20. 12, Ez 16. 30. The LXX has τρισσῶς in Ez 41. 16 where the Hebrew is lacking.

(quoted above) we discover yet another aspect of Origen's hermeneutic:

> Because of these things, therefore...the ark is constructed not only 'with three decks,' but also 'with two decks,' that we might know that there is not always a triple explanation in the divine Scriptures because a literal explanation does not always follow for us, but sometimes only the mingled meaning of the double explanation.[120]

Although the literal level often forms the foundation of exegesis, Origen makes clear the danger of over-literalism. Literal interpretation can be taken too far, as his polemics against Jewish literalism reveal. Thus, Christians are not bound, he says, to accept a literal explanation. However, Origen's use of rabbinic exegesis belies his supposed dogmatic adherence to the stock opposition of the early Church to Jewish exegesis as overly literal.[121]

On the contrary, it is clear that Origen respected the literal, historical sense of the text, and it is often in connection with this level of exegesis that he turns to Jewish tradition:[122]

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[120]Hom in Gen 2. 6 (Heine, 85-86).

[121]Though Origen makes use of rabbinic traditions which are clearly not "literal" readings of Scripture, the Rabbis' attempt to place Scripture in a contemporary Jewish context (which, in most cases, is extremely different from a Christian context) as well as their concern with the methodology for relating interpretation to the text itself earned the characterization even in Origen's schema as "literal." Thus, even though Origen might use an allegorical or metaphoric rabbinic interpretation, he will usually use it as a foundation for the literal level of his exegesis.

[122]See also Hanson, Allegory, 238.

> ...let us see first of all what is related about it literally, and, proposing the questions which many are in the habit of presenting, let us search out also their solutions from the traditions which have been handed down to us by the forefathers [*maiores tradita*]. When we have laid foundations of this kind, we can ascend from the historical account to the mystical and allegorical understanding of the spiritual meaning...[123]

Furthermore, Origen sanctioned the use of non-literal rabbinic exegesis, for "we [Christians] are made wise and are educated by [Jews'] mystical contemplation of the law and the prophets."[124] Origen recognized that the Rabbis' supposed faithfulness to the letter of the text did not prevent them from drawing out of the text extremely imaginative interpretations.

De Lange cautions that Origen's use of the term "literal" is not quite what we moderns might think.[125] Though Clement seemed to use the term "literal" synonymously with "Jewish," it does not seem that Origen does. In fact, writes de Lange, we can distinguish two terms for "Jewish," one referring to polemical attacks on Jewish literalism (Ἰουδαίοι), and one which he uses in the context of philological investigations (Ἑβραίοι).[126] Perhaps, by the literal or historical sense of the text, Origen understands what Jewish exegesis has termed פְּשַׁט. By the

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[123]Hom in Gen 2. 1 (Heine, 72).

[124]Origen, Cels 2. 6 (Chadwick, 71).

[125]De Lange, 106.

[126]De Lange, 30-32.

middle ages the term came to denote the contextual meaning, which is often what we refer to as the "literal" meaning in the twentieth century. However, the earlier understanding of this term was "simple" meaning--a word for word. understanding of a verse, often regardless of context. The contextual reading was often not an issue for the Rabbis. For the most part, once one began to consider the meaning of the verse in context, one was already beginning to apply hermeneutic principles (e.g., פשט) and to engage in exegesis.

In the homilies one can distinguish between Origen's anti-literalism where the interpretation could not be applied to Christian life, as in the realm of religious praxis, or adherence in personal observance to the letter of the Law; and his pro-literalism in moral and historical passages, which could have meaning for the present-day Christian (as the "New" Israel).[127] Perhaps Origen adopted the attitude towards Judaism common among pagan writers that Jewish observance bordered the level of the superstitious, despite elements of their holy text which may have been thought of as ingenious and ancient.

This distinction may reveal an ambivalence between Origen the scholar and Origen the pastor. While Origen's appreciation for the literal text informs his exegesis as a

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[127]The most even-handed presentation of Origen's use of the literal level of interpretation is in Crouzel, 61-64.

scholar and apologist, it does not diminish the frequency with which, as a homilist, he denigrates Jewish scriptural interpretation as both overly literal and ridiculous.[128] In these attacks, Origen claims that the Jews either miss the forest, seeing only the trees, or they see a forest which is bewitched, outside of the realm of truth.[129] While it is true that Origen cannot allow his congregants to fall into the trap of "Judaizing," or over-literalizing the text in the area of religious practice, he also cannot betray his own hermeneutic and therefore encourages them to study the text (starting at the literal level).

In fact, though he adopts the stock attack against Jewish literalism passed down from the Gospels throughout early Christian literature, Origen does not disapprove of literal interpretation of Scripture per se (Philocalia 1. 13). Where Origen does denigrate overliteralism, he does not attack the Jews alone; Christians are equally at fault.

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[128]Besides the passages in the New Testament, this polemic can be traced back to Barn 10, 16.

[129]It seems that Origen objects to the Jews' lack of recognition of the figurative type of literal exegesis, in addition to their refusal to accept Christian allegorical and mystical interpretations, and not, simply, to their literal interpretation of Scripture, since he allows for literal interpretation where plausible, but criticizes Jewish inability to see beyond it (cf. Hom in Ex 5. 1). The debate seems reducible to Jewish rejection of Christological reading of the Bible--thus the Jewish view *in places where it does not agree with Christology* is either "overly literal" or "Jewish fables." In places where the Jewish view either does agree or can be adapted to fit Christology, the literal level seems valid for Origen.

Origen believed that this methodology was equally applicable to the Gospels as to the Old Testament. In some instances (in both Scriptures) a passage could have a literal meaning and in others, this meaning had to be rejected. Origen delineates these very clearly throughout his works.[130] Hanson believes that Origen's polemic against Jewish literalism was deeply rooted in his approach to text, which grew out of his devotion to Allegory, and that we must not take Origen's tripartite hermeneutic too seriously.[131] This opinion fails to account for Origen's attention to the letter of the text. Just as there is not always a literal meaning for Origen, there is sometimes no more than a literal meaning. In these cases, Origen gives a literal exegesis and moves on. To paint Origen into an allegorical corner, freeing him from the letter of the text, is to underestimate Origen's scholarship. This opinion would seem as well to underestimate Origen's skill as pastor; he must have realized the power the stock anti-literalist polemic would have had on Greeks--Origen's potential converts--who were used to hearing charges levelled against any Bible-readers (Jew or Christian) about the implausibility of their holy text. Furthermore, the appeal to λυσεις, allegory, must have attracted those so well versed in such methods of interpretation from their

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[130]Hanson, 239-41.

[131]Hanson, 241-42.

common Greek education.[132]

Thus, seeing Origen's endeavors as part of the broader history of scriptural exegesis (rather than seeing him as the first great Christian exegete), we view him as not only an innovator, but an artful adaptor and borrower as well.

By the third century, Christian exegesis itself, however, had branched off from both its Jewish and Greek roots. But since neither of those exegetical traditions had themselves ceased to flourish, their branches often touched. Given Origen's faithfulness to textual detail and to the literal level of interpretation, it is logical that he would have sought out Jewish exegesis. The result is evident in his homilies on Genesis and Exodus.

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[132]Allegory was so prevalent that it found its way into the rabbinic exegesis as well (see de Lange, 42, 112, esp. 126).

Chapter Three: "Technical Parallels to Rabbinic Exegeses: Instances Where the Biblical Text Exhibits Grammatical, Syntactical, or Logical Difficulties"

Origen seems generally to admit that borrowing from Jewish sources for the purposes of textual problem solving was permissible and was not included in what Paul had referred to as "Jewish fables."[133] As we noted in Chapter Two, Origen often turns to Jewish tradition to discern the literal, or historical, level of exegesis.[134] Origen's work as a biblical scholar led him to appreciate midrashic encounters with the text. For their part, the Rabbis may have engaged in this type of exegesis as a scholarly endeavor, albeit a holy one tantamount to prayer.[135] The Rabbis seemed to focus on the sheer act of Torah study as redemptive in and of itself, rather than on its results.[136] Origen, however, often emphasizes the

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[133]Titus 1. 14.

[134]See Hom in Gen 2. 1 (Heine, 85-86) quoted on p. 38 of this work. Also cf. Hanson, Allegory, 238.

[135]That study is the most important activity can be found in SifDev pisqa 41 on Dtn 11. 13: "R. Jose the Galilean says, 'Learning is more important {than action}, for the religious duty to learn [and study the Torah] came prior to the religious duty to separate dough-offering by forty years, to separate tithes by fifty-four years [the conquest of the land requiring fourteen], the obligation of the taboo of the years of release by sixty-one years, and prior to the requirement to observe the jubilee years by one hundred and three.' And just as a more severe penalty pertains to [neglect of] learning more than to [neglect of doing required] deeds, so a more abundant reward pertains to learning than to the doing of required deeds..." (trans. Neusner, 128; [] his, {} mine).

[136]Cf. the many exhortations to study Torah. Torah study guaranteed one's place in the עולם הבא. It had a magical power to ward off all sorts of dangers. Yet, there is no comparable emphasis on a particular result, or dogma, of such Torah study and exegesis (cf. David Stern, "Midrash and Indeterminacy," Critical Inquiry 15, Sum 1988, 132-61).

preeminence of a particular Christian interpretation over a Jewish interpretation. His exegesis tends to be more overtly polemical. Perhaps this is because the appropriation of the Old Testament for Christian purposes necessarily demanded an explicit rejection of Jewish interpretations with which that Scripture was associated. Thus, his textual scrutiny is more explicit about a moral lesson to be derived--a teaching of Christianity. (Though the Rabbis certainly teach Judaism through their exegesis, their rhetoric is quite different.) It is in the course of this endeavor that he allows himself to build his own exegesis on the foundation of that of the Rabbis when employing rabbinic exegesis.

We must keep in mind that for Origen, the philological level of exegesis is merely the starting point--it might be necessary in order to understand a verse, but it is certainly not sufficient. Although the Rabbis do not distinguish different levels of exegesis in their hermeneutic principles, they are not always compelled to go beyond a "literal" explanation of a passage. Typological exegesis does not exist in rabbinic literature per se, yet it is prominent in the work of Origen. This rhetorical difference makes such a comparison difficult; we are forced to "translate" Origen's exegeses into rabbinic language (or vice versa) in order to discern any parallelism. However, where the material permits, we will attempt to compare how

Origen's use of the borrowed exegesis differs from that of the Rabbis.

In several instances where Origen's exegesis is paralleled in rabbinic literature, Origen does not claim to quote the Rabbis, which leads us to believe that either these traditions had become so well known that they required no attribution (and have escaped preservation in early Church Fathers), that Origen had absorbed a fair number of rabbinic exegeses of problematic texts through his study of younger Jewish Greek versions or occasional contact with Jews.

The similarity in the methods of Origen and the Rabbis has led some scholars to erroneously attribute the source of some of Origen's exegeses to rabbinic traditions. Sometimes the source is a Jewish tradition that is non-rabbinic and othertimes rabbinic. After our initial discussion of parallels to non-rabbinic Jewish traditions and legitimate rabbinic parallels, we will attempt to show how these attributions have been incorrect.

In the second paragraph of the homily on Noah's Ark Origen says he will respond to the challenge of Apelles, the second century heretic, that the dimensions of the ark are too small to have contained that which the Bible claims.[137] Rather than rising above the argument

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[137]Origen also attributes this challenge to Apelles, Marcion's student, in Cels 5. 54.

altogether to the "high" ground of allegory, Origen chooses to "bring to the knowledge of our audience things which we learned from men who were skilled and versed in the traditions of the Hebrews and from our old teachers."[138] Origen claims to have received the tradition from two sources, one Jewish and the other Christian. However, what follows is only the Jewish interpretation:

> The forefathers [*maiores*] used to say, therefore, that Moses...reckoned the number of cubits in this passage according to the art of geometry in which the Egyptians especially are skillful...according to that computation which they call the second power, one cubit of a solid and square is considered as six if it is derived in general, or as three hundred if singly.[139]

The Greek fragment for this homily passage, in addition to being numerically more specific, only refers to the Jewish source at the outset:

> Ἐμάθομεν δὲ ἡμεῖς ἀπό τινος τῶν παρ' Ἑβραίοις ἐλλογίμων, ὡς ἄρα οἱ τριακόσιοι πήχεις ὠνομάσθησαν ὡς ἡ χαλουμένη παρὰ τοῖς γεωμέτραις δύναμις τοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ τριακοστοῦ τετραγώνου, ὡς εἶναι τοὺς ἡμετέρους πήχεις τοῦ μήχους ἐν τῷ χάτω ἐπιπέδῳ ἐννέα μυριάδας. οὕτω δὲ καὶ τοῦ πλάτους δισχιλί<ου>ς πενταχοσί<ου>ς καὶ τοῦ ὕψους ἐνναχοσί<ου>ς.[140]

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[138]Hom in Gen 2. 2 (Heine, 76). The Latin reads: "Sed ad haec nos, quae a prudentibus viris et Hebraicarum traditionum gnaris atque a veteribus magistris didicimus, ad auditorum notitiam deferemus" (GCS 29, 29). This phrase, "men who were skilled..." most likely refers to his predecessors in the Church who were familiar with Jewish tradition (either because they themselves were originally Jewish or Jewish Christians or because they had close contact with Jews).

