THEMES IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

Sodom's Sin

Genesis 18-19 and its Interpretations

edited by
Ed Noort & Eibert Tigchelaar

BRILL

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Jewish and Christian traditions

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PREFACE

The famous story of the doomed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah has generated a rich and diverse history of reception. Whereas the narratives of the Flood, in which the whole of creation reverted to chaos, offer only a very general terminological description of the reason why, the violence and the attempt at male rape in Sodom are explained extensively. The social sin of Sodom developed into a long and painful interpretation of homosexuality and only more recent exegesis has been able to read the texts without the blindfold of dogmatic interpretations of sexuality.

This volume presents aspects of the history of reception of this narrative. The papers collected here were presented at the Sixth Groningen Conference on *Themes of Biblical Narrative* held in June 2002. Every year the Research group Jewish and Christian Traditions of the University of Groningen Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, together with colleagues from other departments, study the history of reception of a narrative from the Hebrew Bible. Naturally, it is not possible to cover every aspect of the rich but cruel history of reception. We hope, however, that enough of the central aspects of the narrative have been treated here to give an impression of the texts interpreted in different times and by different groups.

The papers are arranged in four sections. Part One, "Intertextualities", deals with aspects of the history of reception within the Hebrew Bible. Part Two, "Readings", illuminates the use of the Sodom narrative in *Jubilees*, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Book of Revelation, the Targumim and Early Jewish Literature. A survey of the figure of Lot in the Koran and early Islamic commentaries concludes this section. Part Three, "Themes", focuses on single motifs: the role of the Dead Sea and the command to Lot's wife not to look back. Part Four, "Sexualities", deals with the unholy legacy of the Sodom narrative in the discussion about homosexuality.

The first paper, by Ed Noort, "For the Sake of Righteousness", describes the dialogue and negotiations between God and Abraham in Gen 18:16-33 as the first commentary on the Sodom story. This part of the history of reception follows one line of thought: is God still a righteous God if he destroys wicked and righteous men together. It is not the prosperity of the wicked – as in many parts of wisdom literature – that is at issue here, but the punishment of the righteous. This problem culminates in the rhetorical question "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"(Gen 18:25). The problem of the relationship between God and evildoers is tackled by

six other models reflecting possible answers in the Hebrew and Greek Bibles: Hosea 11, Jonah, Genesis 6-9, Ezekiel 18 and 14; Qoheleth 9; Wisdom 3. The nearest parallel is the older version of the Flood narrative. Therefore, Gen 6:5-9:17 and Genesis 18-19 may be regarded as competing stories about the breach after the good creation. The answer of Genesis 18-19 is that God does not eradicate the wicked and the righteous together. Individual rescue is possible and no more than ten righteous ones are needed to save an entire community.

Raymond de Hoop studies the intertextual relations between the Sodom and the Saul narratives. He posits a triptych with Genesis 19 as the left opening panel, the outrage at Gibeah (Judges 19), the punitive expedition against Gibeah (Judges 20) and the survival of Gibeah thanks to Jabesh (Judges 21) in the central panel, and the rescue of Jabesh by the Benjaminite Saul (1 Samuel 11) as the right closing panel. Judges 19-21 is the key text. By means of a subtle play on place names and tribal names and the links between Sodom and Gibeah stories on the one hand, and the links between Gibeah and Jabesh Gilead on the other, this triptych demonstrates that the good king of Israel comes from Bethlehem/Jerusalem and not from the Sodom of Benjamin, i.e. Gibeah. The chain of stories functions as a hidden polemic against King Saul, undermining his authority by casting doubt on his descent.

With a study of *Jub.* 16:1-9, Jacques van Ruiten takes us beyond the canon of the Hebrew Bible. *Jub.* 16:1-4 describes the announcement of a son to Abraham and Sarah; the destruction of Sodom is mentioned in *Jub.* 16:5-6, the incest of Lot's daughters with their father is related in *Jub.* 16:7-9. The dialogue between Abraham and God (Gen 18:16-33) is absent from this rewriting of the biblical text. Only some phrases can be linked to that part of the story. In the Hebrew Bible, the sin of Sodom is seen as social injustice, only Jer 23:14 hints at sexual connotations. It is only in later times that sexually unacceptable behaviour is connected so closely to Sodom and Gomorrah that Sodom and sexual sin became synonyms. In *Jub.* 16:7-9 it is Lot, not his daughters, who plays the active part in the incest. As a result, the figure of Lot is sharply contrasted to that of Abraham. *Jubilees* sees Abraham as a totally blameless, righteous and pious figure. Lot, however, has two faces. Starting off as the beloved nephew of Abraham, he turns into an exemplary sinner.

In his survey of the Sodom and Gomorrah motif in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Eibert Tigchelaar contradicts J.A. Loader (1990) who observed a remarkable absence of the two wicked towns in Qumran literature. More than a decade later the material has expanded and tools have been improved. It is now possible to conduct a more extensive search. Some manuscripts refer to the names of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the absence of Sodom in

the *Genesis Apocryphon* and the *Damascus Document* can be explained by the overall tendency of the texts. Thus far, 4Q172 fragment 4 is the only text which draws a connection between Gomorrah and sexual sins. 4Q180 quotes Gen 18:20-21, but the reason why is unclear. It is probably part of a commentary on problematic parts of the text, such as the nature of the visitors at Mamre and the foreknowledge of God. 4Q252 III 2-6 deals with Sodom and Gomorrah in a way related to the problems raised by the idolatrous city of Deuteronomy 13 and the individual responsibility of Ezekiel 14. A thorough discussion of 4Q177 reveals the possibility that an actual and eschatological understanding of the text is implied. The sons of Belial in Jerusalem will be destroyed. In the surviving holy city, however, the required number of ten righteous ones will be found, unlike inside Sodom.

From the Dead Sea Scrolls a switch is now made to the New Testament. Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte concentrates on the difficult text of Rev 11:8. Here the corpses of two murdered witnesses will lie on the streets of the city that "spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt". Rev 11:2, 8 indicates that this city must be Jerusalem, so the problem is why is Jerusalem called, of all names, Sodom and Egypt. Lietaert Peerbolte presents a verse-by-verse exegesis of Rev 11:3-6, rejecting the claim that Lactantius was a source for Revelation 11, and studies the prophetic figures of Elijah and Moses as candidates for the roles of the two witnesses. Sodom is the symbol of violence and evil, whereas Egypt stands for the oppressive power that once enslaved Israel. By calling Jerusalem by these two names, two negative epithets from the prophetic language are used. They stand for the town where the Lord of the two witnesses was crucified and where the Christ movement was maltreated.

Florentino Garcia Martinez surveys the Targumim, demonstrating how the biblical text was developed and transformed there. He concentrates on three topics: 1. Who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah? 2. What were the sins of Sodom? 3. Who was Pelitit?

The Targumim view a direct link between Genesis 17 and 18: the three angels come to Abraham on the very day of his circumcision, each with his own task. The names of the angels can be found in rabbinic tradition: Michael, Raphael and Gabriel, the latter being responsible for the destruction of Sodom. Again it is remarkable that in the Targumim, too, there is no focus on sexual misbehaviour. A link with "sodomy" cannot be found. Sodom's sins have social dimensions: the oppression of the poor as demonstrated by Pseudo-Jonathan. Most striking here is the figure of Pelitit, introduced by Pseudo-Jonathan on the basis of the feminine suffix used in MT Gen 18:21, and functioning as a daughter of Lot. The Sodomites forbade helping the poor and that is just what Pelitit was doing. Even in this midrash the sin of Sodom is a social sin.

Starting with a case from modern times in the Muslim world, Fred Leemhuis studies the relevant passages in the Koran and its early commentaries. Although Sodom is not mentioned by name, it plays a role in the middle and late Meccan sura's with the warning "punishment stories". Lūṭ functions as a prophet, a messenger of God (*rasūl*), who warns his countrymen about their crimes of lewdness and robbery. His status is not ambiguous, as it is in the Hebrew Bible. He is one of the eight predecessors of Mohammed. The death of Lūṭ's wife is announced in advance and is known to Ibrāhīm and Lūṭ himself. The early commentaries offer supplementary material. Of course, the names of the angels are known here. Ibrāhīm negotiates the number of believers down to five households. Lūt preaches to his people but is reluctant to receive the angels out of fear that they are coming with the punishment of his people. The sins are more concrete. Homosexuality and male rape play an important role, but social crimes are also mentioned. The execution of the punishment is related in more detail. The towns are lifted up to heaven, turned upside-down and dropped onto the earth again. There is no mention of the motif of the incest between Lot and his daughters.

Two studies in this volume focus on one single motif. Ton Hilhorst enquires into the relation between the Dead Sea and the Sodom narrative. The land of the wicked towns is punished and barrenness becomes its part. But what about the saltiness of the Dead Sea? Was this understood as part of the punishment? Hilhorst reaches a conclusion in three steps. The first step is a study of Sir 39:22-24 in the Hebrew, Greek and Latin versions. Only the Greek version attributes the saltiness of "the waters" to God's wrath. No reason, however, is given. Julius Africanus, preserved in the *Ecloga Chronographica* of Syncellus, states that not only the land but also the lake was overturned because of the impiety of the inhabitants. Here, a direct link can be found between the sins of Sodom and the saltiness of the Dead Sea. But the climax comes in the *Martyrdom of Pionius*. Here the sea has been punished because of man. The saltiness of its water is thus simultaneously a means of keeping humans away from it, in order that the sea not be punished again as in the time of Sodom.

Jan Bremmer focuses on the wife of Lot and the transgression of the command "not to look back". Commentators have failed to explain the motif and Bremmer looks for parallels in the Graeco-Roman world. Surveying the material he finds five fields where the same command plays a role: 1. in contact with the underworld and chthonic powers; 2. in magic; 3. in acts of purification; 4. when going abroad; 5. during acts of creation. His paper concludes with notes on the most famous prohibitions on looking back: Orpheus and Eurydice and Lot's wife. The motif of not looking back in the narrative of Orpheus and Eurydice as a condition to leave the under-

world is a literary invention, and cannot be explained from fear of the gods of the underworld. In Genesis 19 there is a close connection between haste and not looking back, a topos regularly occurring in Greek and Roman Literature.

The final section of the book starts with an extensive article written by the psychologist of religion, Patrick Vandermeersch. In the first part of his study, Vandermeersch challenges exegetes to reflect on their hermeneutic approach to the field of the philosophy of history. He warns against a tendency to restrict oneself to language and history, without regard for ideology. The same may happen when scholars study the bible in the context of a moral evaluation of homosexuality. Vandermeersch demonstrates his point by studying two influential books on homosexuality: Bailey (1955) and Bouwman (1990). Bailey desexualizes Sodom (*yāda'*) and Bouwman heterosexualizes it (matriarchate). These authors are only the first step in Vandermeersch's discussion of Petrus Damiani (1007-1072), the key figure in the homosexualization of the Sodom story. The central text is the *Liber Gommorhianus* (1049) in which Damian gives definitions of sodomy and asks the Pope to decide which types of sodomites should be excluded from the clergy. Damian's battle against sodomy prompts Vandermeersch to ask whether this intriguing figure is defending himself against homosexual feelings for Christ.

The last paper, by Els Jongeneel, studies the crucial role of homosexuality, "sexual inversion", in Proust's *Sodome et Gomorrhe,* the fourth volume of *A la recherche du temps perdu* with its main themes of desire and art. Here the love-hate relationship between the first-person narrator and his Lesbian beloved Albertine is told. Jongeneel describes the ways Proust reworks the ideas of the psychiatrists of his time. Proust explains sexual inversion as a natural phenomenon stigmatized by human culture. Homosexuality is the consequence of a law of nature. Proust uses sexual inversion to reflect on the mystery of human love with its affection, eroticism, jealousy, cruelty and hatred. On the narrative level the story is told as a continuation of Gen 19. Two angels, taken from Genesis 3, who guard Sodom, allow some of the "inverts" to escape. Their descendants have spread worldwide. In the novel, Sodom stands for overt sexuality and Gomorrah for hidden sexual practice. The article concludes with Proust's own view of sexual inversion: "mixed with the dust of the earth, Sodom and Gomorrah are part of our everyday reality".

Groningen, March 2004
Ed Noort & Eibert Tigchelaar

ABBREVIATIONS

AbrN	*Abr-Nahrain*
AC	*L'Antiquité classique*
AmstCah	*Amsterdamse Cahiers*
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*
Arch	*Archaeology*
ATD	Altes Testament Deutsch
ANET	J.B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 1950, 1955^2, 1969^3)
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
Arch	*Archaeology*
ASEs	*Annali di storia dell'esegesi*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BAIAS	*Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society*
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BDAG	W. Bauer, F.W. Danker, W.F. Arndt & F.W. Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, 1990^3)
BDB	F. Brown, S.R. Driver & C.A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1907)
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BT	Biblisch-theologische Studien
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BzA	Beiträge zur Altertumskunde
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CGLC	Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics

COS	W.W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture* (3 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997-2002)
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
DJD	*Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*
DSD	*Dead Sea Discoveries*
DSSSE	F. García Martínez & E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill & Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000)
EdF	Erträge der Forschung
EHAT	Exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
EI2	*Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Second edition
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
EncJud	*Encyclopaedia Judaica* (16 vols.; Jerusalem, 1972)
EstBib	*Estudios bíblicos*
FGrH	*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Edited by F. Jacoby (Leiden, 1954-1964)
GRBM	Greek Roman and Byzantine Monographs
Greg	*Gregorianum*
HALOT	L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner & J.J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Translated and edited under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson (4 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1994-1999)
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HK	Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HKNT	Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IOS	*Israel Oriental Studies*
Jastrow	Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Jerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (London, New York, 1903)
JBQ	*Jewish Bible Quarterly*
JEOL	*Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap Ex oriente lux*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
JSJS	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series

JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
KUB	Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi
KV	Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LXX	Septuagint
MDOG	Mitteilungen der deutschen Orientgesellschaft zu Berlin
MEFRA	*Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome: Antiquité*
MT	Masoretic Text
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OA	Orbis antiquus
OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Oudtestamentische Studien
PAM	Palestine Archaeological Museum
PCP	*Pacific Coast Philology*
PG	J.P. Migne (ed.), Patrologia Graeca (162 vols.; Paris, 1857-1886)
PGM	*Papyri graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri.* Edited by K. Preisendanz (Berlin, 1928)
QJEG	*The Quarterly Journal of Engineering Geology*
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum.* Edited by T. Kluser *et al.* (Stuttgart, 1950-)
RB	*Revue biblique*
RevQ	*Revue de Qumrân*
RFIC	*Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica*
RGG^{3}	*Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (7 vols.; Tübingen, 1957-1965, 3rd edition)
RGG^{4}	*Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen, 1998-, 4th edition)
RHPR	*Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*
SamP	Samaritan Pentateuch
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
SHE	*Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*
SJ	Studia Judaica
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
STJHC	Studies and Texts in Jewish History and Culture
StPatr	*Studia Patristica*
SVT	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha

TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TEG	Traditio Exegetica Graeca
TLL	*Thesaurus linguae latinae*
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
TUAT	*Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*
VAT	Vorderasiatische Abteilung Tontafeln. Staatliche Museen, Berlin
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
ZAH	*Zeitschrift für Althebraistik*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZBKAT	Zürcher Bibelkommentare. Altes Testament
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

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PART ONE

INTERTEXTUALITIES

FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. ABRAHAM'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH YHWH AS PROLOGUE TO THE SODOM NARRATIVE: GENESIS 18:16-33

ED NOORT

In Memory of Dr Roel Oost

1. Introduction

Within the composition of the Abraham narratives, between the making of the covenant in Genesis 17 and the Abimelech narratives in Genesis 20 where Abraham is described as a prophet (20:7) and acts as intercessor (20:17), there is a large block containing the tradition of Lot and the evil city of Sodom: Genesis 18-19.[1] This block, which at first sight seems to be intended to be read as a whole, contains four units: Abraham's hospitality to the three divine visitors who promise that he and Sarah will have a son (Gen 18:1-15), the dialogue and negotiations between YHWH and Abraham on the possible destruction of Sodom (18:16-33), Lot's rescue from this destruction by fire (19:1-29), and finally the description, lacking all negative commentary, of the incestuous conception of Moab and Ammon (19:30-38).

Contrary to the flood narratives, which after Genesis 6-9 are only tangentially referred to in Isa 54:7-10, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is cited and adapted in the literature of the prophetic books of Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zephaniah.[2] In them, the names of the doomed cities have become symbolic and stand for both the wickedness of mankind/Israel

[1] Commentaries used here include H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (HK 1/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977[9]); B. Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora: Genesis übersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin: Schocken, 1934); G. von Rad (OTL; London: SCM, 1972 = ATD; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972[9]); H. Seebass, *Genesis II, 1. Vätergeschichte I (11,27-22,24)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997); G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (WBC 2; Dallas: Word Books, 1994); C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36* (BKAT I/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989[2]); W. Zimmerli, *Mose 12-25. Abraham* (ZBKAT 1/2, Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976); Monographs: L. Schmidt, *"De Deo": Studien zur Literarkritik und Theologie des Buches Jona, des Gesprächs zwischen Abraham und Jahwe in Gen 18,22ff. und von Hi 1* (BZAW 143; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1976); M.J. Mulder, *Sodom en Gomorra. Een verhaal van dode steden* (Exegetische Studies 4; Kampen: Kok, 1988); J.A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities. Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, Early Jewish and Early Christian Traditions* (CBET 1; Kampen: Kok, 1990).

[2] Amos 4:11; Isa 1:9, 10; 3:9; 13:19; Jer 23:14; 49:18; 50:40; Zeph 2:9; Ezek 16:46, 48, 49, 53, 55, 56. Further Deut 29:23; 32:32.

and for the judgment of YHWH. They illustrate that behaviour that disrupts and destroys society is the greatest of all sins. The sexual theme, which plays such a significant role in the later history of the narrative's reception,[3] is of lesser importance here. When Genesis 19 speaks of rape and the violation of the duty of hospitality, both homosexual and heterosexual relations are viewed as being perverted, the latter being evident from Lot's offering of his two daughters to the mob. The main theme in the symbols, Sodom (and Gomorrah) and their destructive "upending" (הפך) by YHWH, is that divine intervention can also halt evil in an urban society.

The literary localisation in the *kikkar* part of the Jordan valley is vague enough to maintain the metaphorical function of the story while being sufficiently specific to include the barren geography around the Dead Sea and the borders of the Arabah. The oases of Jericho and En-Gedi, with their opulent flora and fauna and their blissful atmosphere, as described in the division of territory between Abraham and Lot in Genesis 13, help visualise and act as contrast to the desolate wasteland left after the destruction.

2. Place and Function of Gen 18:16-33

In this series where, in keeping with tradition, the adaptation of earlier tradition is emphasised, I will focus on a part of the history of the reception of the innermost circle of the textual unit. The question is, what new issues do the negotiations between Abraham and YHWH in Genesis 18 raise with regard to the story of the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 19, what possible answers were available for the resolution of these issues, and which answers were chosen? To find an answer involves reading Genesis 19 to Genesis 18 in reverse, inquiring into the reflected parallels visible there. The moment when Abraham subtly haggles for the fifty just men required to save the city to be reduced to ten is a meditation on the pre-existing story of Sodom's destruction, which is explained further through the compositional location in the narrative of the upended cities.

The idea that Gen 18:16-33, with another diachronic relief between 18:16-22 and 18:23-32(33), represents a later problem raised by the Sodom narrative has been soundly defended since Wellhausen's time. The two most important substantive arguments will be outlined briefly below.

1) The question, which culminates in Gen 18:25, of the שפט כל־הארץ, "the Judge of all the earth", and His צדקה, "righteousness", as an abstract problem, belongs to the idea of wisdom and the traditions it influenced.[4]

[3] Anecdotal reference: A literature search by subject heading in one of America's famous libraries jumped directly from Sodom to sodomy and offered much more material!

[4] Seebass, *Genesis*, 131 argues against the use of the word "abstract" because the narrative centres on the special relationship between YHWH and Abraham. It is, however,

Similar questions were found immediately preceding and during as well as after the exile. In the oracle in Jer 5:1, YHWH searches Jerusalem for one person who behaves with משפט, "justice", who seeks אמונה, "truth", so that He can pardon the whole city.[5] But it is part of the topos that not one could be found. The same theme is found in Ezek 22:30. However, even in comparison with these prophetic texts, Genesis 18 is on a much more abstract level.

2) In this narrative, the figure of Abraham has already been developed to such an extent that Abraham "deserves" to be informed of YHWH's plans (Gen 18:17-19).[6] This can be derived, on one hand, through an appeal to Genesis 12 and the blessing conferred there on all peoples through Abraham, and in view of the fact that Abraham will have his descendants "keep the way of YHWH by doing righteousness and justice" (Gen 18:19)[7] on the other.

Abraham here has become a Righteous One who must be kept informed,[8] even of YHWH's plans for destruction and who, in the best deuteronomi(st)ic tradition,[9] instructs his descendants in צדקה ומשפט, "righteousness and justice". A slight indication of the chronological location of this story can be gleaned from the fact that Ezek 14:14 cites two exemplary intercessors, Moses and Samuel, but does not include Abraham. In Ezekiel 14, the figure of Abraham was apparently still insufficiently developed to promote him to the role of intercessor.

A glance at the dialogue between YHWH and Abraham in Genesis 18 clearly reveals that this qualitatively and quantitatively measured line of acceptance is highly abstract; in fact it is not concerned with the fate of Sodom and its inhabitants, nor with that of Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family, but focuses entirely on the relationship between the רשע, "wicked", and the צדיק, "righteous", and their fate in this world with relation to the community, thus leading to the problem of the very righteousness of God.

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possible that within the framework of this relationship, an abstract, theoretical problem is being discussed.

[5] Jacob, *Genesis*, 450, argues rightly against the common opinion that Gen 18 centres on "Abrahams Fürbitte für die Sünder" and states: "Was die Gerechten innerhalb eines Gemeinwesens durch ihre Tugend schützen und retten, ist das Gemeinwesen als solches, die Stadt, der Ort, deren Substrat und Darstellung eben >der Ort<, die Lokalität ist ... Abraham spricht also niemals von der Rettung der Frevler, sondern immer nur des Ortes, der Gegend oder der Stadt."

[6] The role of Abraham here is as exceptional as that of Moses in Ex 33:12, 17, David's in 2 Sam 7:20 and Jeremiah's in Jer 1:5.

[7] Quotations from the biblical text follow the New Revised Standard Version, with slight modifications.

[8] Not because Abraham is the "new" owner of the land (Rashi).

[9] Deut 4:9-10; 6:6-7; 32:46.

The story of Abraham's hospitality and his special gift from God in Gen 18:1-15 corresponds with Gen 18:16-33 at various levels. Each passage has a pointed theological formulation which, as it were, summarises the entire unit.[10] This applies to the fundamental consideration: הֲיִפָּלֵא מֵיְהוָה דָּבָר, "Is anything too wonderful for YHWH?" (Gen 18:14), to the announcement of the birth, and to Gen 18:25, containing the question of YHWH's righteousness:

חָלִלָה לְךָ מֵעֲשֹׂת כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה	Far be it from you to do such a thing,
לְהָמִית צַדִּיק עִם־רָשָׁע	to slay the righteous with the wicked,
וְהָיָה כַצַּדִּיק כָּרָשָׁע	so that the righteous fare as the wicked!
חָלִלָה לָךְ	Far be that from you!
הַשֹּׁפֵט כָּל־הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט	Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?

Here Gen 18:14 paves the way for the formulation found in 18:25, and suggests openness to the decision and implementation expressed in YHWH's intention to verify its truth (18:21).

The actual object of the dialogue is very acutely put here – right at the start – in 18:25 with the definite לְהָמִית צַדִּיק עִם־רָשָׁע, "to slay the righteous with the wicked", between the doubly unequivocal חָלִלָה לְךָ, "far be that from you", the first words that Abraham addresses to YHWH after He (YHWH) remains standing before him (18:23). Only once the *quality* of YHWH's action has been gauged in 18:14, 21 and 23 can 18:24 start the tense, negotiated, declining, *quantitative* series of figures. How many just men are required to save a city?

The dilemma of YHWH's righteousness, posed so acutely by Gen 18:25, returns as an accusation against YHWH in the exact same way as in Job 9:22-24.[11] There the accusation is "He (i.e., YHWH) destroys both the blameless and the wicked" and "He covers the faces of its judges". Here again, we find a description of the fate shared by guilty and innocent alike in relation to YHWH's highest judicial function. What becomes an accusation of pure sadism in Job 9:22-24, is kept an open question and is de facto denied in Gen 18:25. The "resolution" devised here is saved for Genesis 19.

3. Different Models

What model answers were developed for this dilemma over time? What answers could an author with a great deal of the tradition behind him give to this? It should also be noted that Genesis 18 contains its own variant of

[10] Seebass, *Genesis*, 120.

[11] E. Noort, *Een duister duel. Over de theologie van het boek Job* (Kamper Cahiers 59; Kampen: Kok, 1986).

a broader question. In classic theodicy, the prosperity of the רָשָׁע, "wicked", and the evil fate of the צַדִּיק, "righteous", are the object of complaint. Here, in Genesis 18, the immanent destruction of the רְשָׁעִים, "wicked", is not the focus of attention. Interest centres on the צַדִּיק, "righteous", caught in the destruction and in Abraham's fundamental question of how much righteousness is needed to preserve a רָשָׁע, "wicked", community. How is judgment passed, how is it kept just and how can injustice be forestalled?

Hosea 11 goes furthest in suggesting a possible model answer. Judgment as a definitive end does not take place because YHWH literally does not have the heart for it. Israel, as Son of YHWH, is a child of love and is thus called forth from Egypt (Hos 11:1). But Israel turns its back on YHWH's love and must thus return to the land of slavery (11:5). This return to Egypt withdraws the sonhood and revokes the exodus. However, according to Hos 11:8-11, this cannot be the last word. 11:8 even makes an explicit comparison – "how can I" – with two cities from the Sodom tradition:

אֵיךְ אֶתֶּנְךָ אֶפְרַיִם	How can I give you up, Ephraim?
אֲמַגֶּנְךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל	How can I hand you over, O Israel?
אֵיךְ אֶתֶּנְךָ כְּאַדְמָה	How can I make you like Admah?
אֲשִׂימְךָ כִּצְבֹאִים	How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
נֶהְפַּךְ עָלַי לִבִּי	My heart recoils within me;
יַחַד נִכְמְרוּ נִחוּמָי	My compassion grows warm and tender.

In this indictment against Israel/Ephraim, where the cities of the pentapolis Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Zoar and their fates have become symbols in prophetic judgment speeches, Hosea believes that there are sufficient reasons to pass sentence on Israel, but YHWH cannot bring Himself to do this because of His ardent love for His son Israel. It is striking that הפך is used to describe YHWH's inner about turn, this being the technical term used in Genesis 19 for the upending of Sodom.

The first answer is therefore that YHWH cannot carry out his judgment because He cannot harden His heart to do so. At the same time the contrast between Ephraim, on one hand, and Admah/Zeboiim, on the other, clearly demonstrates that the basis for not executing judgment is the special relationship between YHWH and Israel, not Israel's behaviour.

After a jump in time, the book of Jonah offers a second possibility. However, the object here is not the Son of YHWH, Israel. He is only present as a caricature of a prophet. The real object is the large pagan city Nineveh, symbol of the feared and hated Assyria. This major city, *mirabile dictu* – and in contrast to Genesis 19 – converts from top to bottom, human and animal. Thus no judgment is passed. In this instance, the author of Jonah did have at his disposal the exceptional theologoumenon of YHWH's

repentance[12] that explains the turnabout in divine activity. Here again the judgment – to Jonah's great regret – does not occur because Nineveh *acts* while YHWH *reacts*. In the first instance (Hosea), YHWH cannot bear to allow judgment to take place; in the second, the judgment is prevented by the conversion of the רְשָׁעִים, "wicked".

The third possible answer can be found in the main parallel to Genesis 18-19, the flood narratives in Genesis 6-9. An increasing tendency towards theodicy as an argumentation can be observed in the (biblical) deluge narratives. This means that the arbitrary destruction of humanity at the divinity's whim was increasingly being provided with a justification. Since a flood narrative is always the story of those rescued (otherwise – in biblical terms – there would be no-one to recount the story), there must be a reason why some survived and others were victims. This is found in human righteousness when seen as the reason for their rescue from among a world of evildoers. The first passage of the oldest version (J) expresses this tentatively: וְנֹחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה, "but Noah found favour in the sight of YHWH" (Gen 6:8). It is true that Noah is preserved here from ruin, but the reason lies with YHWH and not with Noah. The question of guilt arises, but the punishment is collective. The later version of the flood narrative (P) Gen 6:9 is clearer:

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת נֹחַ	These are the descendants of Noah.
נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק	Noah was a righteous man,
תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו	blameless in his generation;
אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֶּךְ־נֹחַ	Noah walked with God.

There is no question here of "finding favour in the eyes of YHWH", rather, Noah is an outstanding example of righteousness, walking blamelessly with YHWH. Such a righteous person cannot simply succumb in the deluge. YHWH would not let this happen. The רְשָׁעִים, "wicked", perish but the צַדִּיק, "righteous", *par excellence* and his household remain alive.

It is clear that this does not solve all the problems,[13] but it does render the divine activity more transparent and capable of enduring the theodicy question. The biblical environment is not the only place where this question is raised. The epics of the "Umwelt" pose the question of divine justice in cases of collective retribution, too. In the Standard Version of Tablet XI of the Epic of Gilgamesh, the narrative insists that there may be no annihi-

[12] J. Jeremias, *Die Reue Gottes: Aspekte alttestamentlicher Gottesvorstellung* (BT 31; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997[2]).

[13] In the biblical Flood narrative there is still something unclear at the end. The reason for *sending* the flood in the non-priestly version (Gen 6:5-9) is almost the same as the reason for *never sending* a flood again (Gen 8:21). H.-P. Müller noticed the ambiguity, see E. Noort, "The Stories of the Great Flood: Notes on Gen 6:5-9:17 in Its Context of the Ancient Near East", in F. García Martínez & G.P. Luttikhuizen (eds.), *Interpretations of the Flood* (TBN 1; Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1998) 1-38.

lating retribution for the iniquity which destroys all mankind. Ea's famous reproach to the supreme god Enlil:

> You, the sage of the gods, the hero, how could you lack counsel and bring on the Deluge? On him who transgresses, inflict his crime! On him who does wrong, inflict his wrongdoing![14]

does not go as far, however, as it seems to, implying direct individual retribution. A more general *Tun-und-Ergehen-Zusammenhang* is required as Ea's suggestions set limits to the number of victims but do not exclude capriciousness:

> Instead of your causing the Deluge, a lion could have risen, and diminished the people!
> Instead of your causing the Deluge, a wolf could have risen, and diminished the people!
> Instead of your causing the Deluge, a famine could have happened, and slaughtered the land!
> Instead of your causing the Deluge, Erra (the Plague God) could have risen, and slaughtered the land![15]

This passus has the issue of overpopulation in mind and asks for less radical measures. The appeal for a more appropriate and restricted punishment, however, cannot be overlooked. The same view can be seen in the Atramhasis myth that, contrary to the Gilgamesh epic, cites an explicit reason for the deluge (overpopulation and the resulting human clamour) and therefore includes the guilt theme in the narrative itself.[16] In III vi 25, Enki defends himself against Anu and Enlil and argues similarly for appropriate punishment, indicating that the deluge is not a matter of "[On him who transgre]sses, inflict your punishment!"

Although there is an apparent tendency toward individual retribution, the collective factor continues to play an important role in the measures put forward to restrict the number of people affected. In the third model, divine activity is justified by distinguishing between the רָשָׁע, "wicked", and the צַדִּיק, "righteous", to explain the outcome of the story. The boundary be-

[14] Gilgamesh XI, 182-185. Verse numbering after A.R. George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian* (London: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1999). Cf. B.R. Foster, *The Epic of Gilgamesh. A New Translation, Analogues, Criticism* (New York, London: Norton, 2001) 90-1 and *TUAT* III, 734. For a new fragment, VAT 11000, at the beginning of Tablet XI see S.M. Maul, "Wer baute die babylonische Arche? - Ein neues Fragment der mesopotamischen Sintfluterzählung aus Assur", *MDOG* 131 (1999) 155-62.

The new critical edition by A.R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts* (2 volumes; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), will be a landmark in the field. For references to recent literature I would like to thank M. Stol, Amsterdam/Leiden.

[15] Gilgamesh XI, 187-194.

[16] Noort, "Stories of the Great Flood", 30-6.

tween collective and individual, however, remains vague and varies from version to version.

A fourth option, or what may be a specification of the third model, can be found in Ezekiel and his school. Ezekiel 18 poses the problem of collective responsibility between generations. With notable legal casuistry, which may have its origins in the temple and access to the sanctuary,[17] the principles behind the saying "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (18:2) are weighed and measured in a disputation.

The behaviour of the righteous person is defined first; a fixed set of commandments may be presumed to underlie the descriptions of desired and undesirable behaviour.[18] Life belongs to those demonstrating correct behaviour: צַדִּיק הוּא חָיֹה יִחְיֶה, "such a one is righteous; he shall surely live" (18:9). But if the son of the צַדִּיק, "righteous", acts otherwise, מוֹת יוּמָת, "he shall surely die" (18:13). However, if the son of this רָשָׁע, "wicked", notes his fathers iniquity but does not repeat it, he is not punished (18:17). The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father (18:20). Ezekiel 18 severs the ties between three successive generations in matters concerning iniquity and accountability. Ezek 18:20 retains this teaching:

הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַחֹטֵאת הִיא תָּמוּת	The person who sins shall die.
בֵּן לֹא־יִשָּׂא בַּעֲוֹן הָאָב	A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent,
וְאָב לֹא יִשָּׂא בַּעֲוֹן הַבֵּן	nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child;
צְדָקַת הַצַּדִּיק עָלָיו תִּהְיֶה	the righteousness of the righteous shall be his own,
וּרְשָׁעַת רָשָׁע [וְהָרִשְׁעָ Qere] עָלָיו תִּהְיֶה	and the wickedness of the wicked shall be his own.

Both iniquity and righteousness belong to the personal domain and the accountability of the individual. Here we are far removed from the collectivity that plays a role not only in the flood narratives but also in the David cycle (1 Samuel 24) or in the Joshua narratives (Joshua 7). Each generation is answerable for itself. Judgment or death will only fall on the guilty. But this contention does not explicitly determine the identity of the acting subject, which is specified in Ezek 14:12-20 on the basis of a new case: "When a land sins against me (YHWH) ...". The starting point is thus a *collectivity*. The example in Ezekiel 14 is taken from Jer 15:1, where the people

[17] W. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel I* (BKAT XIV/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979[2]) 396-400, 403-16.

[18] The negative "eating upon the mountains, lifting up the eyes to the idols of Israel, defiling his neighbour's wife" etc. is contrasted with the positive "not oppressing anyone, restoring to the debtor his pledge ... giving bread to the hungry, covering the naked" etc. (Ezek 18:7-17).

attempt in vain to use liturgical atonement to avert a drought. The divine oracle announcing the sending of the judgment begins with the formula "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet ...". This is clearly an allusion to the role of intercessor attributed to Moses and Samuel in Ex 32:31-32 and 1 Sam 7:9 respectively. Noteworthy here is that Abraham is not yet included among the ideal intermediaries and intercessors. In the version found in Ezek 14:14, it is not Moses and Samuel who are brought forward but three exemplary figures of righteousness: Noah, Daniel and Job. The fact that Ezekiel cites three pre-Israelite or non-Israelite figures demonstrates *the essence of his argument*. What is said here applies not only to the exiles in Babylon, i.e. not only to Judah or Israel, but generally, to every time and place.[19]

The Noah named here is doubtless the Noah of the deluge narratives who is a good way along the road to becoming an example of righteousness as is understood in the Priestly Codex. That this role is emphasised without close adherence to the flood story is apparent from the fact that in the biblical story Noah's sons and daughters-in-law are also saved, while it is exactly this that Ezekiel considers impossible. Daniel represents the closest connection to the Ugaritic Danilu who represents the suffering righteous person[20] in the Aqhat epic and loses his son Aqhat(u). The fact that the Job from the framework narrative of the biblical book of Job, which certainly circulated in an earlier form, was a suffering, righteous non-Israelite is apparent from the opening words of Job 1:1.

When confronting any divine judgments, whether they be hunger, wild animals, the sword or pestilence, these three exemplary righteous persons will, according to Ezekiel 14, only save themselves, and this because of their own righteousness. This צְדָקָה, "righteousness", extends no further than their own persons. "They would save neither sons nor daughters" is the monotone antiphon to each act of judgment (Ezek 14:16, 18, 20). Here, individual responsibility is driven home. "Everyone for him or herself", no-one can hide behind or take refuge in the nearly spatially understood צְדָקָה, "righteousness", of his closest relatives, not even when they belong to the legendary, exemplarily righteous people – as the abovementioned do.

A fifth possibility, or perhaps more accurately impossibility, becomes evident in the wisdom texts that deny or argue against fateful acts ("*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*"). These include several texts in the book of Job, but the most explicit expressions are found in Qoheleth. In Qoh 9:1 he examines the proposition that the צַדִּיקִים, "righteous", and their works are

[19] Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, 322.

[20] J.C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts From Ugarit* (Leiden: Brill, 1987) 224-73; J. Day, "The Daniel of Ugarit and Ezekiel, and the Hero of the Book of Daniel", *VT* 30 (1980) 174-84.

in the hands of Elohim, implying a quality of being in the hands of God that surpasses that moment in time.[21] Qoheleth's own observations contrast with this proposition. One fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, everything is the same for everyone (9:2-3)![22] This fate is, of course, death. For Qoheleth, death is the great leveller, before which it is irrelevant whether you are צדיק, "righteous", or רשע, "wicked". Contrary to the model answers voiced so far, not only is the fate of the righteous and wicked the same – the צַדִּיק, "righteous", person dies just like the רָשָׁע, "wicked" – but the criteria for righteous and unrighteous behaviour also fall away.[23] The positive or negative balance of your actions is destroyed by death.

This problem and its corresponding solution is represented in extra-biblical wisdom literature too. The following, for example, is a passage from the 7th-century Akkadian dialogue between a master and his servant.[24] The master announces a given act, the slave provides supporting arguments for this act. Then the master plans to do the exact opposite of the previous act, again the slave supplies supporting arguments. Conclusion: everything can be substantiated, every action has its own reason. In the second passage, this caprice is applied to the relationship between action and fate. As for Qoheleth, death is the great leveler for the Babylonian poet – you cannot tell by looking at a skull in a graveyard whether it belonged to a good person or to a wicked person, to a righteous or an iniquitous one:

> "Slave, oblige me again!" "Here, master! Here!"
> "I will carry out a good service for my country!" "So carry one out, master, carry one out. The man who carries out a good service for his country, his deeds are placed in the carrying basket of Marduk!"
> "No way, slave, I will not carry out a good service for my country!"
> 75 "Don't carry one out, master, don't carry one out. Go up onto the ancient ruin heaps and walk about! Search out skulls of high and low!
> Which was a crook and which did good services?"[25]

What Qoheleth formulates thetically is demonstrated experimentally here. What remains of a person can give no clue as to whether he or she was צַדִּיק, "righteous", or רָשָׁע, "wicked". Ultimately it renders choosing between good or evil acts literally pointless.

[21] D. Michel, *Qohelet* (EdF 258; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988) 157-9.

[22] For the textual problems see C.-L. Seow, *Ecclesiastes* (AB 18c; New York: Doubleday, 1997) 296-306.

[23] This is confirmed by Qoheleth 3 where a *kairos* for human behaviour is maintained, but this *kairos* is only known by God (3:11).

[24] *Dialogue of Pessimism*: W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960) 139-49; 323-7; *ANET* 600-1; *TUAT* III/1 157-63; *COS* I, 496.

[25] *Dialogue*, 70-78.

This view, evinced from various sources, shows that the "Far be it from thee to do such a thing, to slay the צדיק with the רשע" in Gen 18:25 was not especially foreign to the ethos of wisdom, even though this was not seen as the ideal situation but rather was experienced as the bitter reality.

The sixth and final possibility is to be found in the Wisdom of Solomon. This view runs contrary to that of Qoheleth. It also devises a solution for his dilemma. The proposition, disputed by Qoheleth, that the צדיקים, "righteous", are in God's hands, is developed further here while Qoheleth's conclusion is contested. Wis 3:1-4 reads

> [1]But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. [2]In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, [3]and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace. [4]For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality.

An important transition has taken place here. Even though it would seem as if the צדיקים, "righteous", perish like the רשעים, "wicked", the צדיקים, "righteous", live on after their death, are secure in YHWH's hands, are in peace and place their hopes in immortality. Calling upon security in the hands of YHWH and a reward after death here solves the mystery of the way fate is experienced.

4. Conclusion

These are the possibilities circulating in the milieu current to the author of Gen 18:16-33. What were his solutions? What was his stance? We can reject the two extreme possibilities as falling outside the author's ken. These are the Hosea variant and the position taken in the Wisdom of Solomon. That YHWH would abandon His judgment for love of His son (Hosea 11) and the possibility that the downfall of a righteous person leads to a better fate after death than the רשעים, "wicked" (Wis 3:1), are not obvious.