[139]Heine, 76-77.

[140]Doutreleau, 38 (from Chaînes, type II (Mosq. 385) manuscript).

Origen's comments in Celsum 4. 41 show that the numerical figures, 90,000 and 2500, were part of Origen's standard interpretation of the dimensions of Noah's Ark.[141] Origen seems satisfied that this explanation answers the objection (of course, in the liturgical setting, it would seem that the other side was not present to counter-attack), for he comments: "Let these things be said, as much as pertains to the historical account, against those who endeavor to impugn the Scriptures of the Old Testament as containing certain things which are impossible and irrational."[142] He then continues, as we would expect, with a spiritual interpretation of the dimensions of the ark.

The only parallel in a Jewish source according to which the dimensions roughly correspond to those mentioned by Origen can be found in 2 Enoch:[143]

> And the Lord called Noe onto the mount Ararat...And he said to him, "Make there an ark with 300 lakets in length and in width 50 lakets and in height 30. And two stories in the middle, and its doors of one laket./ And of their lakets 300, but of ours also 15 thousand; and so of theirs 50, but of ours 2000 and 500, and so of

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[141]There is no parallel for this interpretation found in any of the Fathers preceding Origen.

[142]Heine, 77.

[143]The dating of this text is, according to F. I. Andersen, very problematic. However, based on Origen's statements in Cels 5. 54, we find his suggestion of "late first century A. D." extremely plausible. Furthermore, if Origen had read this book, and not simply excerpts quoted in earlier authors, it would support Andersen's suggestion that the original language was Greek, not Aramaic (though it might have been based on an Aramaic tradition).

> theirs 30, but of ours 900, and of theirs one laket, but of ours 50." In agreement with this numeral the Jews keep their measurements of Noe's ark, just as the Lord said to him, and they carry out all their measurements in the same way and all their regulations, even up to the present./[144]

The last two figures of the squared dimensions correspond to those in the Greek Origen fragment. Yet there is evidence that Origen would not have referred to the writers of Enoch as "men skilled and versed in the traditions of the Hebrews" and "our old teachers," since "the books entitled Enoch are [were] not generally held to be divine by the churches."[145] However, neither Origen nor the earlier Church fathers shied away from quoting from Enoch.[146] Thus, Origen appears to be quoting from an early Christian or Jewish source, but, at least here, not directly from Enoch.

The tradition is neither preserved in Philo, Josephus, nor the Targumim, which follow the biblical dimensions given

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[144]2 Enoch (long version), 73. 1-3 (James H. Charlesworth, ed., The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha 1, New York 1983, 212).

[145]Cels 5. 54 (Chadwick, 306-7).

[146]E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, edd. Vermes, Millar, and Goodman, 3 pt. 1, Edinburgh 1986, 262. He cites Barn 4. 3, 16. 5; Justin Martyr Apologia 2. 5; Irenaeus Haer 4. 16. 2; Tertullian De Cultu Feminam 1. 3, 2. 1-10, De Idolatria 4, 15; Clement Ecl 2. 1, 53. 4; Origen Cels 5. 52, 54-5, Princ 1.3.3, 4. 35, Hom in Num 28. 2, and Jo 6. 42.

in Gen 6. 15-16.[147] We find, however, an interesting comment in Irenaeus attacking the Marcosian heretics for "the Triacontad, [which] they strenuously endeavor to demonstrate by the ark of Noah, the height of which was thirty cubits...."[148] In addition, Clement speaks of "some who say" in his discussion of the ark's dimensions (which he breaks down into factors, rather than amplifying through squaring).[149] It seems that dimensions of the ark were the object of discussion and even controversy in the early Christian period. Nevertheless, aside from these, there are no other references to the dimensions of Noah's ark in early Patristic literature. From the extant comments, then, it might appear that interpreting the significance of the numbers of the ark's dimensions was the exclusive province of Christian heretics and Alexandrian Christians.[150]

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[147]Philo allegorizes the biblical numbers as proportions of the human body, but he briefly mentions the Ark's dimensions. He writes: "In the literal sense [πρὸς τὸ ρητόν] it was necessary to construct a great work for the reception of so many animals, of which the several genera were to be brought inside together with their food (Philo, Quaest in Gn 2. 5, ed. Loeb, supplement 1, 73)." However, we find no mention of the specific squared numbers in Philo to correspond to Origen. Cf. Josephus, Ant 1. 3. 2, and The Book of Adam and Eve (fifth/sixth century A. D.), trans. S. C. Malan, London 1882, 143-44.

[148]Irenaeus, Haer 1. 18. 4 (ANF 1, 344).

[149]Clement, Str 6. 11. 86 (ANF 2, 500).

[150]The only rabbinic allusion to encoded ark dimensions is not parallel to Origen's use: "Why is the cubit called חכי׳קין? R. Huna (mid fourth century) said: Because it comes

The paucity of speculation about the dimensions of the Ark in rabbinic literature indicates that such inquiry was not undertaken by the Rabbis, or that it was part of a Hellenistic Jewish corpus that has been lost to us.[151] In any case, we suspect that Origen did obtain his interpretation from the Jews, whose tradition is preserved only in 2 Enoch and probably not from the Rabbis.

In his third Genesis homily on chapter 17, Origen explores the problem of repetition in 18. 11: "Now Abraham and Sarah were old, and advanced in years."[152] This inquiry is tangential to his main exegesis, yet the textual problem presented by the verse captures Origen's attention. He solves the problem: "For in Abraham it [πρεσβύτερος] is not the old age of his body, but the maturity of his heart that is addressed by this term."[153] Thus, one use refers to Abraham's chronological age, while the second refers to his maturity. He then compares this to a similar turn of phrase in Num 11. 16, concluding, "For in respect to them it

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from Thebes? But the Rabbis said: On account of the name of Noah's Ark [תבה] (BerR 31. 10)." Most of the rabbinic comments on the Ark are restricted to matters of layout and function, and are not concerned with specific overall dimensions.

[151]Aside from BerR 31. 10, the architecture of the Ark (beyond the biblical description) is only discussed in b. San 108b, TPsJ on 6. 14, and PRE 23.

[152]The term πρεσβύτερος is not repeated in the LXX; rather, the second phrase is seemingly redundant.

[153]Hom in Gen 3. 3 (Heine, 92).

is not a judgment about their body nor their age, but about their mind. Such, therefore, were those blessed presbyters Abraham and Sara."[154] (He then returns to his main exegesis, devoting the remainder of the homily to condemning circumcision).

This type of exegesis, finding two different referents in pleonastic phrases which are read as potentially redundant, was often used by the Rabbis. In addition, the content of the exegesis of these verses is found in rabbinic literature. The Rabbis understood זקן to mean "sage," especially in pleonasm with expressions of old age, like שיבה, taking the letters as an acronym for זה שקנה חכמה.[155] This acronymic tradition, ascribed to R. Jose the Galilean (end of the first century), reflects an understanding of Num 11. 16 exactly like that of Origen. The same understanding is also applied to Lev 19. 32, where one is commanded to honor פני שיבה. The Rabbis show that this commandment does not apply to just any old man, rather, to a sage, which is easily derived from the poetic duplication in the next apostrophe of the verse: פני זקן. Given the context of the discussion, which is honoring the sages of every era, it appears as though the Rabbis read Gen

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[154]Heine, 93.

[155]PesK 27. 9 and b. Qid 32b. The Talmudic discussion cites Num 11. 16 as a prooftext.

18. 11 the same way.[156]

The two verses actually appear together in the same passage in b. Yoma 28b:

שאני: אברהם ראיצטגיניות גדולה היתה בלבו א"ר משרם
רזקן ויושב בישיבה הרה ראיר חמא בר חנינא: מימיהן
של אבותינו לא פרשה ישיבה מהם היו במצרים ישיבה עמהם.
שנאמר, "לך ואספת את זקני ישראל." היו במדבר ישיבה עמהם
שנאמר, "אספה לי שבעים איש מזקני ישראל." אברהם אבינו זקן
ויושב בישיבה היה שנאמר, "ואברהם זקן בא בימים."[157]

Although the exposition of the verses is not quite as methodical as Origen, the same theme is evident (though, presumably, it is the term itself and not any repetition which led the Rabbis to conclude from Gen 18. 11 that Abraham was both wise as well as old, which is implied by the Qiddushin passage).

We might suspect that Origen borrowed both the technique and content of his exegesis from the Rabbis were it not for a striking parallel in Philo. While Philo himself may have drawn on Jewish tradition for his interpretation, there is no reason to doubt that Origen

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[156]PesK 27. 9, WaR 30. 10-11, and PesR 51. 2. These contain a list of expositions on Lev 23. 40, an apparently free-floating tradition. The exegesis derives from this verse because of the word הדר, which can mean "honor." The Rabbis apply this to all the patriarchs, in addition to Abraham and Sarah, perhaps reflecting some mystical significance of the lulav and etrog.

[157]This tradition is attributed to R. Hama b. Hanina, a third century Palestinian Amorah. Unfortunately, we do not know in which part of the century he flourished.

relies on Philo for his exegesis.[158]

Philo also understands the use of the terms νέος and πρεσβύτερος as referring to two separate aspects:

> ὡς δὲ καὶ πρεσβύτερον οὐ τὸν γήρᾳ κατεσχημένον, ἀλλὰ τὸν γέρως καὶ τιμῆς ἄξιον ὀνομάζει δηλώσομεν. τίς οὖν ἀγνοεῖ τῶν ἐντετυχηκότων ταῖς ἱερωτάταις βίβλοις, ὅτι σχεδὸν τῶν προγόνων ἑαυτοῦ πάντων ὁ σοφὸς Ἀβραὰμ ὀλιγοχρονιώτατος εἰσάγεται; κἀκείνων μέν, οἶμαι, οἱ μακροβιώτατοι γεγόνασιν, οὐδὲ εἷς, οὑτοσὶ δὲ ἀναγέγραπται πρεσβύτερος...[*Gen 24. 1]...οὕτως καὶ τοὺς συνέδρους τοῦ θεοφιλοῦς τὸν δέκα ἑβδομάδων ἀριθμὸν εἰληχότας πρεσυτέρους ὀνομάζειν ἔθος...[*Num 11. 16]... οὐκοῦν οὐ τοὺς ὑπὸ τῶν τυχόντων γέροντας νομιζομένους ὡς ἱεροφάντας, ἀλλ' οὓς ὁ σοφὸς οἶδε μόνος, τῆς τῶν πρεσβυτέρων ἠξίωσε προσρήσεως.[159]

Philo plays on the homonyms γῆρας and γέρας, much like the rabbinic double meaning of זקן as both sage and old man or the play on הרר and להריר.[160] Since both languages, Greek and Hebrew, allow for a double reading of "elder," it is not surprising that we find them in both the Alexandrian and the Palestinian Jewish traditions. Furthermore, it was the widespread belief in the ancient world that age was synonymous with wisdom.

This case, then, is an example where Origen's method in solving the textual problem of redundancy parallels that of Jewish (Alexandrian) tradition. It appears that this

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[158]We are not familiar with any parallel exegesis in the early Fathers. The patristic comments on Num 11. 16 compare Moses' selection of an advisory group and Jesus' selection of the same number of disciples (Cf. Clem Recogn, 1. 40. 4).

[159]Philo, Sobr 17, 19-20.

[160]See note 156.

philological problem simply lent itself to an etymological solution which coincidentally finds parallels in Philo and, perhaps, in rabbinic literature. This would be supported by the fact that the verse which forms the primary exposition for Origen, Gen 18. 11, is actually not itself present in Philo (who cites Num 11. 16 and Gen 24. 1 as prooftexts rather than points of departure), and only finds its way into the rabbinic passage as a secondary exegesis.

In his first Genesis homily on the Creation, Origen understands the heaven to have been created on the first day, as recounted in v. 1, "In the beginning, God created heaven and earth." Later on, in v. 6, God makes the firmament, "And God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters....'" Since the two verses seem to refer to two separate acts of creation, Origen concludes that there are two heavens, the former spiritual and the latter corporeal.