Nor does the Jonah solution, that God turns aside because the godless city repents, play a role here. Sodom would not have attained the symbolic function that it exercises throughout the whole Old Testament tradition, especially in the prophets, had even a semblance of a conversion been expected. If we move again to the other side of the scale of possibilities, then Qoheleth's thesis and the pessimistic Akkadian dialogue also fall away. The main point of both the dialogue between YHWH and Abraham and the narrative of the destruction of Sodom is that the righteous do not perish with the wicked. What is a verified observation in Qoheleth is a frightening question in Genesis 18, and contradicted in Genesis 19. We get nearer with Ezekiel 18 and especially Ezekiel 14, which the vast majority of exegetes

and commentators treat as a direct parallel to Genesis 18. Nevertheless, this is a false parallel. Ezekiel 18, and to a greater extent Ezekiel 14, represent another stage in thinking. According to the criteria of Ezekiel 14 and probably also those of Ezekiel 18, Lot's wife would have had no chance to be turned into a pillar of salt and Lot's daughters would not have run the risk of being made pregnant by their father because they would not have been taken with him. Genesis 19, by contrast, sets the limit at the prospective sons-in-law, who choose not to go. The rest, however, Lot and his wife and daughters, are given the chance to flee the doomed city.

It even remains to be seen whether the criterion of the two Ezekiel texts would have allowed Lot a chance to flee Sodom. The fact that Lot is a צדיק, "righteous", man comes from the placement of Genesis 18 before Genesis 19. As Genesis 18 treats the fundamental question regarding the lot of the righteous who live among the wicked who are doomed to destruction, Lot's rescue in Genesis 19 has to be presented as the rescue of a righteous person. Nowhere does Genesis 19 assert that Lot himself is an exemplary צַדִּיק, "righteous" person. However, his actions are contrasted with those of all of the men of the city. He offers hospitality and protection, even to the extent of sacrificing his daughters. Moreover, it is questionable whether the narrative condemns that act. Lot goes outside to calm the crowd but that is all. Furthermore, in Genesis 13 he chooses the best part for himself. For the rest, everything is done for him (Gen 19:16) and in 19:29 (a later addition), it becomes apparent that there may be another motivation for rescuing Lot: וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיְשַׁלַּח אֶת־לוֹט מִתּוֹךְ הַהֲפֵכָה, "God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow". God remembered Abraham and therefore Lot was rescued. According to this voice, Lot was not rescued because he was righteous but because he was part of Abraham's family.

This leaves open only the consideration of the flood narratives and the rescue of Noah, though only in its older version (J). The parallel to Lot is not the distinctly blameless and righteous Noah of Gen 6:9 but rather the Noah who according to Gen 6:8 מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה, "found favour in the sight of YHWH".

Such a formulation takes a positive outcome into account but leaves the reason for the favour unexpressed. The same formulation is used for Lot in Gen 19:19: הִנֵּה־נָא מָצָא עַבְדְּךָ חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ, "your servant has found favour in your sight".

The contrast between those who will be rescued – those who have found favour in the eyes of the deity or his representatives – and the total wickedness of the rest of the world, the vacillating and vague references to the nature of the wickedness of the רְשָׁעִים, "wicked", the spectacular rescue of the favoured one and his family, the totally new beginning, represented in

Gen 19:31 by the daughters' words: וְאִישׁ אֵין בָּאָרֶץ לָבוֹא עָלֵינוּ כְּדֶרֶךְ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ, "there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the world", make the older deluge narrative and the Sodom narrative competing stories about the breach after a creation that was good. The flood won out over the fire. The flood was allowed to reverse creation. The fire was allowed a role in the destruction of the cities, which were situated in such a desolate geographical corner that they stimulated the imagination.

From this story the author of Gen 18:16-33 borrowed the basis to pursue the fundamental question of how tolerant righteousness is and how this relates to God's righteousness. The answer that develops from the dialogue is that no more than ten צַדִּיקִם, "righteous", are needed to save a whole community, but this demonstrates the city's depravity, since Sodom did not even contain those ten צַדִּיקִם, "righteous" people. The "solution" offered in Genesis 19 is that the Judge of the whole earth does not eradicate the wicked and the righteous together. The answer at this stage of the tradition is that YHWH will allow the individual righteous person and his family to escape. Individual rescue is possible and is necessary because of YHWH's righteousness. This was to change in later times.

SAUL THE SODOMITE: GENESIS 18-19 AS THE OPENING PANEL OF A POLEMIC TRIPTYCH ON KING SAUL

RAYMOND DE HOOP

1. Introduction

Is Saul also among the Sodomites? is the slightly altered question of 1 Sam 10:11-12, which springs to mind when reading the title of this paper. Was King Saul a homosexual himself? Though this label is frequently suggested with regard to the love between Saul's son Jonathan and the later King David (cf. 2 Sam 1:26),[1] can it also be attached to King Saul? Of course, it all depends on what one reads into the term "sodomite". The classical understanding of the story in Genesis 18-19 takes the sin of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah to be homosexual behaviour, which explains the term "sodomite" as a term of abuse for homosexuals. Yet it is obvious that this point of view is no longer tenable. Sodom's sin has to be qualified as a social sin against the (unwritten) laws of hospitality[2] in a brutal, sexually oriented way by means of male rape,[3] which has nothing to do with homosexuality as we know it today. However, it is obvious that Saul cannot be blamed for having sinned in the same way as the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, so why call him a Sodomite?

The descent of highly placed persons is crucial to their authority in society. It is unacceptable for highly placed persons to be of inferior birth and therefore, if it is possible to demonstrate that someone's descent is not as noble as suggested, it is simultaneously possible to damage that person's credibility and consequently his or her status. This is the case nowadays as

[1] Thus in several novels; cf. e.g. J. Heller, *God Knows* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1984); A. Massie, *King David* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995). For scholarly literature discussing this possibility, see W. Dietrich & T. Naumann, *Die Samuelbücher* (EdF 287; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995) 59-62.

[2] V.H. Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19", *BTB* 22 (1992) 3-11.

[3] C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36* (BKAT I/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981) 367; S. Niditch, "The 'Sodomite' Theme in Judges 19-21: Family, Community, and Social Disintegration", *CBQ* 44 (1982) 365-78, esp. 367-9; G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (WBC 2; Dallas: Word Books, 1994) 55; H. Seebass, *Genesis II, 1. Vätergeschichte 1 (11,27-22,24)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997) 142. The terms "widernatürlich" (Westermann) and "homosexual" (Niditch; Wenham) in combination with rape should be avoided; cf. in this respect M. Carden, "Homophobia and Rape in Sodom and Gibeah: A Response to Ken Stone", *JSOT* 82 (1999) 83-96.

frequently is shown in the media; it was already the case in earlier days. However, was this the case with Sodom and Saul too? In Genesis studies, references to the intertextual relationship of the Book of Genesis and the Book of Samuel are frequently found.[4] Remarkable in these cases is the fact that the parallels are generally negative, like, for instance, the parallels between the story of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) and of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:1-12:7a);[5] the debasement[6] of Dinah and the revenge by her brothers Simeon and Levi (Genesis 34) and the rape of Tamar, David's daughter, and the revenge by her brother Absalom (2 Sam 13:1-33).[7] These stories seem to function as political satire or to contain hidden polemics against certain people and generally portray certain key figures in the book of Samuel negatively. In this paper I intend to demonstrate that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah was not intended to be understood directly but only in the light of a second story as a polemic against the kingship of Saul, as described in a third story in the book of Samuel, namely the outrage at Gibeah (Judges 19) and the rescue of Jabesh-Gilead by Saul (1 Samuel 11).

Seeing the intertextual relationships between the stories in Genesis 19 and Judges 19 on the one hand and between Judges 19 and 1 Samuel 11 on the other is certainly not new,[8] nor is the discussion of the interrelationships between these three together.[9] However, in my view, the main

[4] Cf. e.g. B. Mazar, "The Historical Background of Genesis", *JNES* 28 (1969) 73-83; also printed in S. Ahituv & B.A. Levine (eds.), *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986) 49-62; R.B. Coote, *Early Israel: A New Horizon* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 155-63; R.B. Coote & M.P. Coote, *Power, Politics, and the Making of the Bible: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 25-31; M.Z. Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge, 1995) 48-61. In addition, see R. de Hoop, *Genesis 49 in its Literary and Historical Context* (OTS 39; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 594-619; idem, "The Use of the Past to Address the Present: The Wife-Sister Incidents (Gen 12,10-20; 20,1-18; 26,1-16)", in A. Wénin (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Genesis* (BETL 155; Leuven: Peeters, 2001) 359-69 (see notes 4, 19, 30, for more bibliographical references).

[5] G.A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986) 107-20; idem, "David and His Circle in Genesis xxxviii", *VT* 36 (1986) 438-46; idem, "Biblical Literature as Politics: The Case of Genesis", in A. Berlin (ed.), *Religion and Politics in the Ancient Near East* (STJHC 1; Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 1996) 47-70; C.Y.S. Ho, "The Stories of the Family Troubles of Judah and David: A Study of their Literary Links", *VT* 49 (1999) 514-31; D.M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996) 249-50.

[6] For the discussion of the meaning of ענה pi., in the sense of "to debase someone" (from a social-juridical point of view), cf. E. van Wolde, "Does *'innâ* Denote Rape? A Semantic Analysis of a Controversial Word", *VT* 52 (2002) 528-44.

[7] E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984) 212; R. Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: Norton, 1996) 190, 194; De Hoop, *Genesis 49*, 518.

[8] Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility", 3-11; Niditch, "The 'Sodomite' Theme", 365-78; K. Stone, "Gender and Homosexuality in Judges 19: Subject–Honor, Object–Shame?", *JSOT* 67 (1995) 87-107, esp. 88, 93.

[9] S. Lasine, "Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot's Hospitality in an Inverted World," *JSOT* 29 (1984) 37-59; Y. Amit, "Literature in the Service of Politics: Studies in Judges 19-21", in

purport of these stories is to be found in their intertextual relationships and the point is missed if these stories are only judged on the basis of their individual merits. Together these stories form a kind of triptych, of which the story of the outrage at Gibeah forms the central panel, while the story of Sodom and Gomorrah forms the left (opening) panel and the rescue of Jabesh-Gilead the right (closing) panel:

Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19)	Outrage at Gibeah (Judges 19)	Punitive expedition against Gibeah (Judges 20)	Survival of Gibeah through Jabesh (Judges 21)	Rescue of Jabesh-Gilead (1 Samuel 11)

After some methodological considerations with regard to intertextual relationships in the Bible, this triptych will be examined more closely and the relationship of the central panel with both side panels will be studied.

2. Some Methodological Considerations

Naturally, the first issue to raise is that of which criteria should be used to find intertextual relationships and define hidden polemics. In a recent paper, Noble discussed this matter,[10] referring especially to attempts to identify textual allusions between Genesis 38 and the so-called Succession Narrative of Rendsburg and Ho.[11] He criticises them for their lack of methodology, which permitted the identification of many parallels and resemblances. He states:

> The basic methodological flaw in these arguments, I think, is that the standards for identifying resemblances have been set far too low. Finding resemblances then becomes very easy; yet, although at first glance this

H. Graf Reventlow & B. Uffenheimer (eds.), *Politics and Theopolitics in the Bible and Post Biblical Literature* (JSOTSS 171; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994) 28-40; idem, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing* (BIS 38; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 337-50; R.H. O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges* (SVT 63; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 250-2, 299-303; M.Z. Brettler, *The Book of Judges* (Old Testament Readings; London: Routledge, 2002) 85-89. For some earlier works, cf. C.F. Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1895) 407-8.

[10] P.R. Noble, "Esau, Tamar, and Joseph: Criteria for Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions", *VT* 52 (2002) 219-52.

[11] Rendsburg, "David and His Circle", 438-46; Ho, "The Stories of the Family Troubles", 514-31.

> seems to show that there is abundant evidence for a connection between these two passages, a more careful assessment in fact suggests just the opposite.[12]

This does not imply, however, that he denies the possibility of finding inner-textual allusions to Genesis in other texts. On the contrary, on the basis of Alter's work on type scenes,[13] he tries to find allusions following Alter's conception of type scenes as "a conventional way of narrating a major episode in a hero's career, such as his betrothal."[14] However, while criticising others for not providing an absolute system, he subsequently refers with approval to the fact that Alter stresses "the flexibility with which the 'predetermined motifs' are developed in each specific instance".[15] He thus allows for the transformation of particular elements in specific instances on the one hand, while disapproving of it in the work of Rendsburg and Ho on the other. Moreover, he apparently overlooks the fact that Alter himself worked with a methodology, which could be labelled "characterization"[16] or "typology",[17] comparable to that of Rendsburg and Ho. As Brettler rightly pointed out, "typology" occurs more often in the ancient Near East as a literary feature and for that reason should not be dismissed too quickly.[18] In my view, this literary feature fits the characteristics Amit described with regard to "hidden polemics" in biblical narrative.

According to Amit, every text which can be interpreted as including hidden polemic needs to meet the following four criteria:[19]

1. Avoidance of explicit reference to the phenomenon which the author wants to censure or advocate
2. The use of signs and hints to develop the polemic
3. Additional evidence from biblical material regarding the existence of open polemic in connection with the same phenomenon
4. Reference to the implicit subject of the polemic in the exegetical tradition.

When Genesis 19, Judges 19-21 and 1 Samuel 11 are studied in this light it becomes clear that these narratives were designed to present a hidden polemic against King Saul. In the now following pages we will focus on the second criterion, the use of the signs and hints to develop the polemic. The

[12] Noble, "Esau, Tamar, and Joseph", 227.
[13] R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1981) 47-62.
[14] Noble, "Esau, Tamar, and Joseph", 232.
[15] Noble, "Esau, Tamar, and Joseph", 232.
[16] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 114-30.
[17] Brettler, *The Creation of History*, 48-61; cf. also his *The Book of Judges*, 9-21.
[18] Brettler, *The Creation of History*, 180 note 84.
[19] Amit, "Literature in the Service of Politics", 31; idem, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative* (BIS 25; Leiden: Brill, 2000) 93-98.

first criterion is obvious and does not need further elaboration;[20] for the third and fourth we refer shortly to Amit's study of the subject, in which she lists several arguments.[21]

3. Sodom and Gomorrah and the Outrage at Gibeah

It is generally acknowledged that a relationship somehow exists between the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and that of the outrage at Gibeah. The number of allusions in the description of the fate of the strangers in both cities and the corruption of these two towns are too numerous to be accidental. Outlining them in a table yields the following picture:[22]

Sodom and Gomorrah	Gibeah
• Strangers arrive in the city before darkness	• A stranger arrives in the city before darkness
• A stranger himself (Lot) offers hospitality:	• A stranger (from Ephraim) offers hospitality:
• They should not stay at the square (רְחוֹב)	• they should not stay at the square (רְחוֹב)
• Food is provided	• Food and drink is provided
• The house is surrounded by the men of Sodom:	• The house is beset by the men of the city, base fellows:
• Where are these men, who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know (ידע) them.	• Bring out the man who came into your house, that we may know (יֵדַע) him.
• Lot went out to them, and said: "Please my brothers, do not act so wickedly. (אַל־נָא אַחַי תָּרֵעוּ)	• The master of the house went out to them and said: "No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. (אַל־אַחַי אַל־תָּרֵעוּ נָא)
• Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; (וְעֲשׂוּ לָהֶן כַּטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם)	• Behold, here are my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do with them what seems good to you; (וְעַשׂוּ לָהֶן[23] הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם)
• only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof."	• ... seeing that this man has come into my house."

[20] Amit, "Literature in the Service of Politics", 31.

[21] Amit, "Literature in the Service of Politics", 31.

[22] Cf. also O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*, 250-2.

[23] Reading לָהֶן with mlt Mss of 𝔐 (see *BHS*) and with 𝔊 (αὐταῖς) instead of לָהֶם in Codex Leningradensis.

Sodom and Gomorrah (continued)	Gibeah (continued)
• But they said: "Stand back!"	• But the men would not listen to him.
• The men interfere: they brought Lot into the house to them.	• So the man seized his concubine and put her out to them.
• The judgment is passed on the city by the two men, who have to destroy it.	• The judgment is passed on the city by the man, who gathers "all the people of Israel".

It goes without saying that these two stories strikingly resemble each other,[24] but the question remains as to the purpose of these resemblances. Even readers who preferred to approach these stories as historical accounts, as was usual in the past,[25] cannot ignore these apparent parallels. In answering the question of how this should be explained, Goslinga stated:

> that the author of [Judges] 19 must have been familiar with Genesis 19; probably he purposefully chose this close resemblance in order to remind the reader also of this history so that he would read between the lines that the wickedness of the men of Gibeah equalled that of the Sodomites.[26]

Though I am not inclined to follow Goslinga's use of the word "history" in this context,[27] I do concur with his thesis that these stories are – one way or another – mutually dependent. The parallels between the two stories were purposefully incorporated into the compositions, thus confronting the readers with the wickedness of the inhabitants of Gibeah – they were Sodomites *pur sang*. This offered the reader no other conclusion than that the town deserved the same fate as Sodom and Gomorrah. According to Genesis 19, Sodom and Gomorrah fared badly after the visit of the two men and the same applies to Gibeah – the Levite went home, divided his concubine into twelve pieces and sent her across all the territory of Israel (Judg 19:29) as a call to war. It seems appropriate now to turn our attention to the other half of the triptych, the right part of the central panel and the right side panel:

[24] J.A. Soggin, *Judges* (OTL; London: SCM Press, 1987[2]) 282 does not see much coherence in the resemblances; nor does he find much coherence in the resemblances between Judges 19 and 1 Samuel 11.

[25] Cf. e.g. G.C. Aalders, *Het boek Genesis opnieuw uit de grondtekst vertaald en verklaard. Tweede deel: Hoofdstuk 11:27-30:43* (KV; Kampen: Kok, *s.a.*) 83-5; C.J. Goslinga, *Het boek der Richteren opnieuw uit de grondtekst vertaald en verklaard. Tweede deel: Hoofdstuk 13-21* (KV; Kampen: Kok, *s.a.*) 83-4.

[26] Goslinga, *Het boek der Richteren*, 84: "... dat de auteur van [Richt.] 19 met Gen. 19 goed bekend is geweest; waarschijnlijk heeft hij zich daartoe zo nauw erbij aangesloten, opdat de lezer ook aan die historie herinnerd zou worden en als tussen de regels zou lezen, dat de boosheid der mannen van Gibea die van de Sodomieten evenaarde."

[27] Cf. also Soggin, *Judges*, 282.

4. The Outrage at Gibeah and the Rescue of Jabesh-Gilead

The rescue of Jabesh-Gilead by Saul can be regarded as the first deed of Saul after his anointment, where he acted as a kind of שפט, "judge", who was overwhelmed by God's spirit.[28] According to this story,[29] Saul proved his military prowess and his capacity to serve as Israel's king, which could then be followed by the renewal of the kingship. Saul proved to be a true judge and king, only his hometown remained of course an embarrassment, as did the town which he rescued.

According to the criteria offered by Amit, due attention should be paid to signs that may allude to the subject of the polemic. The first signs that can be found in Judges 19-21 are the names of places.[30] Gibeah is mentioned time and again in this passage: no fewer than twenty-three times, while the town is referred to in the Hebrew Bible on only eighteen other occasions. Gibeah is Saul's town (1 Sam 11:4). Remarkably, the second place found is a town which "did not come up to the Lord to Mizpah" (Judg 21:8) and consequently did not condemn the outrage at Gibeah, namely Jabesh-Gilead (Judg 21:1-14).[31] From this city, four hundred women were not killed under the ban, as in the rest of the towns, but given to the remaining Benjaminites (Judg 21:14). According to this story, there was a blood-tie between Gibeah and Benjamin on the one hand and Jabesh-Gilead on the other. Small wonder that Saul went out to rescue Jabesh-Gilead, they were his kinsmen, only what kind?

In addition, the Levite's act – dividing his raped-to-death concubine and sending her across the territory of Israel – is reflected in Saul's action.[32] This act is alienating in itself; it is lugubrious and incongruous and for that reason improbable.[33] In the case of Saul dividing the oxen, his action is

[28] D. Edelman, "Saul's Rescue of Jabesh-Gilead (1 Sam 11:1-11): Sorting Story from History", *ZAW* 96 (1984) 195-209, esp. 195, 203-4; idem, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah* (JSOTSS 121; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 60.

[29] It would be inappropriate to enter here into the problems of the historicity and the tradition of this account; for these problems, cf. Edelman, "Saul's Rescue of Jabesh-Gilead", 195-209; idem, "The Deuteronomist's Story of King Saul: Narrative Art or Editorial Product", in C. Brekelmans & J. Lust (eds.), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies: Papers Read at the XIIIth IOSOT Congress, Leuven 1989* (BETL 94; Leuven: Peeters, 1990) 207-20.