Origen then directs his discussion to the order of these creations. The problem posed by v. 6 is that v. 1 has already described the creation of heaven. Thus, it might appear that the firmament had also been created on the first day, since its name is "heaven" (v. 8). Yet, Origen points out that the spiritual heaven mentioned in v. 1 was created first, and the corporeal heaven, or firmament, mentioned in v. 6 was created "after that:" "Although God had already previously made heaven, now he makes the firmament. For He

made heaven first, about which He says, 'heaven is My throne (Is 66. 1).'[cap. mine]"[161] It is quite remarkable that Origen would use Isaiah 66. 1 so differently from his Christian predecessors, who only used this verse to attack Jewish literalism.[162]

The same verse is used as a prooftext in a rabbinic passage which also disputes the order of creation. Hillel and Shammai debate the order of the creation of heaven *and* earth in a famous controversy.[163] The students of Hillel claim the earth was created first, and the heavens second, as the chronology of verses 1 and 6 would indicate. The students of Shammai cite Is 66.1 as a prooftext to justify their opinion that שמים נברא תחילה. Like a king, they argue, God first builds his throne (the heavens), and then

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[161]Hom in Gen 1. 1 (Heine, 48). Origen then interprets these two types of heavens as symbolic of the spiritual and corporeal in man, urging his congregants to separate the two aspects in themselves so each "may draw forth 'from within himself rivers of living water springing up into life eternal'..." (Heine, 50). Origen writes that the corporeal heaven, "is called firmament because it divides between those waters which are above it and those which are below it" (Heine, 49). This interpretation directly parallels Philo, who describes the first day's creations as ἀσώματος. On the creation of the second heaven Philo writes that it was solid and that God called (προσηγόρευσεν) it στερέωμα, firmament. The parallel is also found in Christian literature prior to Origen, and may reflect a Hellenistic cosmogony. However difficult to determine, it seems as though Origen's phrase, "For every corporeal object is, without doubt, firm and solid..." is a close paraphrase (or even quotation?) of Philo's aside: τὸ γὰρ σῶμα φύσει στερεόν... (Philo, Op 36).

[162]Cf. Mt 5. 34, 23. 22, Act 7. 49, and Barn 16. 2.

[163]Found in p. Hag 8. 1; b. Hag 12a, BerR 1. 15, WaR 36 (beginning); and PRE 19 (beginning).

fashions his footstool (the earth). Beit Shammai accuses Beit Hillel of getting the order backwards--the proper dimensions of the footstool, they reason, cannot be determined prior to building the throne.

The rabbinic use of Is 66. 1 was interpreted by Christians as gross anthropomorphism, akin to pagan worship of Zeus in their temples.[164] Yet Origen, in citing the same prooftext to support his conclusion that heaven was created prior to firmament, seems to have clearly understood the cosmological nuance of the verse in a manner similar to the Rabbis. But since Origen cites the verse in passing and does not develop his argument in the way the Rabbis do, we cannot conclude that he was aware of the rabbinic tradition. However, he is able to ignore the charges of anthropomorphism which had been heaped on the Isaiah verse in order to substantiate his interpretation of the cosmogonic order.[165] This leads us to conclude that, although Origen and the Rabbis understood the verse in a similar way, this parallel is an example of coincidence.

In his homily on Jacob's reunion with Joseph, Origen examines Gen 46. 4:

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[164]Barn 16. 2. Throne imagery is also used to describe Zeus' heaven (cf. Orpheus: Hymn 62, 2f. Q. and Demosthenes 25, 11; W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, tr. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, Chicago 1979, 364).

[165]No parallel exists in either Philo, the New Testament, or the intervening Church Fathers. (Philo's reference to Is 66. 1 in Conf 98 is not germane.)

> But let us see how also the statement after that should be understood: "And Joseph shall put his hands upon your eyes."...Now, meanwhile, it will not appear to be said without reason, since it has appeared also to some of our predecessors that a certain prophecy seemed to be designated in this statement: since, indeed, that Jeroboam who made two golden calves that he might seduce the people to worship them, was from the tribe of Joseph, and by this he blinded and closed the eyes of Israel, as if his hands were placed on them, lest they see their impiety, of which it is said, "Because of the impiety of Jacob are all these things, and because of the sin of the house of Israel. But what is the impiety of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? (Mi 1. 5)."[166]

This tradition, that Jacob foresaw Israel's idolatry in the time of Jeroboam, is not found in either the Church Fathers or Philo. Thus "some of our predecessors" is probably a conscious connection to the Jewish exegesis found in PesR 3. 4, on Jacob's blessing of Ephraim and Menasseh:

> The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Must I not now make known to Jacob the person who is to rise up [in Israel]...by this pair--namely, Jereboam the son of Nebat of the Tribe of Ephraim? For, as R. Hama taught: "The Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that Jeroboam the son of Nebat would rise up out of Ephraim and make two calves of gold. How else [is the question, which Jacob asked Joseph], *Who are these?* (Gen 48. 8) to be construed, save [that through the holy spirit Jacob was enabled to see the calves made by Jeroboam, something which is intimated by Jacob's use of the word *these*: For even as in the wilderness the calves of gold were greeted with the cry], *These be thy gods, O Israel!* (Ex 32. 4), [so again in the days of Jeroboam, when] *The king took counsel, and made two calves of gold...he said...These be thy holy gods, O Israel!* (1 Kg 12. 28). However, the Holy One, blessed be He, then withdrew the holy spirit from Jacob, [so that he could neither see the future nor bless Ephraim and Manasseh]. (*Now the eyes of Israel were heavy for*

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[166]Hom in Gen 15. 7 (Heine, 212-13).

> *age* [Gen 48. 10]. According to R. Judah, these words are to be understood in the usual sense, namely, that because of his old age, his eyelids were heavy and they clung to the lower lids, so that when he wanted to see he had to have them lifted. R. Nahman said to R. Judah: God's mercy, no! What is meant by *so that he could not see* [ibid. 48. 10] is that the holy spirit had withdrawn from him).[167]

Though rooted in a different verse, Gen 48. 8, this tradition, ascribed here to R. Hama (either b. Bisa, a first generation Palestinian Amorah, or bar Hanina of the second generation), is similar to the one attributed by Origen to "one of our predecessors," albeit condensed and reinterpreted by Origen. One of the supporting verses, Gen 48. 10, "Now the eyes of Israel were dim from age, so that he could not see," generates the same association as Gen 46. 4, "...and Joseph shall put his hands on your eyes," upon which Origen comments. For both Origen and the Rabbis, this blindness suggests the idolatry of Jereboam. Thus we might conclude that Origen's appellation "one of our predecessors" refers to an earlier (Jewish) tradition which has been lost to us yet which underlies the version we have in Pesiqta Rabbati.

In his comments on Gen 22. 2, thought of as "The Trial of Abraham (by both Origen and the Rabbis)," Origen gives a standard Christological view that Isaac, the sacrificial lamb, prefigures Jesus, and that the wood Isaac carries is

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[167] PesR, tr. William Braude, New Haven 1968, 76-7. The parallel in Tan Vayechi 6 is anonymous.

none other than Jesus' cross. However, in the midst of this typology, he comments on the careful language of the text:[168]

> But now meanwhile the text says, "God was testing Abraham and says to him: 'Take your dearest son whom you love.' For to have said "son" would not have been enough, but "dearest" also is added. Let this too be considered. why is there still added also, "Whom you love?" But behold the importance of the test. The affections of a father are roused by the dear and sweet appellations repeated frequently, that by awaking memories of love the paternal right hand might be slowed in slaying his son and the total warfare of the flesh might fight against the faith of the soul./ "Take," therefore, the text says, "your dearest son Isaac, whom you love." Let it be, Lord, that you are reminding the father of the son; you add also "dearest," whom you are commanding to be slain. Let this be sufficient for the father's torment. You add again also, "Whom you love." Let the triple torment of the father be in this. Why is there need yet that you bring to mind also "Isaac?" Did Abraham not know that that dearest son of his, that one whom he loved, was called Isaac? By why is it added at this time? That Abraham might recall that You had said to him: "In Isaac shall your seed be called, and that in Isaac the promises shall be yours." The reminder of the name also produces a hopelessness in the promises which were made under this name./ But all these things happened because God was testing Abraham.[169]

The language, Origen explains, is chosen to specifically heighten Abraham's virtue. God's announcement of the test is neither painless nor direct; rather, each turn of phrase

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[168]B. Murmelstein, "Agadische Methode in den Pentateuchhomilien des Origines," Zum vierzigjahrigen Bestehen der Israelitischtheologischen Lehranstalt, Vienna, 1933, 99-100. No such parallel is found in Philo or the Church Fathers.

[169]Hom in Gen 8. 2 (Heine, 138).

exacerbates Abraham's decision, making his choice more difficult with every word.

Up until the final twist, that Isaac is the reminder of God's promise to the Gentiles, Origen's exegesis is much like the one found in BerR 55. 7:[170]

> "And He said: Take, I pray you, your son, etc." Said He to him: "Take, I pray you," i.e. I beseech you. "Your son." 'Which son?' Abraham asked. "Your only son," He answered. 'But each is the only one of his mother [Ishmael of Hagar and Isaac of Sarah].' "Whom you love." 'Is there a limit to affection?' "Isaac," He said. So why did He not reveal it to Abraham without circumlocution? In order to more greatly endear Isaac to Abraham, so He could reward him for every word.[171]

For Origen the circumlocution is just as problematic as for the Rabbis. Both see each phrase as another opportunity for Abraham to score points on his test. Perhaps the rabbinic version is more fanciful in imagining the script of a possible dialogue, yet the method and message of both exegeses are the same. Here, it is possible that Origen appropriated a rabbinic tradition (adapting it slightly so it would be entirely plausible to himself and his audience) in an attempt to solve a profound textual difficulty. And, since the rabbinic message fit into Origen's Christological interpretation of the Trial, he was free to leave the

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[170]The promise of Isaac is read as Christ, per Gal 3. 16.

[171]Cf. PesR 40. 6. The tradition is also found in b. San 89b, yet the reason for the circumlocution given there is to protect Abraham from shock--to let him find out gradually that God was referring to his most beloved son. (Cf. also Tan Vayerah 22 and PRE 31).

tradition intact. On the other hand, such an interpretation may simply have occurred independently to both Origen and the Rabbis, since both found the passage to be extremely important.

Next we will examine passages which bear some resemblance to rabbinic traditions but where direct parallels are either difficult to determine or have been attributed erroneously by scholars.

In his comment on Gen 13. 10, Origen gives what de Lange has identified as a Jewish exegesis:[172]

> ...it is written of the land of Sodom before it was overthrown, in that time when Lot chose it as his dwelling place, that "it was as the paradise of God and as the land of Egypt." And yet, to digress slightly, what similarity does there appear to be with the paradise of God and the land of Egypt that Sodom should be compared fittingly with these? Now I think it is in this way: before Sodom sinned, when it still preserved the simplicity of the unstained life, it was "as the paradise of God," but when it began to be discolored and to be darkened with the stains of sins it became "as the land of Egypt." But since the prophet says, "Your sister Sodom shall be restored to her ancient state (Ez 16. 55)," we inquire also whether her restoration also recovers this, that she be "as the paradise of God," or only "as the land of Egypt." I, at least, doubt if the sins of Sodom can be diminished to such an extent and its evils purged to the point that its restoration be so great that it be compared not only to the land of Egypt, but also to the paradise of God. [173]

Yet, when we consult the sources which de Lange cites as parallel, what we find is, in fact, something quite

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[172]De Lange, 46.

[173]Hom in Gen 5. 1 (Heine, 113).

different. The method of parsing the section of the verse referring to the Garden and Egypt into two separate parts as they apply to Sodom can be found in early rabbinic passages: "[Sodom was] 'like the garden of the Lord' as to trees, and 'like the land of Egypt' as to grains."[174] "'Like the garden of the Lord' as to trees, 'like the land of Egypt' as to plants."[175]

However, while the technique is similar, the content of these analogies is quite different. In fact, the Sifre passage goes on to compare Egypt to the land of Israel, leaving the image of Sodom behind:

> But perhaps it is to a distasteful trait of the land of Egypt that Scripture has compared it to the land of Israel?...perhaps the comparison is drawn between the land of Egypt and the land of Israel at a time of the degradation...When you were there, it was blessed on your account, and...now, when there is no blessing bestowed upon it as there was when you were there {it is not plentiful in produce (addition mine)}.[176]

In this comparison, Egypt is seen as negative, unlike in the former rabbinic passages. This negative view of Egypt is the only similarity we can discern between Origen's exegesis and the one in Sifre. Thus, it is not so clear that the rabbinic passage cited by Krauss is in fact parallel.