[30] Amit, "Literature in the Service of Politics", 31-3; idem, *Hidden Polemics*, 179-81.

[31] Amit, "Literature in the Service of Politics", 32; idem, *Hidden Polemics*, 179-80.

[32] K.A. Deurloo, "Geen koning in die dagen", in H. Blok *et al.*, *Geen koning in die dagen: Over het boek Richteren als profetische geschiedschrijving* (Baarn: Ten Have, 1982) 89-106, 101; Soggin, *Judges*, 282; Amit, "Literature in the Service of Politics", 34; idem, *Hidden Polemics*, 181-2; O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*, 303; Brettler, *The Book of Judges*, 86.

[33] Lasine, "Guest and Host", 45; C. Exum, "The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges", *CBQ* 52 (1990) 410-31, esp. 428; reprint in G.N. Knoppers & J.G. McConville (eds.), *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (SBTS 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000) 578-600, esp. 596-7, empha-

accompanied by the threat "so shall it be done with his oxen" (1 Sam 11:7). Yet the action by the Levite is not accompanied by a similar message. In its incongruity it is artificial and unhistorical and therefore by nature referring to Saul's action as the action of a true שפט, "judge".

The action by the Levite and by Saul (accompanied by his threat) is answered by all Israel "as one man" (כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד; Judg 20:1, 11; 1 Sam 11:7), as might be expected with such an action. However, despite this "as one man", one group is missing in the account in Judges, namely the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead, thus increasing the contrast between Jabesh-Gilead and Israel – as one man. On the other hand, the coming out of Israel "as one man" in 1 Sam 11:7 on behalf of Jabesh-Gilead is striking – the summons by a Benjaminite (Saul) was answered in contrast to the disobedience of the tribe at the punitive expedition against Gibeah. Then, Benjamin's behaviour could only be described as a cover up and as approval of the town's behaviour.[34]

A small, almost insignificant detail in Judges is the inclusio formed by the almost identical phrase at the beginning and the end of chapters 19-21: אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל/וּמֶלֶךְ אֵין בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, "(while) there was no king in Israel" (Judg 19:1; 21:25). What is described between those two phrases is what happens when there is no king in Israel.[35] In this way this story seems to function as a legitimation of the rise of the monarchy.[36] It should, however, not be overlooked that when a new king was finally anointed, this king came from Gibeah, of all towns in Israel, exactly the town where this folly took place, and was related to Jabesh-Gilead, which did not come out to do justice. Was such a king what Israel needed? After all, was he not a true sodomite, a king of Sodom?[37]

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sizes the fact that the narrative in 𝔐 (in contrast to 𝔊) does not tell whether she was dead or not. In fact the whole attitude of the Levite is alienating in his careless behaviour towards his concubine; cf. Niditch, "The 'Sodomite' Theme", 370-1; Lasine, "Guest and Host", 44-8; Soggin, *Judges*, 282; Exum, "The Centre Cannot Hold", 428 (596-7); Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 181-2.

[34] Amit, "*The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing*", 343-5.

[35] Lasine, "Guest and Host", 43-50, even argued that the narrative demonstrates the complete inversion of the world – even the host and the Levite would be "inverted" types of the characters found in Genesis 19 – and consequently shows the need of a king. See also Exum, "The Centre Cannot Hold", 428 (596-7); D.M. Hudson, "Living in a Land of Epithets: Anonymity in Judges 19-21", *JSOT* 62 (1994) 49-66. Contrast, however, Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing*, 337-341, who describes the narrated event as "a deviant incident, that under no circumstance is to be seen as an indication of the ordinary reality of the period", which has to be seen as "an ideal reality in terms of the central tribal organization, as well as in religious and ethical terms." In that case, the narrative in Judges 19-21 does indeed emphasize the problematical character of Saul's place of origin.

[36] Lasine, "Guest and Host", 37-50; Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility", 6.

[37] Edelman, "Saul's Rescue of Jabesh-Gilead", 207, suggested that the report in 1 Samuel 11 stems from a pro-Davidic context. On literature in defence of David in general, cf. K.W. Whitelam, "The Defence of David", *JSOT* 29 (1984) 61-87 (contrast Edelman,

5. Where Does the Good King Come From?

In the preceding paragraphs no attention has been paid to the other geographical or tribal references in the story of Gibeah, which may function as signs for the hidden polemic of this story. Three names should be mentioned, however. First of all, it is striking that the Levite's concubine came from Bethlehem, where he received a warm welcome from his father-in-law.[38] This may be compared to the warm welcome the two (three) men received from Abraham at the oaks of Mamre before they went to Sodom (Genesis 18). As Abraham's hospitality to the men is in sharp contrast with the hospitality of the men of Sodom, similarly the hospitality of the father–in-law in Bethlehem – the town of David – is in sharp contrast with that of the men of Gibeah[39] – the town of Saul.[40] Comparing the hospitality received in these two towns, Bethlehem and Gibeah, it is clear which town was intended to be preferable – Bethlehem. Consequently, a king from Bethlehem would have been preferable to one from Gibeah.[41]

Secondly, there is a salient detail in God's answer to the question of who should go up first to battle against the Benjaminites: "Judah shall go up first" (יהודה בתחלה; Judg 20:18). In the rest of the story, this answer does not have any consequence – Judah is not mentioned again and this verse appears to be an erratic block or a gloss. Reading this verse, however, while paying due attention to signs of hidden polemics in the text, it seems only natural that Judah should have been the first to battle against Benjamin.[42]

The final geographical reference that should be noted is the fact that the journey of the Levite proceeds from Bethlehem and passes along Jebus, which was – as is said explicitly – Jerusalem.[43] However, even though the day was almost spent, the Levite preferred to pass on to another town where

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"The Deuteronomist's Story of King Saul: Narrative Art or Editorial Product", 207-20); C. Schäfer-Lichtenberger, "Sociological and Biblical Views of the Early State", in V. Fritz & P.R. Davies (eds.), *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States* (JSOTS 228; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 78-105; M.Z. Brettler, "Biblical Literature as Politics: The Case of Samuel", in A. Berlin (ed.), *Religion and Politics in the Ancient Near East*, 71-92; idem, *The Creation of History*, 91-111; M.A. Sweeney, "Davidic Polemics in the Book of Judges", *VT* 47 (1997) 517-29.

38 Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 181, 183.

39 Niditch, "The 'Sodomite' Theme", 367.

40 Deurloo, "Geen koning in die dagen", 99; P. van Midden, "Richteren", in J. Fokkelman & W. Weren (eds.), *De Bijbel literair: Opbouw en gedachtengang van de bijbelse geschriften en hun onderlinge relaties* (Zoetermeer: Meinema; Kapellen: Pelckmans, 2003) 145-57, esp. 156.

41 Amit, "Literature in the Service of Politics", 35; idem, *Hidden Polemics*, 183.

42 Regarding this verse, which alludes to Judg 1:1-2, Van Midden, "Richteren", 147, refers to Judg 1:8-9, where Judah finishes the work which Benjamin failed to do; cf. also O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*, 328.

43 Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 181, 183-4.

Israelites not foreigners lived. He preferred to go to Gibeah (Judg 19:12).[44] However, how deceived he was – he went to Gibeah and not to Jebus, to "Sodom" and not to Jerusalem.[45] This contrast brings us back to the Book of Genesis where an earlier chapter in the book, Genesis 14, should now be considered where this contrast between Jebus and Sodom can already be found. Abraham returned from his rescue of Lot and met Melchizedek (Gen 14:18), the king of Salem (the later Jerusalem), who brought out bread and wine and blessed Abraham abundantly. Melchizedek was a priest of God Most High, his name מַלְכִּי־צֶדֶק denotes "(my/the) king is righteous".[46] Then Abraham met the king of Sodom but he refused to accept anything from him. The name of this king would have told him enough: בֶּרַע, "into evil; in the midst of evil circumstances".[47] This story thus suggests to the reader: the king of Sodom, or the king of Gibeah, are best avoided, you will have to expect everything from the king of Salem, Jebus, Jerusalem.

6. Conclusions

In the above I have demonstrated that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is part of a triptych. The central panel of this triptych is the story of the outrage at Gibeah in Judges 19-21. The left, opening panel is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, the right panel is the story of Saul's rescue of Jabesh-Gilead. By means of various signs, these three stories are linked to each other: the story of Gibeah in Judges 19-21 is the key text, yet without the side panel of Sodom and Gomorrah it loses much of its power. Precisely as a result of a combination of these three stories, Saul is depicted as a direct descendant of Gibeah, the Sodom of Benjamin, and is in this respect a true Sodomite.

[44] Deurloo, "Geen koning in die dagen", 99; Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing*, 343-4.

[45] Deurloo, "Geen koning in die dagen", 99; Amit, "Literature in the Service of Politics", 35; Van Midden, "Richteren", 156.

[46] *HALOT*, 593 suggests two renderings "my king is Zedek (Zaddik)" and "Malki is righteous", the rendering above is a mixture of these two. It is unclear whether the ־ is a linking vowel (B.J. Oosterhoff, *Israëlietische persoonsnamen* [Exegetica I/4; Delft: Van Keulen, 1953] 9) or a possessive suffix (BDB, 575; *HALOT*, 593).

[47] *HALOT*, 162; 1252.

PART TWO

READINGS

LOT VERSUS ABRAHAM. THE INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS 18:1—19:38 IN *JUBILEES* 16:1-9

JACQUES VAN RUITEN

1. Introduction

In this contribution, I will focus on the interpretation of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in the *Book of Jubilees*.[1] The story of Genesis 18-19 is abbreviated significantly in *Jub.* 16:1-9. It concentrates on the opposition between Lot, an example of a sinner, and Abraham, the prototype of a pious man. The biblical author seems to have a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the figure of Lot. On the one hand he is Abraham's nephew, who indeed left Ur. On the other hand, Lot separated from Abraham and settled in Sodom. Although Lot was saved from the destruction of Sodom, his subsequent union with his daughters could be hardly termed exemplary.[2] In *Jubilees*, this ambivalent portrayal is gradually changed into disapproval.

2. Structure of Jub. *16:1-9*

The author of *Jubilees* has composed his rewriting with a clear structure. Due to formal reasons, it is possible to detect a division of *Jub.* 16:1-9 into two parts. The first part (*Jub.* 16:1-4) deals with the announcement of the birth of a child to Abraham and Sarah and corresponds with Gen 18:1-15. It starts with an indication of time ("On the first of the fourth month"),[3] continues with a short rendering of the biblical story, and ends with the

[1] Quotations from Jubilees are from J.C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees, II* (CSCO 511; Scriptores Aethiopici 88; Leuven: Peeters, 1989), with slight modifications. *Jub.* 16:1-9 is partly preserved in Latin. Both the Latin and the Ethiopic translations go back to a Greek translation of the Hebrew original. Cf. VanderKam, *Book of Jubilees, II*, vi-xxxi; K. Berger, *Das Buch der Jubiläen* (JSHRZ II/3; Gütersloh: G. Mohn, 1981), 285-94. The edition of the Latin text of *Jub.* 16:1-9 can be found in J.C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees, I* (CSCO 510; Scriptores Aethiopici 87; Leuven: Peeters, 1989) 271.

[2] Cf. J.L. Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1997) 181-2.

[3] *Anno mundi* 1986 (cf. *Jub.* 15:1; 16:15). Problems with regard to the chronology of the Abraham story in the *Book of Jubilees* are discussed by J.C. VanderKam, "Studies in the Chronology of the Book of Jubilees", in J. C. VanderKam, *From Revelation to Canon. Studies in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (JSJS 62; Leiden: Brill, 2000) 522-44, esp. 532-40, originally published as "Das chronologische Konzept des Jubiläenbuches", *ZAW* 107 (1995) 80-100.

consequences of this, in which a reference to the heavenly tablets is included ("We told her the name of her son as it is ordained and written in the heavenly tablets"). Likewise, the second part (*Jub.* 16:5-9) also starts with an indication of time ("During this month") and ends with a reference to the heavenly tablets ("It has now been commanded and engraved on the heavenly tablets"). The two parts differ from each other with respect to what is written on these tablets. In the first case, this concerns the immediate offspring of Abraham and Sarah, i.e., Isaac (*Jub.* 16:3). In the second case, it concerns the descendants of Lot and his daughters (*Jub.* 16:9). Their offspring will be uprooted. In this way, the two parts become antithetical: on the one hand, the example of the righteous Abraham and the guarantee of his progeny, on the other the example of the unrighteous Lot and the destruction of his seed.

The second part (*Jub.* 16:5-9) consists, strictly speaking, of two units. The first unit (*Jub.* 16:5-6) is structured as follows: first, an indication of time (16:5a), then a short rendering of the biblical story (16:5ab), and finally the consequences of the story without mentioning the heavenly tablets (16:5c-6). This unit deals with the judgment on Sodom and is a rewriting of Gen 18:16–19:32. In the second unit (*Jub.* 16:7-9) the indication of time is missing. However, there is a short rendering of the biblical story (16:7) whereas at the end the consequences of the story are mentioned with a reference to the heavenly tablets (16:8-9). It deals with Lot and his daughters. It is, strictly speaking, a rewriting of the last unit of Genesis 19, i.e., 19:33-38. Therefore, with regard to the contents, it is perhaps better to speak about a tripartite story (*Jub.* 16:1-4, 5-6, 7-9: Abraham and Sarah, Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot and his daughters). It is clear, of course, that the second and third parts are closely interrelated. The indication of time occurs only in the second part, whereas the heavenly tablets occur only in the third. Moreover, in both parts the author speaks about the "judgment of Sodom".

The author of *Jubilees* seems to be more interested in a rewriting of the introduction (Gen 18:1-15) and the postscript (Gen 19:33-38) than in the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah itself (Gen 18:16–19:32). Moreover, not only is the story of Genesis 18-19 shortened and more clearly structured in the rewriting, but the perspective from which the story is told is also different. In Genesis it is the objective narrator who is telling in the third person about YHWH, the angels, Abraham and Sarah, and Lot and his daughters. In *Jubilees*, it is a story of the Angel of the Presence, who is dictating the whole story of *Jubilees* to Moses. It deals with the acts of the angels themselves and it is related in the first person plural. Some changes in the text (e.g., the change from third person singular to first person plural) are connected with this. The narrative character of Genesis,

which includes the alternation of direct speech and narrative parts, is changed into a summarizing rendering of the biblical story in which direct speech is omitted completely.

3. A Comparison of Genesis 18:1-15 and Jubilees *16:1-4*

In the following synoptic overview, I have tried to present a classification of the similarities and dissimilarities between Genesis and *Jubilees*. I have used small caps to highlight those elements of Genesis which do not occur in *Jubilees*, and vice versa, i.e., the omissions and additions. I have used "normal script" for the corresponding elements between both texts, i.e. the verbatim quotations of one or more words from the source text in *Jubilees*, besides additions or omissions. Sometimes there is a rearrangement of words and sentences. I have underlined those elements.[4]

Genesis 18:1-15	*Jubilees 16:1-4*
1a [ ] *YHWH* appeared to *him* by the *oaks* of Mamre,	1a ON THE FIRST OF THE FOURTH MONTH *we* appeared to *Abraham* at the *oak* of Mamre.
b AS HE SAT AT THE DOOR OF HIS TENT IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY.	[ ]
2a HE LIFTED UP HIS EYES	
b AND LOOKED,	
c AND BEHOLD, THREE MEN STOOD IN FRONT OF HIM.	
d WHEN HE SAW THEM,	
e HE RAN FROM THE TENT DOOR TO MEET THEM,	
f AND BOWED HIMSELF TO THE EARTH,	
3a AND SAID:	
b "MY LORD, IF I HAVE FOUND FAVOUR IN YOUR SIGHT,	
c DO NOT PASS BY YOUR SERVANT.	
4a LET A LITTLE WATER BE BROUGHT,	
b AND WASH YOUR FEET,	
c AND REST YOURSELVES UNDER THE TREE,	

[4] Quotations from the biblical text follow the Revised Standard Version, with slight modifications, whereas quotations from *Jubilees* are according to VanderKam, *Book of Jubilees, II*.

Genesis 18:1-15 (continued)	*Jubilees 16:1-4 (continued)*
5a WHILE I FETCH A MORSEL OF BREAD,	[ ]
b THAT YOU MAY REFRESH YOURSELVES,	
c AND AFTER THAT YOU MAY PASS ON	
d -- SINCE YOU HAVE COME TO YOUR SERVANT".	
e SO THEY SAID:	
f "DO AS YOU HAVE SAID".	
6a AND ABRAHAM HASTENED INTO THE TENT TO SARAH,	
b AND SAID:	
c "MAKE READY QUICKLY THREE MEASURES OF FINE MEAL,	
d KNEAD IT,	
e AND MAKE CAKES".	
7a AND ABRAHAM RAN TO THE HERD,	
b AND TOOK A CALF, TENDER AND GOOD,	
c AND GAVE IT TO THE SERVANT,	
d WHO HASTENED TO PREPARE IT.	
8a THEN HE TOOK CURDS, AND MILK, AND THE CALF WHICH HE HAD PREPARED,	
b AND SET IT BEFORE THEM;	
c AND HE STOOD BY THEM UNDER THE TREE WHILE THEY ATE.	
9a *They said to* him:	1b *We spoke with* him
b "WHERE IS SARAH YOUR WIFE?"	[ ]
c AND HE SAID:	
d "SHE IS IN THE TENT".	
10a YHWH SAID:	
b "I WILL SURELY RETURN TO YOU IN THE SPRING,	
c and Sarah *your* wife *shall have* a son".	c AND TOLD HIM that a son *would be given to him* from *his* wife Sarah.
d AND SARAH WAS LISTENING AT THE TENT DOOR BEHIND HIM.	[ ]
11a NOW ABRAHAM AND SARAH WERE OLD, ADVANCED IN AGE;	
b IT HAD CEASED TO BE WITH SARAH AFTER THE MANNER OF WOMEN.	
12a Sarah laughed TO HERSELF, SAYING:	2a Sarah laughed [ ]

Genesis 18:1-15 (continued)	*Jubilees 16:1-4 (continued)*
b "AFTER I HAVE GROWN OLD, AND MY HUSBAND IS OLD,	
c SHALL I HAVE PLEASURE?"	
	b WHEN SHE HEARD THAT WE HAD CONVEYED THIS MESSAGE TO ABRAHAM,
13a *And YHWH said to Abraham:*	c *And we chided her.*
b "WHY DID SARAH LAUGH,	
c AND SAY:	
d "SHALL I INDEED BEAR A CHILD, NOW THAT I AM OLD?"	
14a IS ANYTHING TOO HARD FOR YHWH?	
b At the appointed time *I* will return to *you*, IN THE SPRING,	
c and *Sarah* shall have a son".	
15a *Sarah* denied, SAYING:	d *And* she was afraid
b "I DID NOT laugh":	e and *she* denied
c *for* she was afraid.	f THAT SHE HAD laughed ABOUT THE MESSAGE.
d HE SAID:	[ ]
e "NO, BUT YOU DID LAUGH".	
[ ]	3a WE TOLD HER THE NAME OF HER SON AS IT IS ORDAINED AND WRITTEN ON THE HEAVENLY TABLETS — ISAAC —
	4a AND (THAT) WHEN *we* returned to *her* at a specific time
	b *she* would have become pregnant with a son.

In *Jubilees*, the text of Gen 18:1-15 has been stripped of all its frills. The only thing that the author of *Jubilees* seems to be interested in is the announcement of the birth of a son unto Abraham and Sarah, and the reaction and disbelief of Sarah. Several elements of the story are omitted altogether, i.e. the meeting of Abraham with YHWH, the scene of hospitality in which Abraham prepares food and drink for the angels, and the advanced age of Abraham and Sarah. It is difficult to find good reasons for the omissions of all these elements.

It is clear that the appearance of YHWH in combination with the meeting of Abraham with three men introduces a certain ambiguity to the

text of Gen 18:1-15.[5] Whereas this tension could point to an interesting genesis of the text of Genesis,[6] the author of *Jubilees* has apparently chosen to remove this ambiguity. In addition, he identifies the three men with the angels. The omission of the theophany and its substitution by the appearance of the angels is noticeable because in his rendering of Genesis the author of *Jubilees* often does copy the theophanies. It reveals that the author of *Jubilees* is aware of a problem in the text of Genesis.

As far as the non-mention of the hospitality is concerned, it is possible that the author had some problems with the anthropomorphic character of the angels. It would have been impossible for the angels to eat the meal prepared by Abraham (Gen 18:8e: "they ate"). Other early Jewish authors, such as Philo and Flavius Josephus, also mention this problem, whereas all *targumim* render the phrase "and they ate" as follows: "*they seemed to be* eating and drinking". Thus Abraham was under the impression that they were eating.[7]

Finally, the omission of the advanced age of Abraham and Sarah is at first sight somewhat odd because in Genesis it is a rather important element in the story. However, it is in line with the rewriting of the Abraham story in *Jubilees*. The author is changing the purpose of the story completely. It is not a story of the promise of rich offspring that is continuously threatened but fulfilled in the end through the interference of God,[8] it has become a story of pure lineage.[9] The marriage of Abraham and Sarah is put on one line with the forefathers who also begot children at advanced ages. The nature of the miracle, i.e., the begetting children in old age, is of no importance.[10]

Apart from omissions there are also some *additions* to the text. Some of these additions can be regarded as summaries, e.g. *Jub.* 16:2b ("When she

[5] See, e.g., C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36* (BKAT I/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981) 331-5; G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (WBC 2; Dallas: Word Books, 1994) 45-47; H. Seebass, *Genesis II, 1. Vätergeschichte I (11,27-22,24)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997) 121-3.

[6] See H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (HK 1/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977[9]); J. Skinner, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark, 1910) 299-303; J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1975) 202-3; J.A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities. Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, Early Jewish and Early Christian Traditions* (CBET 1; Kampen: Kok, 1990) 17-26.

[7] See, e.g., Philo, *Abr.* 118; *QG* 4:9; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.11.2 (196); *Tg Neof. Gen* 18:8.

[8] See, e.g., A. van der Kooij, *Abraham, vader van/voor een menigte volken. Gen. 17, 4-5 in het Hebreeuws, alsmede in de Griekse, Aramese en Syrische vertaling* (Leiden, 1990; inaugural lecture) 3.

[9] Cf. especially the rewriting of Gen 11:29-30 in *Jub.* 12:9-11 (see below).

[10] Cf. J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, "A Miraculous Birth of Isaac in the *Book of Jubilees*?", in L..J. Lietaert Peerbolte & M. Labahn (eds.), *The Purpose of Narrating Miracle Stories in the New Testament and Its Environment* (Sheffield; forthcoming). The change to the storyline resolves the tension between the Abraham story and the stories of the forefathers, and makes clear why the chosen line should go through Sarah.

heard that we had conveyed this message to Abraham"). Although this may be regarded as a variation of Gen 18:10d ("And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him"), it is probably better to see it as a summary of the whole passage down to Gen 18:10. In the same way, *Jub.* 16:2cde ("But when we chided her, she became frightened and denied that she had laughed about the message") may be considered a summary of Gen 18:11-15. It is striking, however, that in Genesis it is YHWH speaking to Abraham, whereas in *Jubilees* it is the angels speaking to Sarah.

At the end of the passage there is a clear addition (*Jub.* 16:3-4: "We told her the name of her son as it is ordained and written on the heavenly tablets – Isaac – and [that] when we returned to her at a specific time she would have become pregnant with a son"). The second part is a variation and interpretation of Gen 18:14 "At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son". The curious thing is that in *Jubilees* the name of the son is mentioned on the heavenly tablets. The name of the son has already been announced to Abraham earlier in the text: "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac" (Gen 17:19; *Jub.* 15:19). In *Jubilees*, it is announced to Sarah and engraved on the heavenly tablets. Possibly, the "heavenly tablets" mean nothing more than the Torah, and the reference to these tablets is nothing but a reference to the biblical text.[11] At the same time, it raises the status of Sarah. She is not listening behind the tent door but is being personally addressed by the angels.

4. A Comparison of Genesis 18:16–19:38 and Jubilees *16:5-9*

Jub. 16:5-9 is a very short rendering of the rest of Genesis 18-19. It deals first with the judgment on Sodom (*Jub.* 16:5-6) and then with Lot and his daughters (*Jub.* 16:7-9). Most obvious are the extensive omissions. Nearly the whole of the passage about Abraham negotiating with YHWH in order to save Sodom because of righteous people (Gen 18:16-33) is omitted. There is only a reference to the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:20 וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי כָבְדָה מְאֹד, "their sin is very grave") in *Jub.* 16:5e ("they are very sinful"). The omission of the passage fits in very well with the general picture of Abraham and Lot that is drawn by the author of *Jubilees*. It is not convenient to have a depiction of Abraham making a plea for a righteous Lot. At the same time, a bargaining Abraham who dares to contradict God does not fit in very well with the picture of Abraham as the

[11] F. García Martínez, "The Heavenly Tablets in the Book of Jubilees", in M. Albani, J. Frey & A. Lange (eds.), *Studies in the Book of Jubilees* (TSAJ 65; Tübingen: Mohr, 1997) 243-60, esp. 245.

ultimate righteous person. Also, Genesis 19, where the story of Lot and his visitors is related, is nearly completely omitted. The enumeration of the several sins of Sodom (*Jub.* 16:5c-h) might be an implicit reference to Genesis 19, but this is not certain. The author refers explicitly to the incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughters (Gen 19:30-38) and clearly in *Jub.* 16:7-9.

5. Genesis 18:16–19:28 and Jubilees *16:5-6*

As can be seen in the following synopsis, the complete story of Sodom and Gomorrah is summarized in one phrase. It is a judgment on the cities and the region (*Jub.* 16:5ab).

Genesis 19:24-28	*Jubilees 16:5-6*
24 [ ] YHWH *rained on* Sodom and Gomorrah [ ] brimstone and fire *from YHWH out of heaven*;	5a DURING THIS MONTH the Lord *executed the judgment of* Sodom and Gomorrah, ZEBOIM *and all the environs of the Jordan* [ ].
25 *and he overthrew those cities, and all the valley*, AND ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE CITIES, AND WHAT GREW ON THE GROUND.	b *He burned them* with fire and brimstone
	c AND ANNIHILATED THEM UNTIL THE PRESENT IN ACCORD WITH WHAT I HAVE NOW TOLD YOU (ABOUT) ALL THEIR ACTIONS —
	d THAT THEY WERE SAVAGE
	e AND VERY SINFUL,
	f (THAT) THEY WOULD DEFILE THEMSELVES,
	g COMMIT SEXUAL SINS IN THEIR FLESH,
	h AND DO WHAT WAS IMPURE ON THE EARTH.
	6a THE LORD WILL EXECUTE JUDGMENT IN THE SAME WAY IN THE PLACES WHERE PEOPLE COMMIT THE SAME SORT OF IMPURE ACTIONS AS SODOM — JUST LIKE THE JUDGMENT ON SODOM.

Genesis 19:24-28 (continued)	*Jubilees 16:5-6 (continued)*
26a BUT LOT'S WIFE BEHIND HIM LOOKED BACK,	[ ]
b AND SHE BECAME A PILLAR OF SALT.	
27a AND ABRAHAM WENT EARLY IN THE MORNING TO THE PLACE WHERE HE HAD STOOD BEFORE YHWH;	[ ]
28a AND HE LOOKED DOWN TOWARD SODOM AND GOMORRAH AND TOWARD ALL THE LAND OF THE VALLEY,	
b AND BEHELD, AND LO, THE SMOKE OF THE LAND WENT UP LIKE THE SMOKE OF A FURNACE.	

In spite of the extensive omissions of Gen 18:16–19:28, the author of *Jubilees* adopts several elements of Gen 19:24-25 in *Jub.* 16:5ab, sometimes verbatim ("brimstone and fire", "Sodom and Gomorrah"). *Jub.* 16:5a is a rendering of Gen 19:25. The phrase "he executed judgment" may be considered as a variation and interpretation of "he overthrew", whereas "all the environs of the Jordan" is a variation of "all the valley". *Jub.* 16:5b mainly renders Gen 19:24. The phrase "he burned them" is an interpretation of "YHWH rained ... from YHWH out of heaven", whereas the rendering "he burned them" is possibly suggested by "brimstone and fire". It might also be inspired by Gen 19:28 ("the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace").

Although Gen 18:16-33 seems to be completely absent in the rewriting of *Jubilees*, it might have had some influence. Firstly, Gen 18:25 might play a part in *Jub.* 16:5. Gen 18:25 reads: השפט כל־הארץ לא יעשה משפט, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" The phrase *gabra k"ennānēhomu* (*Jub.* 16:5: "he executed judgment") may be considered the equivalent of יעשה משפט. The phrase also occurs in *Jub.* 16:6, 9. Secondly, with regard to the judgment, Genesis 18 uses several words: ספה ("to destroy") in Gen 18:23-24 ("Wilt thou indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked? ... wilt thou then destroy the place ..."), in Gen 18:25 המית ("to slay"), and in Gen 18:28 השחית ("to ruin"). These terms could all be related to *wa-'atfe'omu* (*Jub.* 16:5c: "he annihilated them").

In *Jubilees*, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is rendered briefly and concisely. All the emphasis is put on judgment. In contrast, judgment plays only a minor role in Genesis 18-19. In *Jub.* 16:5c-6 the judgment is combined with an accusation (16:5d-h), which functions as the motivation for the judgment. Here, the narrating angel refers explicitly to the text of

Genesis, but without reproducing it: "in accord with what I have now told you about all their actions". In *Jubilees*, however, the angel has not yet said anything about the actions of Sodom and Gomorrah, apart from a small verbatim quotation of Gen 13:13 ("Now the people of Sodom were very sinful") in *Jub.* 13:17. To what extent the author of *Jubilees* is implicitly referring to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18-19 is not completely clear. The terminology is fairly broad. The expression "savage" (*Jub.* 16:5d: "they were savage") could refer to the intimidation of the guests and the surrounding of the house of Sodom, but even then it remains vague. The expression "sinful" (16:5e: "they were very sinful") does have a textual relationship to Gen 18:20 ("And their sin is very grave; cf. also Gen 13:13), but this expression is also too unspecific. As far as the other three expressions ("to defile" in *Jub.* 16:5f: "they would defile themselves"; to commit sexual sins" in 16:5g: "they commit sexual sins in their flesh", and "impurity" in 16:5h: "they do what was impure on the earth") are concerned, there are hardly any clues in the text of Genesis whatsoever. It could be an interpretation by the author of *Jubilees* of the sins of Sodom. In *Jub.* 9:15 there is a comparable enumeration of accusations. Those who wanted to occupy the share, which did not emerge by their lot, have filled the earth with "wickedness, impurity, fornication, and sin". This text, however, does not speak of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In the Hebrew Bible and early Jewish literature outside Genesis 18-19, references to Sodom and Gomorrah are usually quite vague too.[12] In most cases, the accusations seem to refer to social injustice, very occasionally to a sexual violation. The Hebrew Bible hints only once at the sexual connotation of the sin of Sodom (Jer 23:14: "But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: *they commit adultery and walk in lies* (נֹאֵף וְהֹלֵךְ בַּשֶּׁקֶר) ... All of them have become like Sodom, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah"). As far as early Jewish literature is concerned, it occurs only in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. In *T. Levi* 14:6, it is said that the heirs of Levi will become apostates by marrying married women, by having intercourse with whores and adulteresses, by taking gentile women for their wives, in short the "sexual relations (μίξις) will become like Sodom and Gomorrah". In *T. Benj.* 9:1, can be read that πορνεύσετε γὰρ πορνείαν Σοδόμων, "you will be sexually promiscuous like the promiscuity of the Sodomites". I do not think that *Jubilees* depends on any of these texts.

[12] For a brief rendering of the several Sodom and Gomorrah traditions in the Hebrew Bible and their interpretation of early Jewish literature, see Loader, *Tale*, 49-117; M.J. Mulder, *Sodom en Gomorra. Een verhaal van dode steden* (Exegetische Studies 4; Kampen: Kok, 1988) 45-68; J.H. Newman, "Lot in Sodom. The Post-Mortem of a City and the Afterlife of a Biblical Text", in C.A. Evans & J.A. Sanders (eds.), *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition* (JSNTSS 154; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 34-44.

However, the sexual connotation in them demonstrates that the notion of sexually unacceptable behaviour was connected with Sodom and Gomorrah from a quite early stage. In the other texts in *Jubilees* where Sodom and Gomorrah occur, the author does not go into the accusation. In these texts, the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah functions as a model for all other judgments.

6. Genesis 19:29-38 and Jubilees *16:7-9*

In the last part of the passage (*Jub.* 16:7-9) the most obvious demarcation of the end of Genesis 19 is abandoned. The scene of Lot and his daughters (Gen 19:30-38) is connected explicitly with the preceding part of the text. In the following synopsis, Gen 19:29 is put alongside *Jub.* 16:7-9:

Genesis 19:29-38	*Jubilees 16:7-9*
29a SO IT WAS THAT,	[ ]
b WHEN GOD DESTROYED THE CITIES OF THE VALLEY,	
	7a BUT WE WENT ABOUT RESCUING LOT
c God remembered Abraham,	b BECAUSE the Lord remembered Abraham.
d and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow[ ],	c So he brought *him* out from the overthrow (OF SODOM).
e WHEN HE OVERTHREW THE CITIES IN WHICH LOT DWELT.	[ ]
30a NOW LOT WENT UP OUT OF ZOAR,	
b AND DWELT IN THE HILLS WITH HIS TWO DAUGHTERS,	
c FOR HE WAS AFRAID TO DWELL IN ZOAR;	
d SO HE DWELT IN A CAVE WITH HIS TWO DAUGHTERS.	
31a AND THE FIRST-BORN SAID TO THE YOUNGER:	
b "OUR FATHER IS OLD,	
c AND THERE IS NOT A MAN ON EARTH TO COME IN TO US AFTER THE MANNER OF ALL THE EARTH.	
32a COME,	

Genesis 19:29-38 (continued)	*Jubilees 16:7-9 (continued)*
b LET US MAKE OUR FATHER DRINK WINE,	[ ]
c AND WE WILL LIE WITH HIM,	
d THAT WE MAY PRESERVE OFFSPRING THROUGH OUR FATHER".33a	
SO THEY MADE THEIR FATHER DRINK WINE THAT NIGHT;	
b AND THE FIRST-BORN WENT IN,	
c AND LAY WITH HER FATHER;	
d HE DID NOT KNOW	
e WHEN SHE LAY DOWN	
f OR WHEN SHE AROSE.	
34a AND ON THE NEXT DAY, THE FIRST-BORN SAID TO THE YOUNGER:	
b "BEHOLD, I LAY LAST NIGHT WITH MY FATHER;	
c LET US MAKE HIM DRINK WINE TONIGHT ALSO;	
d THEN YOU GO IN AND LIE WITH HIM,	
e THAT WE MAY PRESERVE OFFSPRING THROUGH OUR FATHER".	
35a SO THEY MADE THEIR FATHER DRINK WINE THAT NIGHT ALSO;	
b AND THE YOUNGER AROSE,	
c AND LAY WITH HIM;	
d AND HE DID NOT KNOW	
e WHEN SHE LAY DOWN	
f OR WHEN SHE AROSE.	
36a THUS BOTH THE DAUGHTERS OF LOT WERE WITH CHILD BY THEIR FATHER.	
37a THE FIRST-BORN BORE A SON,	
b AND CALLED HIS NAME MOAB;	
c HE IS THE FATHER OF THE MOABITES TO THIS DAY.	
38a THE YOUNGER ALSO BORE A SON,	
b AND CALLED HIS NAME BENAMMI;	
c HE IS THE FATHER OF THE AMMONITES TO THIS DAY.	
[...]	8a HE AND HIS DAUGHTERS COMMITTED A SIN ON THE EARTH WHICH HAD NOT

Genesis 19:29-38 (continued)	*Jubilees 16:7-9 (continued)*
	OCCURRED ON THE EARTH FROM THE TIME OF ADAM UNTIL HIS TIME
	b BECAUSE THE MAN LAY WITH HIS DAUGHTER.
	9a IT HAS NOW BEEN COMMANDED
	b AND ENGRAVED ON THE HEAVENLY TABLETS REGARDING ALL HIS DESCENDANTS
	c THAT HE IS TO REMOVE THEM,
	d UPROOT THEM,
	e EXECUTE JUDGMENT ON THEM LIKE THE JUDGMENT OF SODOM,
	f AND NOT TO LEAVE HIM ANY HUMAN DESCENDANTS ON THE EARTH ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT,

Jub. 16:7 may be considered in the first place as a rendering of Gen 19:29. However, it is possible also to interpret the first phrase (16:7a) as a summary of Gen 19:15-22. The role of the angels is mentioned explicitly in Gen 19:15-16 ("When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying: "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city. But he lingered; so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand" etc.). The author of *Jubilees* is obviously not interested in the deliverance of the wife of Lot and his daughters. He does not refer to the curious death of Lot's wife during the escape.[13] Nor is the flight *into a cave* mentioned. In this respect, it is also important to mention that Lot offering his daughters to the men of Sodom in a final attempt to save his guests (cf. Gen 19:8) does not occur in *Jubilees*. What is striking, finally, is the rearrangement of the material. In Genesis 19 the escape of Lot is narrated in a dramatic way. After the flight, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is narrated. In *Jubilees* it is the other way around. The text speaks first about the destruction and thereafter about the deliverance of Lot.

In the rewriting, all the attention is paid to the incestuous relationship of Lot with his daughters. However, the perspective has been changed. In the biblical story, the daughters seduce their father. Moreover, some excuse is given to the daughters: "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may preserve offspring

[13] In contrast to, e.g., Wis 10:7-8 where the death of Lot's wife is paid a lot of attention.

through our father" (Gen 19:31-32). In *Jubilees*, the daughters play no active role nor is any excuse given for the incestuous relationship. The initiative is attributed to Lot, who was completely passive in the biblical story: "Because the man lay with his daughter" (*Jub.* 16:8b). However, the daughters seem to have had no objections to the action of their father, since the text also reads: "He and his daughters committed a sin" (*Jub.* 16:8a).[14]

After he has briefly summarized the story of Lot and his daughters, the author of *Jubilees* pays a great deal of attention to the consequences of his deed. It is striking that it is not the sin of Lot and his daughters that is engraved on the heavenly tablets, as was the case in the preceding part, where the impure actions of Sodom become an example for those who commit the same sort of impure actions in the future (cf. *Jub.* 16:6). I suggest that it is because of the merit of Abraham, and not because of his own merit, that Lot is not hit by the judgment (cf. *Jub.* 16:7).[15] It illustrates the somewhat ambivalent attitude of the author of *Jubilees* towards Lot.

The destiny of the descendants of Lot and his daughters is written on the heavenly tablets. Lot will have no descendants in the land on the day of judgment. His posterity is predestined to destruction like Sodom, independently of its own actions.[16] In this way, *Jub.* 16:7-9 forms the opposite of *Jub.* 16:1-4. In 16:1-4, Abraham and Sarah are promised a son, whose name Isaac, which is missing in the biblical text at this point, will be written on the heavenly tablets. This Isaac will be the progenitor of the offspring of Abraham. In 16:7-9, the story deals with Lot and his daughter (the singular fits in very well in this connection), who have intercourse and produce progeny. However, it is written in the heavenly tablets that it will be progeny that is destined to destruction. The names of these descendants, although mentioned in the biblical text, are not engraved on the heavenly tablets.

7. *Lot elsewhere in* Jubilees

In *Jubilees* 16, an ambivalent but mainly negative interpretation of the figure of Lot can be seen. Elsewhere in *Jubilees* this view is being prepared. Lot is mentioned for the first time in *Jub.* 12:10, a passage that is

[14] It is somewhat curious that *Jub.* 16:8b reads "daughter" in the singular. The Latin texts read the plural; however, this seems to be a harmonization on the basis of the biblical text.

[15] See A. Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical Literature* (London: Jew's College, 1927; reprint New York: Ktav, 1968).

[16] According to García Martinez, "Heavenly Tablets", 247-8, we have to do here with the registration of actions with a predestinational character. Not only past acts but also future castigation and future rewards are engraved and fixed forever; he speaks therefore about the heavenly tablets as "The Book of Destiny". This is an important aspect of the Heavenly Tables. See also *Jub.* 5:13-14; 24:33; 23:32; 31:32b; 32:21-22, and *1 Enoch*.

incorporated in a rather extensive pericope (*Jub.* 11:14–12:15) that contains the rewriting of the closure of the genealogy (Gen 11:26-32). In the following overall comparison of Gen 11:26-32 and *Jub.* 11:14–12:15, the many deviations (additions, omission and variations) of *Jubilees* with regard to the model text are evident:

Genesis 11:26-32	*Jubilees 11:14—12:15*
a. Birth of Abram, NAHOR AND HARAN (11:26-27b)	a. Birth of Abram (11:14-15)
	b. STORIES ABOUT ABRAM (11:16-12:8) WITH THE MENTIONING OF HIS TWO BROTHERS (12:8)
b. Birth of Lot (11:27c)	
c. Death of Haran (11:28)	
d. Marriages of Abram and Nahor (11:29)	c. Marriage of Abram (12:9)
e. BARRENNESS OF SARAI (11:30)	
	d. MARRIAGE OF HARAN and birth of Lot (12:10)
	e. Marriage of Nahor (12:11)
	f. STORY AROUND THE death of Haran (12:12-14)
f. Departure of Terah with Abram, Lot and Sarai from Ur and arrival in Haran (11:31)	g. Departure of Terah and his sons from Ur and arrival in Haran (12:15)
h. DEATH OF TERAH (11:32)	

The story of Abraham starts with a double mention of his birth (Gen 11:26-27). The first episode is concerned with the youth and the marriage of Abraham until his departure from Haran (Gen 11:26-32). This is described very briefly. In the parallel passage in *Jubilees*, the youth of Abraham is described much more extensively. In particular, the story about his early youth is striking. As far as the genealogical aspects are concerned, several aspects catch the eye.