In the next part of Origen's "digression," however,

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[174]BerR 41. 7.

[175]SifDev pisqa 38 (Neusner, 113). A parallel is found in TPsJ to Gen 13. 10, but the Targum is probably dependent on the earlier rabbinic work cited here.

[176]SifDev pisqa 38 (Neusner, 113-14).

Origen seems to overtly indicate that he is confronted with a tradition different from his own:

> *Those, however, who wish to establish this* [emph. mine] will press us especially from that word which appears added to this counterpromise; for the Scripture did not say "Sodom will be restored," and stop, but says: "Sodom will be restored to its ancient state." And they will assert strongly that its ancient state was not "as the land of Egypt," but "as the paradise of God."[177]

De Lange writes:

> Several times Origen quotes a Jewish teaching that Sodom, after three thousand years of punishment, will be restored to its ancient state, so as to be compared 'not only to the land of Egypt but to the paradise of God.'[178]

While Krauss misses the mark, de Lange is somewhat correct: Though Origen may not be actually "quoting" the Jewish tradition, a parallel to rabbinic tradition is found in Midrash Rabbah, among a list of ten things that will be renewed in the עתיד לבא:

> The fourth is that they will rebuild all the cities of destruction so that there shall not be one place of destruction left in the world; even Sodom and Gemorrah will be rebuilt in the Future Time, as it is said in Scripture, "And your sisters, Sodom, and her daughters, shall return to their former state (Ez 16. 55)."[179]

It is possible but not necessary that Origen is referring to this rabbinic tradition, since no comment on Ez 16. 55 is

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[177]Hom in Gen 5. 1 (Heine, 113-14).

[178]De Lange, 46.

[179]Louis Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews 5, Philadelphia 1909-38, 242 n. 184.

found either in the earlier Church Fathers or in Philo. Yet the parallel between Origen's scholarly digression and rabbinic exegesis clearly exists in this particular instance where Origen attempts to solve a logical discrepancy raised by the text: How can Sodom be compared simultaneously to Eden and to Egypt, the former being a state of perfection and the latter the fleshpots of evil?

Origen's view differs from that of BerR 41. 7; the phrases comparing Sodom to Egypt and Eden are not both positive. In addition, unlike the rabbinic understanding, Sodom will not be restored to a state comparable to Eden. Thus for Origen, "ancient state" in Ez 16. 55 refers to some time after Sodom's "simplicity of the unstained life" and before "it began to be discolored."[180] Origen may be directly calling into question the rabbinic reading of Ez 16. 55. There is, no doubt, a polemical undertone to his exegetical manipulation. Yet, since the comment is truly an aside, it is difficult to determine whether Origen is in fact attacking a Jewish tradition of which he might have been aware.

Murmelstein wrote that Origen's comment on Gen 24. 16 was of rabbinic origin.[181] In his homily on Rebecca at the Well, Origen finds the verse problematic, since the phrase "a man who had not known her" seems redundant to the

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[180]Origen, Hom in Gen 5. 1 (Heine, 113).

[181]Murmelstein, 103-4.

term "virgin," in addition to the fact that the term παρθένος is itself repeated:

> Nevertheless the meaning of the statement disturbs me: "She was a virgin; a virgin, a man had not known her." It is, indeed, as if a virgin were something other than one whom a man has not touched. And what does the addition seem to mean in reference to a virgin that it should be said, "A man had not known her?" Is there, indeed, another virgin whom a man has touched?[182]

The Rabbis struggle with this apparent redundancy as well: "R. Johanan (c. 180-279) said: Since Scripture says, 'A virgin,' certainly we know that 'nor had any man known her.'" Though the rabbinic tradition poses the problem somewhat similarly to the way Origen frames the textual difficulty, their solutions are quite different.[183] R. Meir (mid-second century) contends that she had broken her hymen when descending from her camel, thus she was still called a "virgin, since no man had known her." On the other hand, R. Johanan says:

> Rather, Scripture means that no man had even made improper advances to her, in accordance with the verse, "The rod of wickedness shall not come upon the possession of the righteous [lest the righteous strike back and do wrong] (Ps 125. 3)."[184]

The version of this exegesis in p. Ket 1. 3 gives yet another interpretation: each phrase refers to a different

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[182]Hom in Gen 10. 4 (Heine, 163-64).

[183]Cf. the discussion about commonality of problem in Chapter Two.

[184]BerR 60. 5.

type of intercourse--one natural, the other, unnatural. The Rabbis are in the world of halakhah; they are concerned with virginal status of the betrothed, which determined the dowry and governed whom she could marry. Origen, on the other hand, while interpreting "virgin" literally, takes the phrase that follows to be allegorical:

> Just as Christ is said to be the husband of the soul, to whom the soul is married when it comes to faith, so also, contrary to this, he who also is called "an enemy" when "he oversows tares among the wheat" (Mt 13. 25) is called the husband to whom the soul is married when it turns away to faithlessness. It is not sufficient, therefore, for the soul to be pure in body; it is necessary also that this most wicked man "has not known it." For it can happen that someone may possess virginity in body, and knowing that most wicked man, the devil, and receiving darts of concupiscence from him in the heart destroy the purity of the soul. Because, therefore, Rebecca was a virgin "holy in body and spirit (1 Cor 7. 34)," for this reason the Scripture doubles her praise and says: "She was a virgin; a man had not known her."

This solution was proposed by Clement in his Miscellanies:

> That purity in body and soul which the Gnostic partakes of, the all-wise Moses indicated, by employing repetition in describing the incorruptibility of body and soul in the person of Rebecca, thus: "Now the virgin was fair, and man had not known her."[185]

While it is quite possible that, while Origen develops the exegesis more fully, he bases it essentially on Clement, the occurence of this allegorical interpretation in Philo leads us to believe that both are familiar with that

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[185]Clement, Str 4. 161 (ANF 2, 439).

tradition.[186] Thus, there is no basis to conclude that Origen is dependent on the Rabbis here. Furthermore, as the above comparison illustrates, though they often raised the same questions, their different world views often took them off into quite distinct directions to find their solutions.

In his Exodus Homily on the Song of the Sea, Origen uses rabbinic exegesis to solve what appears to be a textual problem but, in fact, points to a larger theological problem. The problem with the verse, Ex 15. 11, is that the exclamation "Who is like you among the gods?" seems tacitly to acknowledge the existence of other deities. Furthermore, the fact that the text uses the same name for pagan gods as for the One God implies some sort of parity between the two. Origen uses the solution to expound theology:

> The words "Who is like you among the gods?" do not compare God to the images of the Gentiles nor to the demons, who falsely appropriate the name of gods to themselves, but mean those gods who by grace and participation in God are called gods. Scripture also speaks elsewhere of these gods: "I said, 'You are gods (Ps 81. 6),'" and again, "God has stood in the congregation of the gods." But although these are susceptible of God and appear to be given this name by grace, nevertheless no one is found like God in either power or nature. And although the apostle John says, "Little children we do not yet know what we shall be; but if he has been revealed to us"--speaking about the Lord, of course,--"we shall be like him," (1 Joh 3.2) nevertheless this likeness is applied not to nature but to beauty (*Gratium*). For example, it is as if we should say that a painting is a likeness of him whose image is expressed in the painting. So far as the appearance pertains to beauty, it is said to be similar; so far as it

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[186]Philo, Quaest in Gn 4. 99.

> pertains to substance, it is very dissimilar. For the painting is a figure of the flesh and the beauty of a living body. It is an artifice of colors and wax placed on tablets lacking sensation. No one, therefore, "among the gods is like the Lord," for no one is invisible, no one incorporeal, no one immutable, no one without beginning and end, no one creator of all, except the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit. [187]

According to Murmelstein, the Aggadic material addresses this problem as well, including Targum Onqelos which translates the difficulty away: ליח בר מינך אח הוא אלהא ירי[188].... A tradition in Sifre also addresses this concern: "'Other Gods.' For others call them gods. And so Scripture says, 'Yes, though one cries to him, he cannot answer, nor save him out of his trouble' (Is 46. 7)."[189]

Origen raises the problem again in his discussion of the Decalogue:

> If he had said, "There are no other gods besides me," the word [commandment] would appear more absolute. But now because he says, "You shall not have other gods besides me," he has not denied that they exist, but he has prohibited that they exist for him to whom these commandments are given. I think the apostle Paul also assumed that because he writes to the Corinthians saying, "If indeed they exist who are called gods whether in heaven or on earth (1 Cor 8. 5)." And he adds, "Just as there are many gods and many lords, but for us there is one God the Father from whom are all things and we for him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we through him (1 Cor 8. 5-6)." But you will also find gods

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[187]Hom in Ex 6. 5 (Heine, 290-91).

[188]Murmelstein, 110.

[189]SifDev pisqa 43 on Dtn 11. 14, Neusner, 141. The same idea is expressed in MekhY Shirata 8 on Ex 15. 11, citing Ps 115. 5 (not the same passage cited below).

> mentioned in many other passages of Scripture as in the passage, "Since he is the highest Lord, terrible, a great king above all gods (Ps 46. 2)," and, "The Lord, God of gods, has spoken (Ps 49. 1)," and, "In the midst he judges gods (Ps 81. 1)." The same Apostle says of lords, "Whether thrones or dominions or powers all things have been created by him and in him (Col 1. 16)." "Dominions," however, are nothing other than a certain order and multitude of lords. It seems to me that the apostle Paul made the meaning of the Law clearer in this passage. For this is what he says: even if there should be "many lords" who have dominion over other nations, and "many gods" who are worshipped by others, "but for us there is one God and one Lord."[190]

He goes on, citing Dtn 32. 8-9, to explain that these gods are "angels who did not preserve their preeminence [citing Ps 81. 5-7]."[191] Only Israel merited direct rule by God Himself, and "on the others who have been created by him he bestowed that name not by nature but by grace."[192] Origen points out that this passage does not challenge monotheism, as the heretics claim, rather, it alludes to the hierarchy of angels over all of whom God reigns supreme.

A similar approach is found in the Mekhilta. As Murmelstein points out, the same problem is raised there, offering several solutions.[193] The third interpretation

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[190]Hom in Ex 8. 2 (Heine, 318-19).

[191]Heine, 319.

[192]Heine, 320.

[193]Murmelstein, 111. The first resolution is that the term "gods" refers to the Egyptian idols. Having just witnessed the triumph of the One God over these idols in their drowning in the Red Sea, Israel renounces their idols with the exclamation of Ex 15. 11. Another interpretation reads בֵּאלִם as "in strength," thus circumventing the problem.

reminds us of Origen: "מי כמוך באלים יי..." מי כמוך באלו שמשמשים לפניך במרום, שנאמר, "כי מי בשחק יערוך ובני אל בערץ בסוד קדושים רבה ונורא יי אלהי צבאות מי כמוך חסין יה?" (Ps 89. 7-9).[194] This exegesis, like that of Origen, evokes an angelic hierarchy.

However, though Murmelstein writes that "at those places where there is no clear dependence, it must be assumed...that Origen's exegesis came into being independently,"[195] he has neglected to demonstrate Origen's reliance on earlier Christian works. In this instance, Origen seems to depend on pseudo-Clement (if, indeed, that author dates prior to Origen).[196] Parallels are found both in Homily 16. 6 and in the Recognitiones as well.[197] In addition, these exegeses, as they appear in his On First Principles, are formulated as a response to the heretics, as they are in the pseudo-Clementine

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[194]MekhY Shirata 8.

[195]Murmelstein, 93, tr. Ann Millin (Graduate student, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion) expressly for this thesis.

[196]ANF 8, 74. The translator concludes that the work must have pre-dated Origen, since there are other places where Origen parallels pseudo-Clement. Since scholars believe the pseudo-Clementine literature to be of Jewish-Christian (i.e. Ebionite) origin, it is quite possible that Jewish interpretations found their way into the works.

[197]ANF 8, 313-14 and Clem Recogn 8, 55 (ANF 8, 180). Cf. also Clem Recogn 2. 39-42 (ANF 8, 108-9).

literature.[198] Thus, we might conclude that Origen is dependent on earlier Christian exegesis here.

[198]Princ 2. 9. 5-6 (ANF 4, 291). Cf. also Cels 8. 3-5 (ANF 4, 640-41), which cites 1 Cor 8. 5.

Chapter Four: Origen's Use of Rabbinic Legend for Homiletical Purposes

As we saw in Chapter Two, Origen tended to look for three levels of meaning in a given text. This scholarly approach to exegesis, however, was sometimes in conflict with his homiletical purpose. This is evident when he utilizes a rabbinic exegesis, which sometimes leads him to deviate from that hermeneutic and other times allows him to speak as a biblical scholar, keeping well within that tripartite hermeneutic. At other times Origen unites all facets of his religious personality, using a midrash to interpret the literal meaning of a text, but changing its symbolic meaning to fit his homiletical purpose. Although not overt, there are even some instances where one can sense a polemical tone underlying Origen's use of Jewish interpretations, the sub-text of these particular homilies.[199] We will examine three examples where Origen's devotion to seeking out three levels of meaning apparently prompts him to borrow from Jewish tradition to enhance a homiletical point.

In discussing the giving of manna in Exodus homily 7. 8, Origin explodes with a polemical counterattack on the preeminence of the Sunday Sabbath. (We discuss this in detail in the Chapter on "Polemic and Apologetic.") Following a discussion of the well-known etymology of manna,

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[199]Since these are not overt, they will be discussed in this chapter rather than in Chapter Five.

"What is this?," Origen goes on to further attack Jewish interpretation of Scripture.[200] After drawing out the allegorical interpretation of manna as God's word, he comments:

> Do not marvel that the word of God is said to be 'flesh' and 'bread' and 'milk' and 'vegetable' and is named in different ways for the capacity of those believing or the ability of those appropriating it...That manna imparts the kind of taste to each mouth that each one wishes...And, therefore, if you receive the word of God which is preached in the Church with complete faith and devotion, that word will become whatever you desire.[201]

This particular interpretation, relating the character of the emanation of God's word according to the capacity of the recipient to that same capacity of manna to adapt its flavor according to the needs of the hungry can be found in ShemR 5. 9 (a comment brought in by association with Ex 20. 15):

> How did the Divine Voice emanate? R. Tanhuma said...Come and see how the Divine Voice emanated--to each Israelite according to his capability--to the old, according to their strength, and to the youths, to the children, to the babes and to the women, each according to their strength, and even to Moses according to his strength, as it is said: "Moses spoke, and God responded to him with the Divine Voice (Ex 19. 19), that is, with a voice he could endure...R. Jose b. Hanina says: If you are doubtful of this, then think of the manna that descended with a taste varying according to the needs of each individual Israelite. The young men, eating it as bread,* the old, as wafers made with honey,* the babes, it tasted like the milk from their mothers' breasts,* to the sick, it was like fine flour mingled with honey* [*prooftexts

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[200]See Philo, All 2. 86, 3. 175, derived from Ex 16. 15.

[201]Heine, 312-13.

intervene].[202]

While it is true that the association of physical sustenance with God's word is equally established in Christianity as in Judaism prior to Origen, the juxtaposition of that central metaphor to the popular Alexandrian legend (found in Wisdom 16. 21) that the manna tasted like whatever each one who received it wanted or needed is uniquely expressed by both Origen and R. Jose b. Hanina, who were roughly contemporaneous (though R. Jose also lived well into the second half of the third century). Besides Clement, none of the earlier Church Fathers who mention the legend make this connection.[203]

In his work The Instructor, Clement associates the manna with the many forms of God's word.[204] The entire chapter is dedicated to exploring how all who listen to God's word, whether young or old, are as children before Christ. After a remarkable exposition on the inter-related function of blood and milk in the nursing woman as a metaphor for God's Word in 1 Cor 3. 2, he compares this "spiritual nourishment" to the manna.[205] He writes:

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[202]This same tradition is found in PesK 12. 25.

[203]Cf. Tertullian Adversus Marcionem 4. 26. 4, and Clem Recogn 1. 35. 3.

[204]Clement, Paed 1. 41.

[205]This entire discussion, Clement claims, is prompted by Jewish interpretations of Ex 3. 8 (Paed 1. 34). The parallel biological analysis can be found in b. Bekh 6b. By far, the most elaborate exegesis on manna (prior to Clement) is Joh 6.

"Even now, in fact, nurses call the first-poured drink of milk by the same name as that food--manna."[206] Later on Clement concludes: "Thus in many ways the Word is figuratively described, as meat, and flesh, and food, and bread, and blood, and milk. The Lord is all these, to give enjoyment to us who have believed on [sic] Him."[207] Clearly Origen is dependent on Clement for the Christological aspect of his exegesis. Origen probably makes the connection between the various tastes of manna and the variety of God's word using the Wisdom passage.

47-65. This passage sets up Jesus as the new manna, per Dtn 8. 3, which in turn redefines Jesus as God's Word (where the manna had come to symbolize God's commandments in the Jewish manna tradition--cf. Bruce Malina, The Palestinian Manna Tradition, Leiden 1968, 74-77, and 106).

[206]Clement, Paed, 1. 41 (ANF 2, 220). This etymology probably derives from the Greek word ἡ μάννα, which can mean sap (Liddel-Scott, 1079. Cf. Aeneas Tacticus 35). It probably refers to colostrum, which is clearer and more viscous than breast milk itself. A similar analogy of God's word to mother's milk is made in SifDev pisqa 321 on Dtn 32. 25: "'...the suckling.' This teaches that they drank up the Words of Torah like a suckling who suckles milk from its mother's breasts." This association of the Greek word for manna with colostrum may account for the prevalence of the Jewish association of manna with mother's milk, though it is usually attributed to the false etymology of the word לש as תש, "breast," in Num 11. 8 (Tosefta Sot 4. 3, Yom 75 a, ShemR 5. 9, and SifBam pisqa 89 on Num 11. 8, and Aquila [μαστός]). There is some evidence that the semitic and Greek words for manna had similar connotations. According to Brown, Driver, and Briggs, the hebrew word, ןמ, is attested in Arabic, known to bedouin in the Sinai Peninsula as a "sweet, sticky, honey-like" sap (Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Oxford 1951, 577). It is possible that the similarity of exegeses can be attributed to this linguistic connection.

[207]Clement, Paed, 1. 47 (ANF 2, 221).

Yet it is interesting to note that Origen, like R. Jose, understands that God's word "is named in different ways for the capacity of those believing or the ability of those appropriating it."[208] Though it is quite possible the two scholars arrived at their expositions independently, it is remarkable that they made the same connection among manna, God's word, and the differing aptitudes of those who receive God's word.

Origen concludes his homily saying that God's word, as preached in the Church, consoles the afflicted, celebrates the optimist, calms the angry, heals those in pain, and consoles the poor. But, he warns, the teaching must be received with honest faith; the "manna" will rot before the unfaithful.

It is most likely that Origen's exegesis was inspired by Clement and Wisdom 16. 21 and was not directly influenced by rabbinic tradition. Yet, the similarity of both the rabbinic interpretation and that of Origen cannot be overlooked. While Origen and the Rabbis did share a common heritage of teachings about manna, and it is probable that they arrived at their exegeses independently, de Lange suggests that "Origen may have been attempting to reinterpret certain important Jewish symbols in Christian terms."[209]

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[208]Hom in Ex 7. 8 (Heine, 312).

[209]De Lange, 117.

A second parallel is found in Origen's exposition of the raising of Moses' arms at the battle against the Amalekites.[210] He contrasts Moses' posture with that of Jesus: while Jesus spread out his hands on the cross, Moses only lifts his hands up. With this opening, Origen sets his exegesis apart from the interpretation proposed by his Christian predecessors, who see Moses as a prefiguration of Christ and his outstretched arms as the cross.[211]

Origen then continues:

> To lift up the hands is to lift up our works and deeds to God and not to have deeds which are cast down and lying on the ground, but which are pleasing to God and raised to heaven...If, therefore, the people observe the Law, Moses lifts his hands and the adversary is overcome; if they do not observe the Law Amalec [sic] prevails.[212]

First, he gives a general interpretation of lifting up of hands--doing God's will. Then he applies this exegesis to the text: Moses' raised arms are dependent upon Israel's adherence to Torah, or תורה, which results in victory. If

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[210]Hom in Ex 3. 3 and 11. 4.

[211]See Pseudo-Barnabas 12. 12, Justin Dial 90, 91, 112, and 131, Irenaeus Dem 46 and 79, Haer 4. 24. 1 and 4. 33. 1, Tertullian Adversus Judaeos 10. 10 and Adversus Marcionem 3. 18. 6. That Origen generally understood the verse as prefiguring the cross is clear from Hom in Ex 3. 3: "And truly that of which Moses gave a figure is fulfilled in us...So, therefore, let us also lift our arms in the power of the cross of Christ and 'let us raise holy hands' in prayer 'in every place without anger and dispute [cf. 2 Tim 2. 8]' that we might deserve the Lord's help" (Heine, 259). However, he seemed to prefer the power of the Word to "the power of our Lord's cross" (Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem 3. 18. 6; ANF 3, 337), as we see in the beginning of that same homily (3. 3).

[212]Hom in Ex 11. 4 (Heine, 359).

Israel fails to observe the commandments, they fail in battle.[213]

We find a similar tradition in the Mekhilta, though the details are different:

> Rabbi Eliezer says: "Scripture says 'Israel prevailed' or 'Amalek prevailed' only to indicate that as long as Moses raised his hands upward, Israel would master the Words of Torah, which were about to be given into Moses' hands. But when he lowered his hands, Israel deprecated [לזלזל] the Words of Torah, which were about to be given into Moses' hands.[214]

R. Eliezer (early second century A.D.) plays on the root גבר, which in qal formation means "prevail" and in hif'il can mean "master."[215] The midrash also connects the word ידו "his hand," to the occurrence of the same in the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex 32. 15, 35. 29), enabling the metonymic identification of the role of Moses' hands here with their role in giving Torah.

The parallel is perhaps even stronger in the version found in the Palestinian Talmud, attributed to Samuel, a Babylonian Amorah who flourished in the first half of the third century:

> We have been taught: "And it came about that when Moses...etc." Could it be that Moses' hands could make or break the battle? [Impossible!] Rather,

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[213]It seems as though Origen is commenting on the historical situation and is not referring to the modern condition of Jews vis-a-vis Torah. Admittedly the passage has antinomian overtones.

[214]MekhY Amalek 1, on Ex 17. 11.

[215]Cf. QohR 9. 11.

> as long as Israel fixed their eyes heavenward, and directed their hearts towards God, they would prevail; and if not, they would fall.[216]...Samuel said [in connection to this]: "And the host will be unleashed [against Israel] because of the violation of the eternal [תמיד]...(Dan 8. 12)," [i.e.] because of her breach of Torah. "...throwing truth to the ground..." Whenever Israel throws words of Torah on the ground, this gentile Kingdom issues decrees and flourishes. What is the prooftext? "...throwing truth to the ground, while she achieved and prospered. "Truth" can only denote Torah, as it is written in Scripture, "Buy truth but don't sell it; [for it is] wisdom, ideas, and knowledge (Pr. 23. 23)." Rabbi Judah bar Pazzi said: "Israel has shunned good [טוב], the enemy will pursue (Hos 8. 3)." "Good" can only denote Torah, as it is written in Scripture, "Look, I have given you a good doctrine--don't forsake my Torah (Prov 4. 2)."[217]

Clearly, the speaker sees Israel's failure to observe Torah and to uphold the commandments as the direct cause of Amalek's success (in every age). This theme is quite well known in the legends of Amalek.[218] The Rabbis believed in the efficacy of Torah to a phenomenal degree; it had supernatural protective powers to ward off sickness and evil. It does not seem that Origen uses this level of the

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[216]M. RHSh 3. 8.

[217]P. RHSh 3. 8. Parallels are found in PesK 15. 5 and EkhaR, petikhta 2.

[218]SifDev pisqa 296; MekhY Amalek, ch. 1 on Ex 17. 8; PesK 3; Tan Beshallach, 25; TPsJ Ex 17. 1 and Dtn 25. 18 (and cf. TPsJ Ex 17. 8); b. San 103b; b. Shab 118b; PesR 13. 5-6. In fact, the Israelites had just been tested in the manna episode, described in Ex 16. 4, to determine their ability to adhere to God's law. As we learn further on in the account, some are faithful, while others are not. Some Rabbis see a direct causal relationship between Israel's impudence in the manna episode and the onslaught of Amalek (Cf. b. Shab 118b; also SifDev pisqa 296, ShemR 26. 2, PRE 44, and BemR 17. 17).

rabbinic exegesis. Yet, like Samuel and R. Judah b. Pazzi, Origen does see Israel's success or failure in direct proportion to their adherence to Torah. This is what both see in the symbols of Moses' arms.