In *Jubilees*, only the birth of Abraham is mentioned explicitly, not that of his brothers: "During the thirty-ninth jubilee, in the second week, in the first year, Terah married a woman whose name was Edna, the daughter of Abram, the daughter of his father's sister. In the seventh year of this week she gave birth to a son for him, and he named him Abram after his mother's father because he had died before his daughter's son was conceived" (*Jub.* 11:14-15). The fact that Abram has two brothers is mentioned only in passing in *Jub.* 12:8: "He told this matter (the service of

the idols) to his two brothers, and they were angry with him, and he kept quiet". The *sequence* in which the brothers get married and have children is different in both texts. In Gen 11:27-29 the order is Haran-Abram-Nahor, whereas in *Jubilees* it is Abram-Haran-Nahor.

The content and form of the marriage and birth reports are quite different in both texts. As far as the marriage report of Abraham and Sarah is concerned, *Jubilees* does not mention that Sarah was barren (Gen 11:30). At the same time, the information about the marriage is very extensive.[17] In Genesis, the mention is quite brief. In *Jubilees*, a date is given ("During the fortieth jubilee, in the second week, in its seventh year"), whereas the marriage of Abraham and Sarah is taken apart and described more extensively ("Abram married a woman whose name was Sarai ... and she became his wife"), and (most importantly) her descent is mentioned ("the daughter of his father"). In other words, Sarah was the sister of Abraham (*Jub.* 12:9). On the one hand, the addition could be prompted by the fact that elsewhere in Genesis, when he visits Pharaoh (Gen 12:10-20) and the king of Gerar (Gen 20:1-18), Abraham calls Sarah "his sister".[18] On the other hand, it is not impossible that the author of *Jubilees* is stressing the good origins of Sarah. She comes from the right family. As far as the author is concerned, she cannot be the daughter of Haran, as is possible to conclude from the biblical text: "Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Jiscah" (Gen 11:29). The father of Sarah is not mentioned, but because this is mentioned with regard to Milcah it is possible to suspect that Sarah was also a daughter of Haran. In early Jewish literature, there are several examples of the identification of Sarah and Jiscah.[19] This is not the case for the author of *Jubilees*, however.

Other changes in the text also underline the opinion of the author of *Jubilees* that Sarah cannot be the daughter of Haran. I refer to the fact that in the book of Genesis, most things concerning Haran are placed *before* the marriages of Abraham and Nahor: his birth, his fathering of Lot, and his death (Gen 11:26-28). In *Jubilees*, however, the information on the marriage

[17] Cf. B. Halpern-Amaru, *The Empowerment of Women in the* Book of Jubilees (JSJS 60; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 35.

[18] It is interesting to note, however, that the author of *Jubilees* does not refer to Sarah as the sister of Abraham when they encounter the Pharaoh (*Jub.* 13:13-15), whereas the visit to the king of Gerar is omitted all together.

[19] See Pseudo-Philo, *L.A.B.* 23.4; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.6.5 (151); *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen* 11:29; *b. Meg.* 14a; *b. Sanh.* 69b; *Gen. Rab.* 38:14. Cf. D. U. Rottzoll, *Rabbinischer Kommentar zum Buch Genesis. Darstellung der Rezeption des Buches Genesis in Mischna und Talmud unter Angabe targumischer und midraschischer Paralleltexte* (SJ 14; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994) 201-2; Halpern-Amaru, *Empowerment*, 35 note 4.

of Abraham with Sarah is put *before* the marriage of Haran (cf. *Jub.* 11:9-10).[20]

Apart from this, with regard to Haran Genesis mentions only in brief that "Haran was the father of Lot" (Gen 11:27), whereas in *Jubilees* there is an extensive marriage report: "His brother Haran married a woman in the third year of the third week, and she gave birth to a son for him in the seventh year of this week. He named him Lot" (*Jub.* 12:10). It is striking that the name of Haran's wife is not mentioned, nor, even more importantly, her origins. The marriage report of Nahor, which is quite extensive in Gen 11:29, where the name of the wife and her origins are mentioned, is very brief and only in passing in *Jubilees*: "His brother Nahor also got married" (*Jub.* 12:11).

Finally, in Genesis the death report of Haran, the father of Lot, is quite neutral (cf. Gen 11:28). In *Jubilees*, however, his death is connected with the fact that he tried to save the idols that Abram was trying to burn from the fire (cf. *Jub.* 11:12-14). The report of the death of Terah is not included in *Jubilees*. The extensive coverage of the events surrounding the death of Haran does have a clear function. It characterizes Haran as the prototype of an unfaithful person, as opposed to the faithful and righteous Abram. Although both descend from Terah, and in that sense are in the line of Shem, the line of the elected people only continues through Abraham. For this reason, it is important for Sarah not to be defiled with the blood of the unfaithful Haran either, she is a direct descendent of Terah. According to *Jubilees*, it is important for there to be a pure line from Abraham and Sarah back to the forefathers, via Terah, Shem, Noah and the other predeluvians, back to Seth and Azura, and through them to Adam and Eve. The election of Israel is built into the creation of the world, as can also be illustrated by other passages in *Jubilees*.[21]

Jubilees also betrays a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards Lot. On the one hand the extensive genealogy points to a positive appreciation. On the other hand, disapproval is shown by the fact that the derivation of his mother is not mentioned, and moreover that his father is depicted as an idolater.

The second place in which Lot is mentioned is *Jub.* 12:30, a text without parallel in Genesis. When Abraham is leaving Haran to go to the land

[20] Halpern-Amaru, *Empowerment*, 35.

[21] See, e.g., *Jub.* 2:20. Cf. B. Schaller, *Gen. 1.2 im antiken Judentum. Untersuchungen über Verwendung und Deutung der Schöpfungsaussagen von Gen 1.2 im antiken Judentum* (Diss. mach.; Göttingen, 1961), 63; J.C. VanderKam, "Genesis 1 in Jubilees 2", *DSD* 1 (1994) 311-21, esp. 318; L. Doering, "The Concept of the Sabbath in the Book of Jubilees", in M. Albani, J. Frey & A. Lange (eds.), *Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, 179-205, esp. 185-8; J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, *Primaeval History Interpreted. The Rewriting of Genesis 1-11 in the* Book of Jubilees (JSJS 66; Leiden: Brill, 2000) 49, 57-65.

of Canaan, his father Terah blesses him. He says to Abraham that if he sees the good land, that he should come back and take Terah with him. But he also adds: "Take Lot, the son of your brother Haran, with you as your son". Despite the dubious birth of Lot (his mother is unnamed, and her origins are unknown), and the problems of his father (idolatry), the author of *Jubilees* seems to confirm that there is a certain affinity between Abraham and Lot. Lot seems to function for Abraham as a sort of son substitute.

In *Jubilees* 13 Lot is referred to several times. It is striking that the passage about the struggle between the herdsmen of Abraham and those of Lot (Genesis 13) is not mentioned in *Jubilees*. The text states simply: "Lot separated from him" and then continues "Lot settled in Sodom" (*Jub.* 13:17). Complete responsibility for the separation of Lot and Abraham is thus put squarely on the shoulders of Lot. Lot is the one who leaves, Abraham and his herdsmen are not to blame. *Jubilees* adds to the separation of Lot an emotional reaction by Abraham: "He was broken-hearted that his brother's son had separated from him for he had no children" (*Jub.* 13:18). This emotion of Abraham corresponds to the reaction of Terah earlier in the text: "Take Lot, the son of your brother Haran, as your son" (*Jub.* 12:30). It seems as if the text is saying that Abraham loved his nephew very much, but he was not able to keep him on the right path.

8. Conclusions

The biblical author has an ambivalent attitude with respect to the figure of Lot. He is considered both positively, since he is closely related to Abraham, and negatively, since he settled in Sodom, which is the city of all sin. The author of *Jubilees* also has an ambivalent attitude. There is the extensive genealogy of Lot, and the affection of Abraham towards his nephew is mentioned. However, Lot is gradually turned into an example of a sinner. Despite the extensive genealogy, he is a man with a dubious origin. His mother is unnamed, and without the right genealogical credentials. His father Haran is portrayed as a man of idolatry. Lot has a dubious life. He is made responsible for the separation from Abraham, and after this separation he moved into Sodom. Since he lay with his daughter(s), all his descendants are uprooted. In the end, on the day of judgment, he will be without any offspring. Lot does not belong to the elected people with whom God made a covenant. At the same time, all negative aspects are removed from Abraham. He is the ultimate pious man. He did not deliver his wife into the hands of the pharaoh, nor into the hands of the king of Gerar. Together with his wife Sarah, who has the right genealogical credentials, he will be blessed with numerous offspring, and only with them will God make his eternal covenant.

SODOM AND GOMORRAH IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

EIBERT TIGCHELAAR

1. Introduction

In his study of the tale of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Hebrew Bible and in early Jewish and early Christian traditions, Loader expresses his amazement over "the absence of any appreciable development of the Sodom and Gomorrah traditions in Qumran".[1] He observes:

> As far as I can see it, it only occurs in the biblical manuscripts and the retelling of Genesis 13-14 in the Genesis Apocryphon. It is not exploited as in the rest of contemporary Jewish literature, while one would have expected the Qumran community to welcome the biblical symbol of a wicked city which could be applied to Jerusalem.[2]

In this contemporary Jewish literature there are lists of groups of sinners in which

> Sodom is found in the company of the Watchers/giants, the generation of the flood, the generation of the dispersion, the generation of the wilderness, and the Egyptians.[3]

Such a list is found in the *Damascus Document* (CD II 16—III 12), but no mention of Sodom is made there. Moreover, references to the sinful nature of Sodom are absent from the *Genesis Apocryphon*. Hence,

> [t]here must be a reason for its absence from the Damascus Document and in the Genesis Apocryphon as well as for the lack of interest in Sodom elsewhere in the Qumran writings. Could it be that the site of Qumran, near the Dead Sea (albeit its north-western side) with its reminiscences of Sodom and the rest of the Pentapolis, made these cities less than attractive as symbols of wickedness to the people of Qumran?[4]

Loader wrote these observations long before all the texts from Qumran were published, and without access to tools such as reliable concordances. Now we know that there are references to Sodom and Gomorrah in a few frag-

[1] J.A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities. Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, Early Jewish and Early Christian Traditions* (CBET 1; Kampen: Kok, 1990) 124. The study was awarded a Prize of Honour of the Teylers Godgeleerd Genootschap.

[2] Loader, *Tale of Two Cities*, 124.

[3] Loader, *Tale of Two Cities*, 124.

[4] Loader, *Tale of Two Cities*, 125.

mentary texts.[5] The present contribution aims to gather all the materials relating to Sodom and Gomorrah and Genesis 18-19 in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It will become clear that one cannot argue for a complete lack of interest in Sodom in the Qumran writings. Rather, one should pose the question to what extent these writings were concerned with Sodom and Gomorrah as examples of wickedness or God's punishment.

2. Genesis 18-19, Sodom and Gomorrah, in Biblical Manuscripts

Only two biblical manuscripts from Qumran preserve parts of Genesis 18-19. 2Q1 (2QGen) frag. 1 has a few letters from Gen 19:27-28, including, in line 2, the names of Sodom and Gomorrah: סו]דם ועמרה.[6] 8Q1 (8QGen) consists of three tiny fragments. Frags. 2-3 preserve a few words and letters from Gen 18:20-25. These few remains testify to a textual variant in Gen 18:25, namely מעשות אות הדבר.[7]

The names of Sodom and Gomorrah are attested in 1QIs[a] (Isa 1:9, 10; 3:9; 13:19) written סודם and עומרה. The few textual variants in these verses are not relevant for the topic of Sodom and Gomorrah.

3. Genesis 13 and Sodom and Gomorrah in the Genesis Apocryphon

The *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QapGen and 1Q20) is a paraphrase of narratives found in *Genesis*. The remnants belong to twenty-three columns, covering more or less the period from Lamech (col. II) up to Gen 15:4 (XXII 34). Hence, a possible retelling of Genesis 18-19 has not been preserved. The text does, however, paraphrase the narratives of Genesis 13 (Lot going to Sodom) and 14 (the war involving Sodom and Gomorrah). The retelling of Genesis 13 is of interest, since the biblical narrative includes two side-remarks which anticipate the narrative of Genesis 18-19, namely Gen 13:10b ("before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah") and 13:13 ("the Sodomites were wicked, great sinners against the Lord").

Genesis 13 consists of three episodes, namely the return of Abram and his company from Egypt to Bethel (13:1-4), the parting of Lot from Abram

[5] M.G. Abegg, Jr., "Concordance of Proper Nouns in the Non-biblical Texts from Qumran", in Emanuel Tov (ed.), *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XXXIX. The Texts from the Judaean Desert. Indices and an Introduction to the* Discoveries in the Judaean Desert *Series* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002) 229-84 at 275 and 277 adds two occurrences to those already mentioned by Loader, namely 3Q14 8 2 which reads ן סדום ד[, "of Sodom and [", and 4Q252 III 2 which preserves the two last letters of the name of Gomorrah. Yet, these data are not complete: One should add at least two fragments which are mentioned neither by Loader, nor by Abegg, namely 4Q180 2-4 and 4Q172 4.

[6] *DJD* III, 48, pl. X.

[7] *DJD* III, 147-8, pl. XXXI. אות הדבר was added supralinearly.

and his settlement in Sodom (13:5-13), and God's promise of the land to Abram and his descendants (13:14-18). This chapter is paraphrased in 1QapGen XX 33—XXI 21 and *Jub.* 13:15-21. One need not enter into each detail, but it may be noted that both *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* expand on the last clause of the first episode. Gen 13:4 refers to the altar, and tells that Abram called there upon the name of the Lord. *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* tell that on his return Abram sacrificed a burnt sacrifice on the altar, and specify the contents of Abram's prayer.[8]

The second episode of Genesis 13 describes the events leading up to Lot's parting from Abram, and his settlement in Sodom. The rewritings are not really interested in the preceding events. 1QapGen XXI 5 summarizes "After that day Lot parted from me because of the behaviour of our shepherds", and *Jub.* 13:17a "And in the fourth year of that week Lot separated from him". The texts do, however, refer to Lot's settlement in Sodom. *Jub.* 13:17b summarizes Gen 13:12-13 as follows: "And Lot dwelt in Sodom. And the men of Sodom were great sinners". On the other hand, 1QapGen XXI 5-7 expands on Gen 13:12, telling that Lot took his flocks with him, that Abram even added to his flocks, and that Lot reached Sodom and bought a house there.[9] Yet, the *Genesis Apocryphon* omits any reference to Gen 13:13 (the evil of Sodom). Finally, *Jub.* 13:18 and 1QapGen XXI 7 have a shared notice on the distress of Abram.

Loader comments on the silence on the evil of Sodom in 1QapGen XXI:

> the sins and the ruin of Sodom are not introduced where it is most expected ... Why would an opportunity to criticise the traditional symbol of evil be avoided so obviously.[10]

The answer to Loader's question may be quite simple. We have no certain way of knowing whether the lost parts of the *Genesis Apocryphon* included a paraphrase of Genesis 18-19. One may, observe, though, that the short expansions in the text of 1QapGen XXI 5-7 have a harmonizing and anticipatory function.[11] Gen 13:12 merely tells that Lot pitched his tents until

[8] 1QapGen XXI 2-4: "Upon it I offered burnt sacrifices and an offering to the God Most High, and invoked the name of the Lord of the Universe there; I praised God's name and blessed God. I gave thanks there in God's presence for all the flocks and wealth which he had given me, because he had acted well towards me, and because he had returned me in peace to this land". *Jub.* 13:16: "he returned to this place and offered there a burnt sacrifice, and invoked the name of the Lord, and said: 'Thou, the God Most High, art my God for ever and ever'".

[9] 1QapGen XXI 5-7: "He (Lot) went and settled in the Jordan valley (taking) all his flocks with him. And I even added many to his. He pastured his flocks, and reached Sodom, and bought himself a house in Sodom and lived there, while I lived on the mountain of Bethel".

[10] Loader, *Tale of Two Cities*, 125.

[11] M.J. Bernstein, "Re-Arrangement, Anticipation and Harmonization as Exegetical Features in the Genesis Apocryphon", *DSD* 3 (1996) 37-57.

Sodom (עד סדם), but Gen 14:12 remarks that Lot was living in Sodom (והוא ישב בסדם), and in Genesis 19 it is said that Lot owns a house in Sodom. 1QapGen XXI 6-7 explains that Lot pastured his sheep in the Jordan Valley until he reached Sodom. He then bought a house in Sodom and lived there. The reference to this house only makes sense as an anticipation of the house that is mentioned in Genesis 19.[12] In other words, there was no need to mention the sins and ruin of Sodom, because they will be described further on.

One should also note that the *Genesis Apocryphon* is not a typically sectarian composition, even though the parts on Noah are apocalyptic in several respects (visions and dreams; mysteries; calculation of periods). The main interest of the text is not the removal of evil, but (as in *Jubilees*) the covenantal allocation of land to Shem, and to Abram and his descendants. Since the text is not primarily interested in evil, it does not grasp each and every opportunity to criticise a symbol of evil.

Recognition of the overall tendency of a work may also explain the absence of any mention of Sodom in the so-called "list of sinners" of the *Damascus Document* (CD II 14-IV 12). The composition is concerned with Israel's adherence to or straying from the covenant, not with sin as such. The Watchers are mentioned (CD II 17-18) because they, as angels, are paradigmatic for the priesthood, or even Israel as a whole. The sins of Adam and Eve, as well as those of Sodom and Gomorrah, are not mentioned because they do not belong to the category of straying from the covenant.[13]

4. 4Q172 fragment 4

The phrase]פחז עמורהן[, "the wantonness (?) of Gomorrah", is found in 4Q172 4 4. The manuscript number 4Q172 was given by Allegro to fourteen fragments which he could not identify with certainty, but whose script he thought to be reminiscent of 4Q161 (4QpIsa[a]), 4Q166, 4Q167 (4QpHos[a] and [b]), and 4Q171 (4QpPs[a]).[14] The hand of 4Q172 4 is closer to that of 4Q161, but it is not clear how the text fits with this Isaiah pesher. In fact, there are not that many manuscripts at Qumran which have this specific style of hand which is termed Late Hasmonaean Early Herodian rustic semi-

[12] Bernstein, "Re-Arrangement", 46 note 19.

[13] I gained this insight from reading M.L. Grossman, *Reading for History in the Damascus Document. A Methodological Study* (STDJ 45; Brill: Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2002).

[14] *DJD* V, 50-1.

formal.[15] The fragment might be the single remaining fragment of a manuscript, and any determination about its contents must be based on the remaining text alone.

The fragment may be transcribed as follows:

1.] thus, and they fornicated ...[	]כן ויזנון]*מנון	1
2.] (the) iniquity on the sq[uares	]והעול ברחון]בות	2
3.] wantonness of Gomorrah [	]פחז עמורהן	3
4.] burning. And also ... [	]בוערת וגם כ*ן	4
5.] their heart. *Blank* [	]לבבם	*vacat*	5
6.] I saw in ...[	]ראיתי בחן	6

The reading of line 1 is uncertain. ויזנו, "and they committed fornication" or "and they will commit fornication", fits well with line 3 "wantonness of Gomorrah", but it is not clear how one should understand the preceding and following words.[16] In line 2 ברחו can be "they fled", but the letters may also be the beginning of, for example, ברחוֹבות, "on the squares". The use of עול, "iniquity", with article, is very uncommon. It is only attested in the *Rule of the Community*, in the phrases והעול האמת, "the spirits of truth and iniquity", תולדות העול, "generations of iniquity" (both 1QS III 19), and אנשי העול, "men of iniquity" (1QS V 2, 10; VIII 13; IX 17). In line 3 read]פחז עמורהן, "wantonness of Gomorrah", or, in my opinion less likely,]ותפחז עמורהן, "and Gomorrah became rebellious". Since Gomorrah is never used alone, it probably is the second part of a broken up parallelism, the first part being, e.g., as in Lam 4:6, סְדֹם חַטַּאת, "the sin of Sodom". In line 4, בוערת, "burning", may qualify אש, "fire", or גפרית, "brimstone", as a punishment for the wantonness of Gomorrah.[17] My reading and reconstruction of line 6 are tentative, but may provide a clue about the genre of the text.[18]

The few words in this fragment show a correspondence with the vocabulary of 4Q184 (4QWiles of the Wicked Woman), namely עול, "iniquity';

[15] For a description of characteristics of the "rustic semiformal series", cf. J. Strugnell, *DJD* XIX, 112 (on 4Q375) who also mentions 4Q161, 4Q166, 4Q167, 4Q168, 4Q171, 4Q184. Compare also 4Q439, 4Q525.