It is remarkable that Origen, who promulgates the antinomian rhetoric of the Church, would use such an ostensibly pro-nomian interpretation (at least publicly). Yet, it appears that Origen has no problem with the ancient Hebrew understanding of doing God's will in its appropriate historical context. For the present time, though, the adherence to the Law must be in a spiritual sense.[219] It seems rather odd, however, that, at least here, he specifically eschews the traditional Christian reading of this passage. Why does he find the Jewish interpretation more attractive?

In order to begin to answer this question, we must look to the rest of Origen's commentary on this passage:

> You also lift your hands to God; fulfill the command of the Apostle: "Pray without ceasing." [1 Thess 5. 17].Then what is written will come about: "As a calf devours green grass in the plains, so this people will devour the people who are on the earth" [cf. Num 22. 4]. This indicates, as we received from the elders [maiores], that the people of God were fighting not so much with force and arms as with voice and speech, that is, by pouring out prayer to God they were overthrowing their enemies.[220]

Here, Origen understands Moses' lifting up of hands as

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[219]Hom in Ex 11. 6.

[220]Heine, 359.

prayer. This interpretation is found in the Mishnah, all versions of the Targum, Mekhilta, Pesiqta Rabbati and Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer.[221] Even Targum Onqelos, the Targum which follows the Hebrew most closely, adds פריסן בי צלו (spread out in prayer) in v. 12. The same paraphrase also appears in the Church Fathers.[222]

However, Justin rejects this reading of the verse, on the grounds that it was not the power of Moses' prayer (nor of Israel's prayers) which in itself evoked God to grant military success. Rather, he argues, the miracle was elicited by Jesus, through the types of Joshua/Jesus' name and the cross. In a response to Trypho's incredulity that God would let His own Son be crucified, which is cursed by

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[221]M. RHSh 3. 8, all versions of the Targum on Ex 17. 11-12, MekhY Beshallach 7, on Ex 14. 31 and Amalek 1, on Ex 17. 11, PesR 12. 5, 8, and PRE 12. 8, 44. In MekhY Amalek 1, on Ex 17. 11: R. Eleazer of Modi'in (early second century) says that Moses הפנה על מעשה אברח אמהרת...ן[מעשה. This turning is none other than prayer, as we learn from the halakhic inference drawn from the verse, that there should be a minimum of three men praying before the Ark on fast days. This exact formulation is further elaborated in TNeof to Ex 17. 12. This verse signifies זכות אבות in MekhY Beshallach 7, on Ex 14. 31. M. RHSh 3. 8 cites this passage to demonstrate the importance of evoking כוונה, intention, when leading a congregation in prayer.

[222]Cf., e.g., Tertullian, De Ieiunio 10. 9 (after a long exposition on the stations and hours of prayer): "In Exodus, was not that position of Moses, battling against Amalek, by prayers, maintained as it was perseveringly even till "sunset," a "late station?" (ANF 4, 109); Adversus Judaeos 10. 10: "But, to come now to Moses, why, I wonder, did he merely at the time when Joshua was battling against Amalek, pray *sitting* with hands expanded, when in circumstances so critical, he ought rather, surely, to have commanded his prayer by knees bended, and hands beating his breast, and a face prostrate on the ground..." (ANF 3, 165).

God, Justin writes:

> For it was not because Moses so prayed that the people were stronger, but because, while one who bore the name of Jesus (Joshua) was in the forefront of the battle, he himself made the sign of the cross.[223]

Elsewhere Justin explains that the two men, Joshua and Moses, both prefigured Christ--one in name, the other in form.[224] (The two did not become united until Jesus of Nazareth.) Thus, it was actually through the power of Christ that Israel prevailed.

In this homily, Origen rejects part of this exegesis, that Moses' extended arms prefigure the crucifixion, yet he does uphold the other part, namely, that Christ's power was present in name. Just prior to his exegesis of Ex 17. 11 Origen says, in his comment on Ex 17. 9:

> Previous to this passage there has been no mention of the blessed name of Jesus. Here first the splendor of this word has appeared...Moses calls Jesus; the Law invokes Christ that he choose for himself 'strong men' from among the people. Moses was not able to choose. It was only Jesus...[225]

Thus, Origen takes Joshua to be Jesus (the name is the same), following the traditional line of commentators who preceded him.[226]

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[223]Justin, Dial, 90. 4 (ANF 1, 244).

[224]Justin, Dial, 111.

[225]Hom in Ex 11. 3 (Heine, 358).

[226]Cf. Justin, Dial, 113, who compares the name change to that of Abraham and Sarah (Cf. Num 13. 16; this particular comparison is also found in WaR 19. 2).

Lest we think that Origen appropriated the Rabbis' actual concept of prayer along with their exegesis, we must take into consideration what has just preceded his use of the Jewish interpretation of Moses' arms. He pointed out that this incident follows Israel's having been watered and fed by God. In other words, says Origen, Israel has just received God's word, and has "approached the deeper meaning of spiritual teaching...."[227] For Origen, the act of eating manna itself imbues the recipient with knowledge. The Tanhuma also finds a relationship between those who ate manna and deeper understanding (i.e., of Torah):

"למען אנסנו בתורתי הילך אם לא." לא נתנה התורה
לדרוש אלא לאוכלי המן.[228]

According to R. Shimon, to whom this tradition is attributed, the generation who ate manna was the first to expound Torah. After all, that generation did not have to work to earn its keep--all the people's needs were provided by God; what else would they spend their time doing? However, what Origen intends by "spiritual teaching" is quite different from what R. Shimon calls דרש.

Origen's understanding of "teaching" is well in keeping

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[227]Hom in Ex 11. 3 (Heine, 357-58).

[228]Tan Beshallach 20 on Ex 16. 4, attributed to R. Shimon ben Joshua. The same tradition is found in the MekhY, attributed to R. Shimon bar Yochai. Since we have no way of determining the genuine authorship, we will simply refer to him as "R. Shimon."

with that of his Christian predecessors.[229] However, in the context of this exegesis, he chooses to see Moses' uplifted arms as symbols of the *prayer (word)* of Christ, not of his *act* of crucifixion.[230] Origen entreats his congregants to study, to pray, and to follow these *words* in their living out life (in this apparent time of persecution). Compelled by the power of his scriptural interpretation, he firmly asserts that it is through the power of Christ's Word that the enemy will be defeated.[231]

Origen continues his exegesis with an exhortation to prayer:

> So also, therefore, if you wish to conquer your enemies, lift your deeds and cry out to God as the Apostle says, "Being urgent in prayer and watching in it." [Col 4. 2] For this is the battle of the Christian in which he overcomes the enemy.[232]

With this battle cry Origen returns to the opening theme of the entire homily: How to defeat the enemy who persecutes those who "wish to live piously in Christ."[233] His answer is clear: by leading a Christian life and through prayer.

In addition to picking up the routine exegesis of Ex 17. 11-12 as referring to prayer, Origen refers to Num 22. 4

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[229]Cf. especially Tertullian, De Ieiunio 10. 9.

[230]Cf. Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem 3. 18. 6 (ANF 3, 337).

[231]Hom in Ex 11. 4 (Heine 360). Cf. also Hom in Ex 3 (end).

[232]Heine, 359-60.

[233]Hom in Ex 11. 1 (Heine, 355).

to prove that Israel used words rather than force to defeat her enemies. The interpretation of this verse as indicating that Israel's strength lies in prayer is well-attested in early rabbinic literature.[234] (There are no extant comments on the verse in the early Fathers or in Philo.) However, none of the Rabbis link the midrash on Num 22. 4, which refers to Israel, to her victory through prayer in the Amalek battle. Perhaps Origen associates the use of the Greek verb ἐκλέχω in Num 22. 4 with the folk etymology of Amalek, found in Philo, PesK 3. 8, and Tanhuma: "'a people licking out [ἐκλείξαι]'...for in very deed it eats up the whole soul and licks it out.[235] In fact, this connection is more readily made in the Greek, since the Hebrew verb for licking used in Num 22. 4, לחך, is only a synonym for the verb used in the folk etymology of Amalek, לקק. Origen, depending on the Greek, brings the two midrashim together because they rely on the same Greek word. Since the Rabbis relied on the Hebrew, they would not been sensitive to the linguistic echo apparent in the Greek. Thus, Origen makes a unique association which, in fact, may only be possible because he sees the passage "as a condemnation of the

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[234]Krauss, 153, citing SifBam pisqa 157 on Num 22. 4, BemR 20. 4, Tan Balak 3, and TanB Balak 4. See also b. San 105a. Balaam is also said to have incited Amalek to attack Israel (Sot 11a), which may be the connection to our passage.

[235]Philo All 3. 186. Cf. also Conq 11. This was probably one of the entries in the onomastica (Lester L. Grabbe, Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation, Atlanta 1988, 131-32).

Synagogue."[236]

Origen expands the rabbinic exegesis to demonstrate this view. Rather than seeing the two actions of Moses as reflecting Israel's behavior as a whole, sometimes Torah-obedient and sometimes Torah-defiant, Origen sees the Hebrews as composed of two peoples, Christians and Jews:

> ...one is a people from among the nations [ex *gentibus*] who lift up Moses' hands and strengthen them, that is, who elevate on high those things which Moses wrote and establish their understanding in an elevated manner and in this way are victorious. The other is a people, who, since they do not lift Moses' hands nor elevate them from the earth nor consider anything in him to be lofty and subtle, are overcome by the adversaries and overthrown.[237]

Here Origen is speaking of the Law, as did R. Eliezer, yet Origen delineates two levels therein: the spiritual level (of the gentiles) and the earth-bound, perhaps literal, level (presumably of the Jews). Though this division is not part of the rabbinic exegesis of the verse, it is found in Philo, which may provide the background for this particular insight. Philo discusses the battle between the bodily pleasures and the intellect. This verse, writes Philo, demonstrates that when the intellect rises above the mortal [θνήτος], the pure intellect, symbolized by Israel, prevails. But, when that intellect is brought low and weak,

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[236]De Lange, 82.

[237]Hom in Ex 11. 4 (Heine, 360).

passion, symbolized by Amalek, prevails.[238] Although Philo's exegesis may underlie Origen's understanding of the verse, Origen brings his discussion to a polemical level beyond the allegorical.

In this polemical reversal, Jews become the vanquished Israel and gentiles (Christians) are identified with victorious Israel.[239] He makes the point more explicit some paragraphs later:

> "For the Law cannot be effective," as the Jews affirm, because "the Law is weak in the flesh, [Rom 8. 3]" that is, in the letter, and can accomplish nothing according to the letter...[yet] all things can come about spiritually.[240]

Thus, for Origen the present-day situation of the Church and the Synagogue is read out of the Amalek battle. The Synagogue has been defeated; only the Church can prevail over the enemy. Thus Origen returns his congregants to his initial discussion: "the enemy" (Rome--per 2 Tim 3. 12) must be overcome--and only Christians can meet the

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[238]Philo, All 3. 186. Cf. also VitMos 1. 217-18.

[239]It would seem that this would be familiar narrative trope for early Christianity. Besides Justin, Dial 131 (demonstrating that Christians "are more faithful to God than" the Jews, for whom God performed great miracles, but were a thankless bunch): "Now it is clear that the memorial of Amalek remained after the son of Nave (Nun): but He makes it manifest through Jesus, who was crucified, of who also those symbols were fore-announcements of all that would happen to Him..." (ANF 1, 265), we have not located any more explicit use of Amalek to refer to contemporary Jews.

[240]Hom in Ex 11. 6 (Heine, 364).

challenge.[241] In order to understand the significance of Moses' raised and lowered arms, Origen may have relied on rabbinic exegesis. Yet, "he cannot resist tweisting it slightly so as to read [it] as a condemnation of the Synagogue."[242] He skillfully weaves and recasts it to suit his homiletical message: Side with the winners; dedicate yourself to prayer and life in Christ.

The strongest case to be made for Origen's direct borrowing of rabbinic legend is his exegesis of the crossing of the Red Sea, in Ex 14. 29: "...and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left." After giving a moral interpretation of the verse, he interprets:

> Audivi a maioribus traditum quod in ista digressione maris singulis quibusque tribubus filiorum Istrahel singulae aquarum divisiones factae sint et propria unicuique tribui in mari aperta sit via idque ostendi ex eo, quod in Psalmis scriptum est: "qui divisit mare rubrum in divisiones." Per quod plures divisiones docentur factae, non una.[243]

This same exegesis is found in early rabbinic literature.[244]

The legend that the sea was divided into twelve paths,

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[241]Amalek often denotes Rome in rabbinic literature as well--see Ginzberg 6, 25, note 147. In later literature, however, Amalek designates Christianity (Ginzberg 6, 24, note 141).

[242]De Lange, 82.

[243]Hom in Ex 5. 5 (GCS, 190).

[244]Krauss, JQR 5, 151-52. We do not follow his reading of b. Sot 36b.

one for each tribe, is found in the classical midrashim, TPsJ, and in later midrashic collections.[245] The most striking parallel to Origen is in a Mekhilta text, where the same prooftext occurs as in Origen's exegesis:[246]

נעשה גזרים גזרים שנאמר "לגוזר ים סוף לגזרים."[247]

This comes out of a list of the ten miracles which were performed at the Sea (for which eleven examples follow). The legend is no doubt "free-floating" (i.e., not tied to one prooftext) since 1) it is found elsewhere and 2) the list claims to enumerate ten things (a stock number) when, in fact, it gives eleven.[248] Further on in the Mekhilta,

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[245]MekhY at Ex 14. 16; BerR 84. 5, 8; ARN 33; m. Av 5. 4; DevR 11. 10; TPsJ Ex 14. 21; MTeh Ps 68. 14 and 136. 15 (an allusion); Petirat Moshe; and Maimonides' Commentary on Av 5. 4. For what may be the earliest attestation of this tradition, cf. Fragment Targumim to Dtn 1. 1 (paralleled in Neofiti and TPsJ):

...כר הוי חרך קיימין על גיף ימא דסוף איתבזע ימא מן קומיכון, ואתעבר חרתי עשרי איסטרטין מן אסטרא; חר לכל שבט.

This occurs in a list of miracles (and punishments for their subsequent rebellions and ungratefulness) which God wrought for Israel. As a substitute for a meaningless list of place names, the Targum has inserted the events of the exodus. Thus this particular reference takes the place of מרל סוף.

[246]Because Origen also takes over the rabbinic prooftext, we might reject Heine's translation of the present participle, *ostendi:* "and I have proven it." Rather, read the passive: "and [I have heard that] it is proven."

[247]MekhY 5 on Ex 14. 16: It was cut into parts upon parts, as it is said, "To him who divided the Red Sea into parts (Ps 136. 13)" (Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, trans. Jacob Z. Lauterbach, v. 2, Philadelphia 1933, 224).

[248]A colorful painting from the synagogue at Dura-Europus depicts the sea with twelve stripes, probably to indicate twelve partings. The artistic rendering attests to the prominence of this legend (Cf. C.H. Kraeling, The Excavations

we read that the tribe of Benjamin jumped into the Sea first, citing Psalm 68. 28, "There is Benjamin the youngest ruling them, the princes of Judah, their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naftali."[249]

This particular exegesis is not found in any of the early Church Fathers who deal with the incident: Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Novation, Cyprian, or Pseudo-Clement. The usual interpretation of this incident is a dual splitting.[250] Philo, too, interprets the episode this way.[251]

Yet, for his literal (or historical) exegesis, Origen apparently turns to the Rabbis. For the symbolic level, he follows the traditional Christian view of the immersion set out by Paul as baptism by God, prefiguring John's baptism.[252] And for the moral level, which comprises the conclusion of his sermon, he builds on this Christian tradition, virtually ignoring the "foundation" laid by the

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at Dura-Europus, Final Report 8, pt. 1, The Synagogue, New Haven 1956; or E.R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Graeco-Roman Period, vols. 9-11: "Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue," Princeton 1964).

[249]MekhY on Ex 14. 22. The Rabbis derive from this, and from the rest of the Psalms verse, that the miracles at the sea, as well as all ensuing miracles, were performed on behalf of Benjamin, Judah, Zebulun, and Naphtali.

[250]E.g., cf. Justin Martyr, Dial, 131. 3, Tertullian, Adversus Marcionem, 4. 20. 1, Clem Recogn, 1. 34. 6.

[251]VitMos 1. 177, 179 and 2. 253.

[252]1 Cor 10. 2. Cf. also Tertullian, De Baptisma, 9. 1. 4.

maiores, whose tradition he freely puts forth.

After proving the interpretation further by citing Psalm 68.28, he then returns to Paul's symbolic interpretation of the incident as baptism, which is completely independent of the previous rabbinic exegesis of Ex 14. 29. He concludes the homily by construing the entire Exodus saga as applying to the act of scriptural interpretation, the theme he introduces in his opening remarks: If one leaves Egypt, (ignorance), following Moses, (God's Law), one will be confronted by the sea, (the contradictions and adversaries' interpretations and challenges of Scripture).[253] If one is vigilant in scriptural study, the "sea" will withdraw, and one will traverse with the correct faith and with legitimate lines of reasoning, leaving the adversaries to drown in the sea. In these closing remarks, Origen also leaves behind the rabbinic exegesis he presented just three paragraphs earlier.

Why, then, does Origen even cite the rabbinic legend if he is not going to employ it, as he proposes in his hermeneutical theory, as a foundation? Since Origen condemns Jewish "fables," following Paul, it is strange that he would turn to Jewish legend to aid his own exegesis.[254]

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[253]This allegorical interpretation is reminiscent of Philo.

[254]Tit 1. 14 and 2 Tim 4. 4; These attacks can be found in Hom in Gen 3. 6 (end), 6 (end), and 13. 3.

In fact, in the very beginning of this homily he has attacked Jewish exegesis for its lack of insight into the mystical, or spiritual level.[255] He turns immediately to Paul's allegory of the Exodus (1 Cor 10. 1-4), pointing out "how much Paul's teaching differs from the literal meaning."[256] Origen speaks here as a pastor, steering his congregation away from their proclivity for "Jewish fables: It seems to me that if I differ from Paul in these matters I aid the enemies of Christ...."[257]

But as Origen goes on in his explication of the text, he becomes further entrenched in the text itself. As if forgetting his homiletical (polemical) purpose, which he laid out so clearly at the beginning of the homily, he lapses into his scholarly mode. This is what leads him to say, "I thought that the careful student should not be silent about these things observed by the ancients [*maiores*] in the divine Scriptures."[258]

Although bringing in the legend may seem to contradict Origen's allegiance to Paul's allegorical interpretation, Origen, as a scholarly pastor, resolves this seeming discrepancy. By quoting this Jewish tradition, Origen

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[255]This is common in his homilies: Cf. Hom in Gen 1. 13, 3. 1, 5, 6. 1, 3, 7. 6, 13. 2, 3; Hom in Ex 7. 3, 7, 11. 4, 6.

[256]Hom in Ex 5. 1 (Heine, 276).

[257]Heine, 276-77.

[258]Hom in Ex 5. 5 (Heine, 283).

himself demonstrates what he is trying to elicit from his congregants: careful study of Scripture. It is not the tradition itself which lays a foundation for Origen's teaching, but the actual act of taking it into consideration. Origen, then, uses the rabbinic exegesis for its method rather than its meaning. The exodus, and specifically the passage at the Sea, is a metaphor for the interpretive process: the actual content of the exegesis is irrelevant.

Thus, we have seen three examples of Origen's use of Jewish exegesis to illustrate the message of his homily. In his discussion of manna, Origen brings together Christian and Jewish Wisdom literature to weave his own connection between the food which tasted like whatever one wanted and God's word, which emanates to all according to their needs or abilities. That this exegesis is also found in rabbinic literature might be a coincidence, or it may have served as a foundation upon which Origen based his own reinterpretation. In the Amalek passage, he first uses the rabbinic exegesis to explicate the verses, then he adapts the moral level of that exegesis to entreat his congregants to prayer and regular Church attendance. In the end of that discussion, he reverses the symbolic level of the exegesis to reflect his contemporary reality: the Christian supersession of Judaism. Finally, in his homily on the parting of the Red Sea, he uses the creative rabbinic

exegesis to show the methodology available to his congregation for Bible study.

Chapter Five: Polemic and Apologetic

In Chapter One we suggested that Origen's motivations for undertaking such a detailed study of the Old Testament went beyond his religious commitment to discovering "God's Word" in Scripture.[259] Like many of his predecessors, he sought to triumph in the Jewish-Christian debate, both literary and real. In his Letter to Africanus, Origen explicitly mentions an apologetic and polemical purpose in his work on the Hexapla. In this chapter, we will examine several examples of such polemic, where Origen's exegesis ties together a scriptural passage with the situation of Christianity vis-à-vis Judaism in his time.

De Lange writes: "It is no exaggeration to say that, for Origen, the whole of the debate between the Church and the Synagogue can be reduced to the one question of the interpretation of Scripture."[260] While this assertion is true in the broader context of Origen's work, it is evident to a lesser extent in his homilies, which address an audience of contemporary Christians. Even though Origen perpetuates the myth of Jewish literalism as part of the theological concept of God's rejection of Israel, he himself exhibits a concern for literal interpretation of the Old Testament as it affected religious behavior and observance. This conflict of interpretation was an essential element of

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[259]See p. 21 in this work.

[260]De Lange, 82.

the debate between the Church and the Synagogue.[261] The traditional categories of the debate were a) Mosaic legislation (circumcision, Sabbath, and dietary laws), b) God's rejection of the Jews and the supersession of the old covenant by the gentile covenant, and c) the divinity, person and mission of Jesus.[262] Unlike some of his predecessors, Origen did not adopt the usual pagan objections to Judaism.[263] Rather, he only avails himself of Christian objections to Judaism, reworking traditional claims. His attention to such issues as synagogue attendance and literal observance of the law reveals that a

> serious threat, resulting from a syncretistic tendency in the age, and by implication refuting the charge of Jewish antagonism, was the danger of corruption of the church by the percolation within it of Jewish teachings and of Jewish practices...[264]

In these areas Origin's polemic takes on a particularly vitriolic tone. His pastoral goal is clear: he must put an end to this syncretism.

We will begin with a general discussion of Origen's polemic against Jewish interpretation. For Origen, supersessionism was most vividly played out in the realm of scriptural exegesis. An illustration of Jewish

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[261]De Lange, 83.

[262]De Lange, 89.

[263]De Lange, 64.

[264]De Lange, 86.

"misunderstanding" of Scripture follows. We then move to the realm of praxis, where Origen defends the celebration of the Christian Sabbath on the Lord's Day. Finally, we will explore a theme we have already glimpsed in the Amalek discussion of Chapter Four: how the Church has eclipsed the Synagogue, becoming the New (True) Israel.

In his homily on Exodus 12-14, Origen begins by articulating a hermeneutic for understanding the Old Testament which, he informs his congregants, God intended for the Christians.[265] He begins his homily:

> The apostle Paul, "teacher of the gentiles in faith and truth" (1 Tim 2. 7) taught the Church which he gathered from the Gentiles how it ought to interpret the books of the Law. These books were received from others and were formerly unknown to the Gentiles and were very strange. He feared that the Church, receiving foreign instructions and not knowing the principle of the instructions, would be in a state of confusion about the foreign document [the Septuagint]. For that reason he gives some examples of interpretation that we also might note similar things in other passages, lest we believe that by imitation of the text and document of the Jews we be made disciples. He wishes, therefore, to distinguish disciples of Christ from disciples of the Synagogue by the way they understand the Law. The Jews, by misunderstanding it, rejected Christ. We, by understanding the Law spiritually, show that it was justly given for the instruction of the Church.[266]

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[265]This was a belief of the early church. See J. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, New York 1960, 32.

[266]Hom in Ex 5. 1 (Heine, 275). Latin: Proptera ergo ipse in nonnullis intelligentiae tradit exempla, ut et nos similia observemus in ceteris, ne forte pro similitudine *lectionis* et *instrumenti Iudaeorum* nos effectos esse discipulos crederemus. Hoc ergo differre vult discipulos Christi a discipulos synagogae, quod legem, quam illi male

Thus Origen sets up a dichotomy between Christian and Jewish interpretation. Yet, as we saw in Chapter Four, it is in this very homily (5. 5) that Origen uses a Jewish interpretation (of the twelve divisions of the Sea) as the starting point of his exegesis. Origen does not, as we have seen, eschew a (Jewish) interpretation simply because it is, in fact, literal. It appears that Origen objects to Jewish literal interpretation of passages where a Christian interpretation has superseded the Jewish one. In fact, according to Origen's own three-fold hermeneutic, it is the literal interpretation itself which often forms the foundation of a moral or spiritual interpretation. Yet, Origen's distinction between "the ancients," the source of the tradition about the parting of the Sea, and "the Jews" reveals the meaning of his rhetoric which apparently attacks Jewish literalism. He is not attacking the interpretation, only the interpreters.[267] Thus, he says:

> The Jews, therefore, understand only this, that "the children of Israel departed" from Egypt and their first departure was "from Rameses" and they departed from there and came "to Socoth" (cf. Ex 12. 37), and "they departed from Socoth" and came "to Etham" at Epauleus next to the sea (cf. Ex 13. 20, 14. 2).[268]

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intelligendo Christum non receperunt, nos spiritaliter intelligendo ostendamus eam ad ecclesiae instructionem merito datam. Iudaei ergo hoc solum intelligunt quia "profecti sint filii Istrahel...."