[16] Allegro, *DJD* V, 50, read in line 1]ובהיותו עמהן, "when he is with them", which Strugnell, "Notes en marge", corrected to]כן ויזנו עמהן. The translation in *DSSSE*, 349, "and they will feed with them", is improbable in the context. The last word is not עמהן. The oldest photograph, PAM 40.579, still preserves a piece of the upper left part of the fragment which clearly shows that the last three letters are מנן or מנן, preceded by a letter like ע, מ, or any other letter with a lightly descending base (*nun*, *kap*). A paleographically possible reading would be ממנן, or עמנן. PAM 40.579 also has an additional fragment placed in the gap in line 1 with כן preceded by another trace. It is not clear whether the fragment belonged here.

[17] In the Hebrew Bible the verb בער, "to burn", is not used in relation to Sodom. This may have been the case, however, in *Jub.* 36:10, "with devouring burning fire, just as He burned Sodom" (reconstructed as ובאש בוערת ואוכלתן כשורפו את סדום by J.C. VanderKam in 4Q223-224 2 ii 52-53).

[18] Allegro, *DJD* V, 50, reads]ב*ן**יתי. In PAM 40.579 *alef* is virtually certain.

פחז, "wantonness'; ברחובות, "on the squares'; and also the common לבבם, "their hearts".[19] The precise meaning of פחז is still a matter of controversy. Yet, in post-Biblical Hebrew it is most often used in contexts that also refer to fornication or other sexual misbehaviour.[20] This small, as yet unassigned fragment presents the only case in the Dead Sea Scrolls where a relation between (Sodom and) Gomorrah and sexual sins is suggested.

5. 4Q180 (4QAges of Creation)

4Q180 consists of only a few preserved fragments, and was published by Allegro as *The Ages of Creation*.[21] Frags. 2-3 are extremely difficult to read, and Allegro therefore failed to recognize that frags. 2-4 ii 5-7 contains a quotation of Gen 18:20-21.[22] Here we are concerned with two separate issues: the wording and the function of the quotation.

5.1. The Wording of Genesis 18:20-21 in 4Q180 2-4 + 8 ii 5-7

Strugnell added another fragment (frag. 8) to the left of frags. 2-3. Though many letters are badly legible or barely preserved, Strugnell suggested to read the text of 4Q180 2-4 + 8 ii 5-7 as follows:[23]

5 זע[קת סדום ועמורה כי רבה]וחטאתמה כי 6 [כבד]ה מאדה
ארדה נא ואראה הזעקתמה הבאה 7 [אלי ע]שה כלה ואם לא אדעה

One may compare this text to that of the MT:

20 ויאמר יהוה זעקת סדם ועמרה כי־רבה וחטאתם כי כבדה מאד
21 ארדה־נא ואראה הכצעקתה הבאה אלי עשו כלה ואם־לא אדעה

[19] עול in 4Q184 1 3, 8, 10; 3 4; פחז in 1 13, 15; 3 5; see also פחזות in 1 2; ברחובות in 1 12; 6 1; לבבם in 1 16. זנה, "fornicate", has not been preserved in 4Q184, but cf. the reconstructions והזונ[ה in 1 1 (Allegro) and מהזנונ[ת in 1 13 (Strugnell).

[20] See especially J.C. Greenfield, "The Meaning of פחז", in Y. Avishur & J. Blau (eds.), *Studies in Bible and the Ancient Near East, Presented to Samuel E. Loewenstamm, on his Seventieth Birthday* (Jerusalem: E. Rubinstein, 1978) 35-40, who suggests the meaning "wantonness" or "lasciviousness" (פחז // זנות). R. de Hoop, "The Meaning of *phz** in Classical Hebrew", *ZAH* 10 (1997) 16-26 suggests the meaning "to deceive", "act treacherously" (פחז // שקר); A. Lange, "Die Wurzel *PHZ* und ihre Konnotationen", *VT* 51 (2001) 497-510 suggests a connotation of "standing up (against)" (פחז // עול).

[21] *DJD* V, 77-79. Als known as "Pesher on the Periods".

[22] This was first recognized by R. Weiss, "Fragments of a Midrash on Genesis from Qumran Cave 4", *Textus* 7 (1969) 132-4. On the basis of the poor physical condition of frags. 2-3, and in view of the contents, Weiss argues that 4Q180 2-3 do not belong to the same manuscript as the other fragments of 4Q180. However, Allegro is backed by Strugnell and Milik, two major experts on classification of fragments.

[23] J. Strugnell, "Notes en marge du volume V des 'Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan'", *RevQ* 7 (1969–70) 163–276 at 253. The transcription offered above dispenses from the numerous dots and circlets which should express the uncertain reading of most letters.

Two variants are of interest, namely הזעקתמה corresponding to MT הכצעקתה, and זשה[corresponding to MT עשו. The MT has in 18:20 זעקה, and in 18:21 צעקה, apparently without any distinction in meaning. The Samaritan Pentateuch has in both verses צעקה, whereas 4Q180 probably had in both cases זעקה.[24] The plural suffix in הזעקתמה is *ad sensum* and may have been brought about by the plural suffix in the preceding וחטאתמה.[25] The absence of the preposition כ, "as", in הזעקתמה may be either a mistake, or reflect another understanding of the syntax of the clause.

More problematic is the other variant: זשה כלה[corresponds to עשו כלה of MT.[26] כלה only makes sense as an adverb "completely", even though the phrase עשה כלה is "inflict destruction" in Jer 30:11 and 46:28.[27] The meaning of the phrase of MT is: "I will go down, and see whether they have done completely according to the cry against it that has come to me, or not, that I may know".

It seems fair to restore in 4Q180 אלי ע[שה כלה], but what then is עשה?[28] A third person masculine singular perfect fits badly with either Sodom or כלה (whether read as כָּלָה or כִּלָּה). Therefore, Milik suggests it is the infinitive construct: "I will go down and see whether the outcry against them that has come [to me is (a reason for) in]flicting destruction, or not, that I may kno[w"".[29] Dimant offers an easier solution, namely אע[שה כלה, "I will inf]lict destruction". This gives the following twist to the verse: "I will go down and see whether (according to) their outcry which has come [to me, I will inf]lict destruction or not, that I may kno[w".[30] Dimant calls attention to *Tg. Onq.* which reads in Gen 18:21 "whether they have done (עבדו) according to the outcry against them that has come up before Me, (in which

[24] LXX has in both verses κραυγή, and *Tg.Onq.* קבילה.

[25] See also LXX κατὰ τὴν κραυγὴν αὐτῶν, and *Tg.Onq.* קבילההון.

[26] See also SamP עשו כלה, and 8Q1 2-3 עשו כלוה. LXX: συντελοῦνται.

[27] In the apparatus to BHS, O. Eißfeldt proposes to read in Gen 18:21 כלה (כלם), which would result in the reading: "I will go down, and see whether all of it (i.e. of Sodom) have done according to cry against it that has come to me, or not, that I may know". Likewise, C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36* (BKAT I/2; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981) 346. In that case the only (minor) problem is the incongruence of number.

[28] אלי ע[שה כלה is restored by Weiss, "Fragments of a Midrash", 134; Strugnell, "Notes en marge", 253-4; J.T. Milik, "Milkî-sedeq et Milkî-reša' dans les anciens écrits juifs et chrétiens", *JJS* 23 (1972) 95-144 at 119-20.

[29] Milik, "Milkî-sedeq", 120, translates "Je veux descendre et voir si le cri contre eux, qui monte [vers moi], est une affaire d'annihilation, ou non; je veux (le) savoi[r", and argues that both עשה (4Q180) and עשו (MT) are the qal infinitive of עשה. However, such infinitives ending on *-o*, rather than *-ot*, are rare: the three examples from the MT are all from Proverbs: Prov 16:16 קנה־חכמה; 21:3 עשה צדקה; 31:4 שתו־יין.

[30] D. Dimant, "The "Pesher on the Periods" (4Q180) and 4Q181", *IOS* 9 (1979) 77–102 at 82-4. Translation adopted from Dimant who assumes that the *kap* has been omitted by accident from הזעקתמה.

case) I will make an end of them (אעביד עמהון גמירא)".[31] This solution is attractive, and, in fact, אלי אע[שה fits nicely in the available space, even better than אלי ע[שה.

Lange also reconstructs אע[שה, but claims that the manuscript does not read כלה but כללה, which, he suggests, is an alternative form of כְּלִיל, a "whole-offering". He therefore reads "I will prepare it (i.e. Sodom) as a whole-offering".[32] This would be a highly interesting variant, but his interpretation of the traces on photograph PAM 41.719 is untenable.[33]

5.2. Why Was Genesis 18:20-21 Quoted in 4Q180?

What is the function of the quotation in 4Q180 2-4 + 8 ii 5-7 of Gen 18:20-21? Column i of the conglomerate of fragments contains little legible text. The decipherable words "on his face", and "your name", suggest that these lines are related to Gen 17:3 and 5. Dimant argues that frags. 5-6 may also belong to this column. These small fragments have references to "a journey of two days", "Mount Zion", "Jerusalem", and Pharaoh, as well as the words "written concerning". These phrases do not of necessity belong to one episode or quotation. Milik places these fragments two or more columns after 2-4 ii, being related to the description of Genesis 22, but Dimant thinks they may reflect an expansion on Gen 17:8.[34]

The first lines of 4Q180 2-4 column ii are barely legible, but perhaps one should read in line 1 "Mount Z]ion, which is [where] G[od of] E[ternity] abides". The restoration "Mount Zion" is plausible in view of its occurrence in frags. 5-6 4. After a blank the text continues in lines 3-4 with a reference to Gen 18:1-2: "The three men [who] appeared to [Abra]ham at the Oaks of Mamre are angels", a statement which is immediately followed by the quotation of Gen 18:20-21. Both Milik and Dimant reconstruct at the beginning of this quotation ואשר אמר, "and as for what he said", instead of ויאמר יהוה, "and YHWH said". After the quotation, they restore in lines 7-8 פשר]הדבר [על כול]ן 8 בשׂר אשרן, "[The explanation of] the word [con-

[31] Translation of B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis. Translated with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus and Notes* (ArBib 6; Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1988).

[32] A. Lange, "Eine neue Lesart zu 4Q180: *kllh* vice *klh*. Die Vernichtung von Sodom und Gomorrha als Ganzopfer", *ZAH* 6 (1993) 232-4.

[33] Lange, "Eine neue Lesart", 234, has a manipulated photograph of PAM 41.719. On this figure there seems to be a stroke (more or less diagonal) between *lamed* and *he*, but it is unlikely that this is part of a second *lamed*. There is not enough room, unless one presumes two tightly crammed *lamed*s. On PAM 41.719, as printed from the Brill CD-ROM, the *he* is clearly legible, the head and both legs being preserved (the *he* is not clear on later photographs, nor on Lange's figure), and there is no space for two *lamed*s. The photograph suggests a fold or tear running diagonally through the *lamed*, and therefore giving the impression of a second hook. There is, therefore, no evidence of a second *lamed*.

[34] Milik, "Milkî-sedeq", 121-2; Dimant, "Pesher on the Periods", 85; "Ages of Creation", 12a. The reference to Pharaoh in 4Q180 5-6 5 is problematic both in Milik's and in Dimant's interpretation.

cerns all] [8]flesh which[". Allegro hesitantly placed another fragment at the bottom of the column, containing the word "and I will see", which may be interpreted as a resumption of "and I will see" of Gen 18:21. That is, the quoted words serve as a lemma for an explanation. According to the reconstruction of Milik, accepted by Dimant, this fragment should be read

> "and I will see", for everything [is engraved according to the Periods of their] desi[gnation for] before he created them he knew [their] desig[ns].

It is not certain whether frag. 4 should indeed be placed here. Whether or not, this explanation still does not clarify why Gen 18:20-21 was quoted here.[35]

4Q180 frag. 1 preserves the introduction to the composition, as well as the heading "Interpretation concerning the ages which God made". The short introduction with predestinatarian language refers five times to these קצים, "ages" or "periods", and ends with a damaged reference to the ten generations from Shem up to Abraham. After this introduction, a new section starts with "Interpretation concerning Azazel and the angels", a reference to Gen 6:1-4, as well as to the Enochic Book of Watchers, especially *1 Enoch* 6-16. How do the quotations of Genesis (in frags. 2-4 and 5-6) fit within a composition that presents an interpretation concerning the ages?

Milik argues that 4Q180, 4Q181 and 11Q13 are three copies of a composition that interpreted a "Book of the Periods".[36] He proposes that the commentator was concerned with demonic and angelic intervention in human affairs. Therefore, this composition quotes those sections from Genesis that deal with divine apparitions. The double reference to Mount Zion indicates that this commentator had a specific sacerdotal interest.[37] Milik implicitly suggests that these interests are the organizing principle of the work. Yet, his view that 4Q180, 4Q181 and 11Q13 are copies of a commentary on a "Book of the Periods", as well as his opinions on the organiz-

[35] Allegro, *DJD* V, 79, placed frag. 4 "only very tentatively here, the line of the stitched upper edge corresponding roughly with the lower edge of f. 2". Strugnell, "Notes en marge", 253, refers to the stitches between frags. 2 and 4, which would also be visible in frag. 8. Thus also Milik, "Milkî-sedeq", 121. Interestingly, Dimant, "Pesher on the Periods", adopts this placement, but in "Ages of Creation", in Lawrence H. Schiffman & James C. VanderKam (eds. in chief), *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 12a she dismisses the placement since "it does no fit there materially or contextually".

[36] Milik, "Milkî-sedeq", 110 and ibid. *The Books of Enoch. Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 248-56. In "Milkî-sedeq", 110, and *The Books of Enoch*, 252 note 1, Milik refers to fragments of a papyrus Aramaic manuscript which probably would preserve parts of this "Book of Periods". This is 4Q310 (4QpapText ar) in Milik's lists, but 4Q559 (4QpapBibChronology ar) in the present numbering.

[37] Milik, "Milkî-sedeq", 110, 122, 123.

ing principles of the work have been criticized.[38] One may note that Milik does not present an explanation for the quote from Gen 18:20-21.

Dimant takes another approach on the basis of the heading about the periods, and the reference in this first section of 4Q180 to the Ten Generations from Shem to Abraham when he sired Isaac. She observes that all the Genesis accounts that are referred to in 4Q180 belong to the timespan in between the birth of Shem (one hundred years before the flood) and the birth of Isaac. In other words: this period is not only bracketed by the births of Shem and Isaac, but also by the descent of the Watchers and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

This period of the Ten Generations corresponds to the Second Week of the Enochic *Apocalypse of Weeks* (*1 En.* 93:1-10; 91:11-17), which is the period of deceit and violence. Within the *Apocalypse of Weeks*, the Second Week (93:4) is parallel to the Seventh Week (93:9-10; 91:11), the "week" beginning with the exile, which too is characterized by deceit and violence. Some other texts from Qumran display similar kinds of periodizations, and we even have a fragment from a text that briefly describes the periods (4Q247). Dimant argues that – in spite of the heading – it is possible that 4Q180 only describes the period of the Ten Generations, because the author was interested in "sin and punishment", especially in the period which was thought to parallel his own period.[39]

Dimant's explanation is in my view more convincing than Milik's, but she leaves other details of the text unexplained. Thus Milik calls attention to 4Q180 2-4 ii 3-4 which refers to Gen 18:1-2 as an example of the author's interest in angelic intervention, but fails to explain the quotation of Gen 18:20-21. In Dimant's understanding the latter quotation fits in the pattern of the author's interest in sin and punishment, but she does not discuss 4Q180 2-4 ii 3-4 in any detail.

A closer look at the references to Genesis 18 in 4Q180 2-4 ii suggests yet another possibility, namely that we have here a series of notes and comments which comment on the biblical text, and explain problematic issues in this text. 4Q180 2-4 ii 3-4 states: "The three men [who] appear[ed] to [Abraha]m at the Oaks of Mamre are angels". The clause does not describe an angelic apparition, but presupposes the biblical text, and comments on the problem of the identity of the three men. Some of the problems of Genesis 18 relate to the question of the plural and the singular forms, and as to whether one of the three men is perhaps God himself, and whether the "men" of Genesis 18 are the "angels" of Gen 19:1.[40] 4Q180 takes a clear stand: the three men are three angels.

[38] See the discussions of Dimant in "Pesher on the Periods" and "Ages of Creation".

[39] Dimant, "Pesher on the Periods", 91-9.

[40] See, for example, the discussion in Loader, *Tale of Two Cities*, 18-9 and 22-6.

4Q180 continues with the quotation of the next problematic verse. The text of MT might seem to say that the Lord does not yet know how serious things are in Sodom, which would be in conflict with the idea of God's all-encompassing knowledge. If 4Q180 frag. 4 belongs at the bottom of the column, than the quotation is followed by an explanation stating that God knew all things before he created them. Since the text is damaged, we cannot know how the author solved the problem. We only know he tackled it somehow.

In other words: what we have here is not a mere reference to sin and judgment of Sodom (which would suffice if the author wanted to characterize the period), nor a running paraphrase of Genesis 18, but a collection of comments. The comments in this column do not concern "sin" and "punishment", but the nature of angels, and the foreknowledge of God.

6. 4Q252 (4QCommentary on Genesis)

4Q252 (4QCommentary on Genesis A)[41] starts off as a long paraphrase of the Story of the Flood, with special interest in chronology (I 1—II 5), but then it touches upon other Genesis narratives in a much shorter form. After the Flood come the Curse of Canaan (II 5-7), Terah and Abram (II 8-13), Sodom and Gomorrah (III 2-6), the Binding of Isaac (III 6-9), the Blessing of Isaac (III 12-13), and the children of Esau (IV 1-3). Finally, there is a long commentary on the Blessings of Jacob (IV 3—VI). Some sections are paraphrases, others are short discussions or commentaries. The overall character of the text is moot. Bernstein argues that the composition basically consists of a series of disjointed simple sense comments on the biblical text, whereas Brooke argues for a thematic reading.[42] Brooke reasons that the comments deal with unfulfilled blessings and curses, especially concerning sexual misbehaviour and the possession and purification of the land.[43]

[41] Edited by G. Brooke in *DJD* XXII, 185-207.

[42] M.J. Bernstein, "4Q252: From Re-Written Bible to Biblical Commentary [4QpGen[a]]", *JJS* 45 (1994) 1–27; "4Q252: Method and Context, Genre and Sources. A Response to George J. Brooke", *JQR* 85 (1994) 61–79; "Pentateuchal Interpretation at Qumran", in P.W. Flint & J.C. VanderKam (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment 1* (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1998) 128-59, esp. 150-4; G.J. Brooke, "The Thematic Content of 4Q252", *JQR* 85 (1994) 33–59; "The Genre of 4Q252: From Poetry to Pesher", *DSD* 1 (1994) 160–79.

[43] Cf. also M. Kister, "Notes on Some New Texts from Qumran", *JJS* 44 (1993) 280–90 at 287-9 ("this text emphasizes promises and blessings to the fathers of the Jewish people, and discusses the legitimacy of dispossessing and destroying other peoples"); I. Fröhlich, "Themes, Structure and Genre of Pesher Genesis. A Response to George J. Brooke", *JQR* 85 (1994) 81–90 ("contrasting traditions about sinners and righteous").

The text is presently of interest because III 2-6, a badly preserved passage,[44] deals with Sodom and Gomorrah. The editor transcribes and translates the preserved text as follows:[45]

2	עשר אנשי]ם	עמו]רה וגם
3	העיר הזאת]	] צדיקים
4	אנוכ[י לא]	]*ים לבדם יחרמו
5	ואם לוא ימצא שם]	וכל] הנמצא בה ושלל ה
6	וטפ ה ושאר *]	]עולם וישלח

2. (twe)lve men [Gomo]rrah and also
3. this city[ ] righteous ones
4. *"I [will] not* [(Gen 18:31?)]... only they shall *utterly destroy* (Deut 13:16)
5. and unless there *is found there* (Gen 18:32) *and all*] *which is found in it* (Deut 20:11) and its *booty* (Deut 13:17)
6. and its *little children* (Deut 20:14), and the rest ...[ ] ever. *And (Abraham) stretched forth* (Gen 22:10)

The preceding column includes a section dealing with Abram and Terah (II 8-13), ending with a blank line as section divider (II 14). Then a section of about ten lines is missing, apart from some words of III 1-2.[46] In III 2-6 the names of Sodom and Gomorrah are not preserved, except for the two letters]רה, "]rah", followed by "and also this city". At the end of III 6 the text begins a new section on the Sacrifice of Isaac (III 6-9). The italics in the editor's translation indicate scriptural quotations or allusions. One might also mark line 3 "righteous ones" (Gen 18:24, 26, 28), and perhaps line 6 "ever" (Deut 13:17).