[267]Cf. de Lange, 30.

[268]Heine, 275.

He continues to contrast the Jewish interpretation with that of Paul, which is Christological. The sea crossing is baptism, the food and drink are spiritual, and the rock is Christ. Although he bases a number of his interpretations on etymologies of "the Hebrews," it is clear that his objection is not with the literalism of these interpretations themselves, but the fact that no allegorical or symbolic explanations are given beyond the literal level of meaning.

In fact, when one looks at Jewish interpretations of this passage, it *is* taken as a literal itinerary of Israel's journeys, as an historical record.[269] Apparently, this was not sufficient for Origen, nor did he want his congregants to be satisfied with merely the "literal" interpretation. Origen makes this point by using the weathered rhetoric of the Church which inveighs against Jewish literalism.

In his homily on Exodus 7. 3, he also appears to be contending with the Judaism of his day. Origen begins by quoting Ex 16. 4-5, which explains how the manna is to be collected on the sixth day. As if he is addressing actual opponents, Origen says:

> I, at least, wish first to have a word about this Scripture with the Jews to whom "the words of God" are said to be "entrusted." What do they take it to mean when it says, "For six consecutive days you shall gather. On the sixth day, however, you

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[269]TO and TPsJ on Ex 12. 37 and ShemR 18. 11.

> shall gather double?" It appears that that day which is placed before the Sabbath is called the sixth day, which we call the Day of Preparation. The Sabbath, however, is the seventh day./ I ask, therefore, on what day the heavenly manna began to be given, and I wish to compare our Lord's Day with the Sabbath of the Jews...But if it is plain from the divine Scriptures that on the Lord's Day God rained manna and on the Sabbath he did not, let the Jews understand that already at that time our Lord's Day was preferred to the Jewish Sabbath. Even then it was revealed that on their own Sabbath no grace of God descended to them from the sky. [270]

Origen argues that the lack of manna is a lack of blessing, and thus God denigrates the Jewish Sabbath. Since manna, God's word, was withheld from the Jews on their holiest day, but was bountiful on Sunday, Origen concludes, God was clearly showing favor to the gentiles.[271] This counterattack seems to respond directly to the tradition of R. Ishmael (early second century A. D.), commenting on Gen 2. 3:

> He blessed it with manna and sanctified it with manna. He blessed it with manna, since on week days there descended [only] one portion [of manna], but on Sabbath eve, two portions [descended]. And He sanctified it through manna, since none descended on the Sabbath at all.[272]

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[270] Hom in Ex 7. 5 (Heine, 307-8).

[271] The tradition that manna, indeed any nourishment, is equivalent to God's word is found in early Christian literature: Joh 1. 14 and 6. 51.

[272] BerR 11. 2. The midrash echoes Philo VitMos 2. 263-70, thus it is possible that Origen is responding to Philo. However, Philo goes beyond the rabbinic interpretation: "...the food given from heaven followed the analogy of the birth of the world; for both the creating of the world and also the raining of the said food were begun by God on the first day out of six. The copy reproduces the original very

For R. Ishmael, the very lack of manna constitutes God's holy observance of the Sabbath. R. Ishmael's rationale can only be understood within a halakhic framework. According to rabbinic interpretation of Mosaic law, the collection of any objects on the Sabbath (be they food or sticks) is strictly forbidden since it constitutes work. Thus, God Himself is understood to be honoring the Sabbath prohibitions by providing food for the Sabbath on the day before. In this way, Israel can observe the Sabbath in its complete legislation by not having to go out and collect the manna for that Sabbath day. Origen, however, wrenches the discussion out of its halakhic context, rendering it defenseless. In his interpretation there are no rules of Sabbath observance--only the value of the Word. And since receiving God's grace is the highest value, the days on which manna falls win out over the one day on which it doesn't.[273]

De Lange has noted that Origen found ample evidence in Scripture for "the transference of divine care from the Jews to the Gentiles."[274] Origen's doctrine of election,

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exactly... (VitMos 2. 264; ed. Loeb 6, 583)."

[273]It is curious that Origen does not feel the need to point out why Sunday is relegated to the level of the profane (i.e. along with other weekdays), which seems a logical hole in his argument. Perhaps this reveals the pointedness of Origen's attack, that he is concerned with knocking down the Jewish interpretation, not with building up an air-tight interpretation of his own.

[274]De Lange, 79.

writes de Lange, leads him to re-identify Jacob as the new Israel, or Christianity: "Jewish tradition had long identified Esau with the enemies of Israel, and derived satisfaction from the promise the [sic.] Jacob would prevail over them. Since Jacob now stands for the Church, Esau, the older brother, will represent the Jews."[275] In his comments on Genesis 25. 23 Origen derives this polemical view from Scripture:[276]

> Therefore the Lord said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall be divided out of your womb. And one people shall overcome the other, and the elder shall serve the younger" (Gen 25. 23). How "one people has risen above the other," that is, the Church over the Synagogue, and how "the elder serves the younger" is known even to the Jews themselves although they do not believe [etiam ipsis Iudaeis licet non credentibus notum est]. I think it is superfluous, therefore, to speak about these things which are well known and very commonplace to everyone [De his ergo, quae palam sunt et valde omnibus trita, dicere superfluum puto].[277]

This reversal motif, or contra-primogeniture, is quite common in early biblical literature. These passages were metaphors for Israel's preeminence despite her relative youth and size among other nations. The Rabbis continued to interpret the paradigm identifying Jacob with the Jews and Esau with their enemies; some state the motif in religious

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[275]De Lange, 80.

[276]Origen makes the same point in Hom in Gen 15. 5 on Gen 46. 3-4.

[277]Hom in Gen 12. 3 (Heine, 179).

terms: Jacob is pious, and Esau is idolatrous.[278] Others use political rhetoric: they are the two proudest nations (playing on the spelling of nations as גוים, which can be taken as proud, גאים), Hadrian of the Gentiles and Solomon of Israel, or even more generally, as Jews and Romans.[279]

However, we should not attribute to Origen the recasting of the reversal of Gen 25. 23 as referring to the Christians and the Jews. This interpretation can be traced to Romans 9. 10-13:

> And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call, she was told, "The elder will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."[280]

It is further elaborated in Epistle of Barnabas 13. 2, and is repeated by Irenaeus (Haer 4. 21. 2) and, then, Tertullian:

> Accordingly, since the *people* or *nation* of the Jews is anterior in time, and "greater" through the grace of primary favour in the Law, whereas ours is understood to be "less" in the age of times, as having in the last era of the world attained the knowledge of divine mercy: beyond doubt, through the edict of the divine utterance, the *prior* and "greater" people--that is, the Jewish--must necessarily serve the "less;" and the "less" people--that is, the Christian--overcome

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[278]BerR 63. 6.

[279]BerR 63. 7.

[280]The New Oxford Annotated Bible With The Apocrypha, edd. Herbert May and Bruce Metzger, Revised Standard Version 1977, 1371.

the "greater."[281]

According to Tertullian, the Jews forfeited their status of election to the Christians as a result of their continued idolatry and disobedience of God's Law. Though Origen does not mention this tradition in particular, he alludes to it. That Judaism has been supplanted by Christianity "...is known even to the Jews themselves although they do not believe." This comment might suggest that the Jews of Origen's day read Gen 25. 23 as an instance of contra-primogeniture while stubbornly continuing to read Jacob as the Jewish Israel and not as the Christian, or "New," Israel. Or, perhaps Origen means that Jews admit their lesser position in the face of Roman power (and even attributing this to Israel's sins), but they refuse to acknowledge Christian supersession.[282]

Yet Origen does not remain on this polemical level for his allegorical exegesis. Like (and, perhaps, from) Philo, Origen sees these two nations as internal to the human being:[283]

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[281]Jud 1. 3, 4 (ANF 3, 151).

[282]Hom in Gen 12. 3: "How 'one people has risen above the other,' that is, the Church over the Synagogue, and how 'the elder serves the younger' is known even to the Jews themselves although they do not believe..." (Heine, 179). See b. AZ 2b, where Gen 25. 23 is used to show that Edom, i.e. Rome, according to R. Jochanan, the most important kingdom, will be the first to enter the world to come (to be judged by God). Each kingdom appears, in order of political importance. Of course, only Israel merits the reward.

[283]Sacr 4 and Congr 129-130; see also All 3. 88-90.

> Let us add this...I think that this can be said also of us as individuals, that "two nations and two peoples are within you." For there is both a people of virtues within us and there is no less a people of vices within us...But if we should be such a Rebecca and should deserve to conceive from Isaac, that is, from the word of God...the flesh shall serve the spirit and vices shall yield to virtues.[284]

Thus, Origen moves quickly from the level of polemic to the higher ground, as he sees it, of allegory. Origen uses the polemic for instant effect, to aggrandize Christianity, yet he does not dwell on it--nor does he see it as the ultimate understanding of the text.

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[284]Heine, 179.

Conclusion: Scholarly Debate and Deeper Understanding

In our study of Origen's homilies on Genesis and Exodus we sought to discover to what extent Origen had access to modes of exegesis and exegetical traditions of Alexandrian, and, perhaps, Palestinian Jewry. It is evident that while Origen's exegetical approach often paralleled that of the Rabbis, he did not rely directly on rabbinic sources for his borrowing of Jewish material. While he may have learned a few exegeses through his interchanges with Jews, either in his congregation, in the public forum, or in public debates, his use of these exegeses does not suggest a close, literary aquaintance with rabbinic exegesis. It is clear that he relied on Philo for Jewish material, and it seems quite probable that he culled some midrashic material from intertestamental literature as well. Some of this literature may be lost to us, but it seems more likely that Origen relied on material which was included by the church as part of its own writings than that he would have turned to his rabbinic colleagues for their oral traditions.[285]

Be that as it may, whether or not Origen relied on rabbinic exegesis directly is not entirely vital to our understanding of Origen's use of Jewish exegesis. What is important is that he found their work to be significant for his own work, however he obtained his material. This

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[285]See Origen's discussion of the dimensions of Noah's Ark for a parallel to intertestamental literature.

reveals Origen, "The Christian Exegete," in his appropriate historical context. A tremendous legacy of Jewish biblical exegesis had existed before him and continued to exist after him. He connected that line of tradition with the heritage of the Greeks--Alexandrian exegesis--and renewed a slavish dedication to Scripture and the interpretation thereof which might have been lost to Christianity altogether if he had not come along.

We have found that Origen used others' interpretations in a variety of ways: to solve textual difficulties, to drive home a homiletical idea, and to both attack views which were antithetical to his perception of Christian thought and defend positions which themselves came under attack of others.

Due to his efforts and the efforts of those who followed his example, Jews and Christians down through the Middle Ages and into our own time have continued to exchange, both amicably and not so amicably, insights to biblical interpretation. As we continue to "turn it and turn it, for everything is in it, and contemplate it, and become wise and old over it," we hope that the commitment of our ancestors to find meaning for their lives in Scripture will be a goad for us in our time. But, unlike our forbears, we hope to leave behind the polemic, the apologetics, and the enmity brought on by blind commitment to exclusive truth rather than mutual respect and

appreciation of each other's differences. The time has come to put down the sword, and to learn from one another.

הפוך בה, והפוך בה, דכולא בה. וכה תחזי, וסיב ובלה בה...

--Avot 5. 22

Guide to Abbreviations and Citations

With the exception of patristic literature, all abbreviations in the text are according to Theologische Realenzyklopädie, Abkürzungverzeichnis, with appropriate changes for English spelling (i.e., accents omitted, for German "k" we use English "c"; and for German "s" we use English "z;" and Judges is abbreviated "Jdg," Kings, "Kg," and Isaiah, "Is."). Patristic title abbreviations are according to A Patristic Greek Lexicon, ed. G.W.H. Lampe, Oxford 1961 (substituting capital letters for each new word, as is the American custom.)

Citations are given in full at first mention, after which they are generally cited in short reference by author only. In places where the work cites more than one work by a given author, the title is, after the first citation, abbreviated. The major collections, *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte* and *Patrologia Graeca* by J.-P. Migne are abbreviated throughout the work as GCS and PG, respectively.

Types of works are abbreviated as follows: Homily, "Hom;" and Commentary, "Comm." In Talmudic references, "b." refers to Babylonian, and "p." refers to Palestinian when preceeding the name of a tractate. In Midrashic references, p. before a number refers to chapter.

In footnotes, citations have omitted the traditional abbreviations "p." and "pp." for the sake of brevity.

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