What is this short discussion of Sodom and Gomorrah about? Bernstein refrains from a full discussion because of the broken character of the section. He merely observes that "the condemnation of Sodom and Gomorrah ... is phrased in language reminiscent of the idolatrous city (Deut 13:13-19)", and concludes that one cannot determine "[w]hether it is merely the language which is associative, or whether the author of 4Q252 felt that it was under the law of the idolatrous city that Sodom was being condemned".[47] Brooke does not speculate on the text missing in the gaps, but gives various suggestions for the function of the Sodom and Gomorrah section in this composition.[48] The references to Deut 13:13-19 and 20:10-20 (rules for waging

[44] Comparison with col. I (where a line has in average 11 words) indicates that from III 2-6 less than 35% remains (20 complete or broken words in 5 lines).

[45] Brooke, *DJD* XXII, 201-2. Cf. for the text also Brooke, "Thematic Content", 34.

[46] The most extensive discussion of III 1-2 is Brooke, "The Genre of 4Q252", 168-70.

[47] Bernstein, "4Q252: From Re-Written Bible", 15 note 46.

[48] See especially Brooke, "The Genre of 4Q252", 170, and "Thematic Content", 46-7. Note that the arguments in these articles are not identical, but complementary.

war), in which the "ban" is only mentioned with regard to cities which God has given Israel as an inheritance (Deut 20:16-18), indicates that in the view of the commentator Sodom and Gomorrah were considered to be part of the land, and that their punishment is part of the purification of the land. Ezek 47:15-20 also regards Sodom and Gomorrah as part of the land. Hence, implicitly, this section involves an unfulfilled promise. Brooke also points out that most pericopae commented upon in 4Q252 involve some kind of sexual misbehaviour (of the Watchers, the curse of Canaan for the uncovering of Noah's nakedness, of the Amelekites, and of Reuben). The inclusion of Sodom and Gomorrah in this series is warranted because their sin "is principally a sexual one as the story of Lot's two angelic visitors indicates".[49] In a response, Bernstein criticized Brooke's thematic reading of 4Q252 in general, and the emphasis on sexual trangressions specifically ("we search the actual text in vain for any sexual allusions"), Brooke's references to the cleansing of the land ("not supported by the text"), and the claim that the gift of the land is a theological theme in 4Q252.[50] The basic hermeneutical question is whether one's judgment of this text ought to be based only on what is explicit, or near explicit, or whether one should search the implicit "theological agenda" of the compiler.[51]

Barzilai believes, with Bernstein, that 4Q252 discusses exegetical questions that arise from Genesis.[52] The key-word in the preserved text is לבדם, "they alone". In Gen 18:23-33 Abram argued that the righteous should not be punished because of sinners. But does that mean that the sinners should be saved on account of the righteous? The commentator seems to state that on account of ten righteous people the city may be saved, but he makes the point that even then the sinners will perish.[53] In this respect, the commentator takes the same stand as Ezek 14:12-23, which states that even the righteousness of Noah, Daniel and Job does not deliver the rest of their land. In 4Q252 III 4 the word preceding "they alone" can be read as חט]אים, "sinners" (Gen 13:13!). The following יחרמו may perhaps be read as a *hofal* "the sinn]ers, they alone shall be utterly destroyed", but more likely as a *hifil*

[49] Brooke, "Thematic Content", 47. See also 56.

[50] Bernstein, "4Q252: Method and Context", 67-9.

[51] Bernstein, "4Q252: Method and Context", especially 63-5.

[52] G. Barzilai, "The Fate of the Wicked of Sodom and Gomorrah in an Ancient Interpretation from Qumran (4Q252 Col 3)", *Beit Mikra* 154-5 (1998) 323-31 [Hebrew]; 335 [English abstract]. See also http://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Eparasha/vayera/bar.html.

[53] See also the different approaches to the text (Gen 18:24) in the medieval commentaries. According to Ramban the text implies that God will spare the whole population for the sake of the fifty righteous ones, whereas Radak argues that as long as there remained fifty righteous persons in the city, the city would not be completely destroyed – only the wicked would be destroyed. See N. Leibowitz, *Studies in Bereshit (Genesis) In the Context of Ancient and Modern Jewish Bible Commentary* (Jerusalem: Eliner Library [etc.], s.a.) 186-7.

"the sinn]ers, them alone one shall utterly destroy".[54] This explanation tallies with Bernstein's interpretation of 4Q252: the text consists of a series of exegetical remarks which discuss problems in interpreting the book of Genesis.

7. 4Q177 IV 10 and a Qumran Reading of 4Q252 III 2-6

A possible allusion to Genesis 18 is found in 4Q177 IV 10 (*4QCatena A*), or (according to Steudel's rearrangement of 4Q174 and 4Q177) *4QEschatological Midrash* XI 10, which reads עד עשרה צדיקים בעיר אב]רהם, "Ab]raham, at least ten righteous men in a/the city".[55] Admittedly, the name Abraham is not complete, but it is difficult to think of another plausible reconstruction. The broken clause is found in a section which describes the final destruction of the children of Belial, the delivery of all the children of light, and the return of the God-fearers to Zion and Jerusalem with joy.

The link between 4Q174+177 and Genesis 18-19 is Judges 19 and Deut 13:14.[56] The narratives of Judges 19 and Genesis 19 are to a large extent parallel, and in some cases verses are virtually identical.[57] Thus, Judg 19:22 "the men of the city, wicked people (בני בליעל), surrounded the house" is parallel to Gen 19:4 "the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house". The phrase בני בליעל, "wicked people", or "children of Belial",

[54] In the latter case one has to restore את החט]אים לבדם יחרמו. A *hofal* is difficult because these are almost always written *plene* in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Barzilai, "The Fate of the Wicked", 324, restores some of the missing words in the gaps, resulting in the following text: "... Sodom and Gomo]rrah and also [3]this city[... ten] righteous one, [4]I shall not [destroy the entire city ... but the sinn]ers, they alone, shall be utterly destroyed [5]and unless there are found there [ten righteous people, I shall utterly destroy the city and all the people] which is found in it and its booty [6]and its little children and the rest of [its animals, ... and it shall remain a ruin for] ever". However, his reconstruction of line 5 is too long (65 letters with spaces) in comparison to the length of the lines of the other columns (average 55 letters with spaces).

[55] In the first edition of Allegro, *DJD* V, 71, the line is frag. 12-13 i 5. A. Steudel, *Der Midrasch zur Eschatologie aus der Qumrangemeinde (4QMidrEschat[a.b]). Materielle Rekonstruktion, Textbestand, Gattung und traditionsgeschichtliche Einordnung des durch 4Q174 ("Florilegium") und 4Q177 ("Catena A") repräsentierten Werkes aus den Qumranfunden* (STDJ 13; Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill, 1994), argues that 4Q174 (4QFlorilegium) and 4Q177 are copies of the same composition. Cf. for the composite text also Steudel, *Die Texte aus Qumran II Hebräisch/Aramäisch und Deutsch* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001) 187-213. The terminology used in 4Q177 IV 10 עד עשרה צדיקים, "up to ten righteous", may be compared to עד עשרה אנשים (CD X 4; XIII 1; 1QSa II 22). In CD XIII 1 it has, with למועט, the meaning "at least ten men", and in 1QSa II 22 the phrase without למועט also seems to imply "at least".

[56] I accept Steudel's suggestion of combining 4Q174 and 4Q177 provisionally.

[57] See for details R. de Hoop, "Saul the Sodomite: Genesis 18-19 as the Opening Panel of a Polemic Triptych on King Saul", above, esp. 21-2.

is relatively rare in the Hebrew Bible,[58] and the only time it is found in Torah is in Deut 13:14, the pericope referred to in 4Q252 III 2-6. In Deut 13:14 these "sons of Belial" lead the inhabitants of the city astray, resulting in the killing of these inhabitants and the utter destruction (the חרם). In other words, the "children of Belial" are compared to the men of Sodom. It is, however, not likely that the text would allow for the possibility that the sons of Belial would be pardoned on account of ten righteous people.

By reading the broken texts of 4Q174+177 and 4Q252 together, we may arrive at the meaning of the references to Sodom and Gomorrah. First, one should observe that both 4Q174+177 and 4Q252 originate in the same sectarian (Qumranic) milieu. The last columns of 4Q252 have distinctive sectarian generic features and terminology, such as פשרו, "Its interpretation" (IV 5), אנשי היחד, "men of the community" (V 5), and the references to the צמח דויד, "the Sprout of David", and משיח הצדק, "the messiah of righteousness" (V 3-4).[59] Although 4Q252 "is probably a compilation of various sources",[60] it is undisputed that in col. 5 "we recognize ourselves as being in a thoroughly Qumranic milieu".[61]

Second, 4Q252 and 4Q174+177 use the same rather unique terminology, and are more closely related to each other than to other sectarian texts. We do not know whether 4Q252 explicitly referred to בני בליעל, "wicked people", or "sons of Belial" in this section, but the other references to Deut 13:13-19 suggest the likelihood of an association between the "men of Sodom" and the "sons of Belial". 4Q174+177 is one of the few Qumran compositions which mentions the בני בליעל (4Q174 1 i 8; 4Q177 II 4),[62] but it also refers to "the Sprout of David" (4Q174 1 i 11; cf. 4Q252 V 3-4). In view of 4Q174 1 i 11 and 4Q177 II 5 דורש התורה, "Interpreter of the Law", it is possible that one should restore 4Q252 V 5 to דורש]התורה. 4Q177 mentions the "men of the Community" (4Q177 I 1; 4Q252 V 5).

The plain meaning of 4Q252 III 2-6 is that if there would have been ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, the city would have been spared and only the sinners would have been destroyed. The relation to 4Q174+177 shows that an actualizing or eschatological exegesis may be implied. The sinners of Sodom are model of the contemporary opponents, the children of Belial.[63] "Sodom" is used as a sobriquet for Jerusalem in Isa

[58] Deut 13:14; Judg 19:22; 20:13; 1 Sam 1:16 (feminine singular); 2:12; 10:27; 25:17 (singular); 1 Kgs 21:10, 13; 2 Chr 13:7.

[59] The literature on 4Q252 V and its messianism is extensive. See most recently, G.G. Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet. Positive Eschatological Protagonists of the Qumran Library* (STDJ 47; Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2003) 59-63.

[60] Kister, "Notes on Some New Texts", 289.

[61] Bernstein "Pentateuchal Interpretation", 154.

[62] The other places are 4Q286 7 ii 6; 4Q525 25 2 (uncertain); 11Q11 VI 3; 11QT[a] LV 3.

[63] Cf. Steudel, *Der Midrasch zur Eschatologie*, 167-8 on the "children of Belial" as enemies of the Qumran community.

1:9, 10 and Rev 11:8, but not directly in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Barzilai argues that the phrase "and also this city" in 4Q252 III 2-3 probably does not refer to Sodom, but either to Jerusalem, or to Zoar. The mention in 4Q177 IV of ten righteous ones in a (or the) city, followed by a reference to Jerusalem, indeed suggests that this city is Jerusalem. Hence, it is likely that 4Q252 III 2-6 is not only a commentary on a difficult section of Genesis. It also addresses the fate of Jerusalem and the annihilation of the sons of Belial. Both texts (4Q252 and 4Q174+177) express the idea that when the children of Belial will be annihilated, the city of Jerusalem will be saved on account of ten or more righteous ones in the city.

SODOM, EGYPT, AND THE TWO WITNESSES OF REVELATION 11:8

BERT JAN LIETAERT PEERBOLTE

1. Introduction

> καὶ τὸ πτῶμα αὐτῶν ἐπὶ της πλατείας της πόλεως της μεγάλης, ἥτις καλεῖται πνευματικῶς Σόδομα καὶ Αἴγυπτος, ὅπου καὶ ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν ἐσταυρῶθη

Chapter 11 of the Book of Revelation describes an unusual episode: it speaks about two "witnesses" who will die to be raised after three-and-a-half days. In 11:8 the city where this will take place is identified as the city "that is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt". Since this city is introduced in 11:2 as "the holy city" and referred to in 11:8 as the city "where also their Lord has been crucified", the town's identity is clear: John speaks about Jerusalem. But as he refers to Jerusalem in a very veiled manner the reference may perhaps have more levels than just a reference to the historical capital of Judea. This article intends to shed light on the encrypted mention of Jerusalem in Rev 11:8. To do this, two elements have to be treated. Firstly, an explanation needs to be given for the character and identity of the two witnesses. It is evident that they are described with the characteristics of Moses and Elijah, but the reason for this character lending is far from clear.[1] Secondly, after the character and meaning of the two witnesses have been discussed, the exceptional combination of "Sodom and Egypt" as a designation of Jerusalem will be looked into. What made John use exactly these epithets and why does he use them for Jerusalem? By scrutinising these issues the larger question will be addressed: what situation does John describe in Rev 11:8?

As a result of the aforementioned approach the present article falls apart into two sections. The first section treats the appearance of the two witnesses, the origin of the imagery used, and addresses the question of the meaning of these two witnesses in the symbolic universe depicted by John. The second section will go into the use of Sodom and Egypt as pejorative qualifications in this specific text as well as into the background of that imagery. In the end the character of the reference to Jerusalem will be dis-

[1] Other identifications have been made in the course of history, especially with Elijah and Enoch. For a presentation and discussion of the various identifications, see D.E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16* (WBC 52B; Nashville: Nelson, 1998) 598-603.

cussed. The conclusion will be that the two witnesses symbolise the Christ-movement and that the picture of their fate symbolically stands for the struggle of the Christ-movement to prophesy in the heart of Judaism dominated and ruled as that was by Gentiles.

1. The Two Witnesses

a. The Portrayal in Revelation 11

The episode of the two witnesses described in Revelation 11 holds an important position within the septet of the trumpets described in Rev 8:2-11:19. As is the case in the other septets in the Book of Revelation, the sixth phenomenon in the series appears to describe the present of John and his intended readers.[2] Several interpretations of the two witnesses are given in literature discussing this chapter, but often the question is surpassed why exactly Moses and Elijah were used as models for the two witnesses.

The narrator of Revelation 11 describes the appearance of the two witnesses in 11:3-13. The period of their prophecy is the subject of 11:3-6: They will be instructed by God (mediated by an angel; 11:3), and they will "prophesy" over a period of 1260 days, dressed in sack-cloth (11:3). In 11:4 the witnesses are identified as the "olive trees" and "lamps" that are standing in front of the "Lord of the earth". They will kill any opposition by the fire coming from their mouth (11:5). And during this period they have the power to close the heaven in order to stop the rain from falling, and to change water into blood and strike the earth with every plague they wish to use (11:6). Rev 11:7-10 describes the downfall of the two witnesses. "The beast from the abyss" will come, wage war against them, and kill them (11:7). Then John describes how their bodies will lie on the streets of the city under discussion in this article (11:8). All inhabitants of the earth will wonder at them, and marvel at the Beast, in a period of three-and-a-half days (11:9-10). After that period the two witnesses will be vindicated: a spirit of life will be sent forth by God, and revive them (11:11). They will be called up from heaven, before the eyes of their enemies (11:12). Subsequently a great earthquake will introduce the second woe (11:13).

As is the case throughout the Book of Revelation John combines several biblical traditions into a new set of images. In order to understand the narrative that was summarised in the previous paragraph, some of the intertextual references will have to be studied closer. Since I have discussed the Beast from the Abyss in another publication, I will leave that part of the

[2] See L.J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist. A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (SJSJ 49; Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1996) 161-2.

narrative aside here.[3] I will focus on the identity and role of the two witnesses in this section to discuss the character of the city referred to in the next. We will now look into the evidence given in the 11:3-6, and discuss each of these verses separately. After the verse-by-verse survey some conclusions will be drawn regarding the background and meaning of the imagery used.

Rev. 11:3

The two characters are not individually named, but introduced as τοῖς δυσὶν μάρτυσίν μου. John uses the term μάρτυς four more times throughout the Book of Revelation. In Rev 1:5 it is Jesus who is introduced by this term. But in 2:13 John uses the word for an otherwise unknown Christ-follower named Antipas, who apparently died on behalf of his faith in Pergamum. In 3:14 John again refers to Jesus by the words ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς (as in 2:13). And in 17:6 he mentions the followers of Jesus who were killed by "the Woman" as μάρτυρες on behalf of Christ. The terminology is evidently on its way of becoming a technical term for a "martyr", but in 1:5, 3:14 and 11:3 this is not the sense of the word. Here, and probably also in 2:13, the word indicates that the one designated as such testifies or prophesies about God.[4]

The task of the two witnesses is to "prophesy during a period of 1260 days": καὶ προφητεύσουσιν ἡμέρας χιλίας διακοσίας ἑξήκοντα. The idea of prophecy is crucial to the understanding of the Book of Revelation as a whole. The content of the book is referred to in 1:3 as "the words of the prophecy" (τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας). And in 19:10 the "testimony of Jesus" is identified as the "spirit of prophecy" (ἡ γὰρ μαρτυρία Ἰησοῦ ἐστιν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας). In the closing chapter John refers to the content of the book three times as "the words of the prophecy of this book" (τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου; cf. 22:7, 10, 18) and once as "the words of the book of this prophecy" (ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων τοῦ βιβλίου τῆς προφητείας ταύτης; 22:19).

The only other passages in which John uses a form of the word "prophecy" are found in Revelation 10 and 11. In 10:11 the seer is instructed to "prophesy" on the fate of the Gentiles, as he does immediately afterward in Revelation 11. Then 11:3 describes the task of the two witnesses as "prophesying", and 11:6 refers to their ministry as "a prophecy". Since the content of their prophecy is not described, we can only guess as to their message. This cannot be far removed from the "testimony on Jesus" (μαρ-

[3] Lietaert Peerbolte, *Antecedents of Antichrist*, 121-8 and 142-53.

[4] See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 610: "The term 'witness' in this context has the connotation 'prophet' since the phrase οἱ δύο μάρτυρες, 'my two witnesses' in v. 3 is exactly parallel to οἱ δύο προφηται, 'the two prophets', in v. 10 (...)".

τυρία Ἰησοῦ) that is obviously so important to John,[5] but for the author it is evidently not important to fill out this detail.

The period of 1260 is taken from Daniel (7:25; 12:7, 12), and is one of John's ways to refer to the period in which he considered himself to live: the penultimate period of history he also refers to as a period of three and a half years or 42 months.[6] The mention of the 1260 days therefore defines the period in which the witnesses act as the period in which John and his readers live. This is an important element for our understanding of the literary function of the appearance of the two witnesses.

Rev 11:4

Rev 11:4 identifies the witnesses as "the two olive trees and the two lampstands" standing before the Lord of the Earth. John obviously refers to the vision in Zechariah 4 (esp. 4:3, 11, 14). Zechariah identifies the two olive trees in the vision as the "two Anointed Ones standing by the Lord of the entire earth" (LXX: οὗτοι οἱ δύο υἱοὶ της πιότητος παρεστήκασιν τῷ κυρίῳ πάσης της γης; 4:14). It is remarkable that John also identifies the two witnesses as "two lampstands", whereas Zech 4:2 speaks of only one lampstand.[7] David Aune suggests that this detail "may indicate the presence of an exegetical tradition upon which John is dependent".[8] Aune is probably right, but there is more to this case than just the presence of a traditional exegesis of Zechariah: the two witnesses are depicted with characteristics of those two figures who encounter Jesus in the Transfiguration-scene of Mark 9:2-8parr. A further discussion of the traditio-historical background of this important detail of the picture of the two witnesses will therefore be given below.

Rev 11:5

Rev 11:5 describes the power the two witnesses hold over their enemies: they will kill their opponents by fire coming from their mouth. This element clearly takes up an image also found in 2 Sam 22:9, Job 41:11, and Jer 5:14. The last text mentioned identifies the words of God as a fire in the mouth of the prophet. John very likely refers to that idea to picture the two witnesses as prophets. The idea that fire coming from the mouth can kill God's enemies is also found in Ps 97:3.

[5] Cf. Rev 1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4.

[6] See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 609-10.

[7] Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 599, mentions 1QS IX 10-11; CD XII 22-23; XIII 20-22; XIX 34-20:1; XIV 18-19; XIX 9-11; 4Q175 (4QTest) 1-20 to point at the exegetical tradition John refers to.

[8] See also Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 612.

Rev 11:6

Rev 11:6 provides the clues to identify the two witnesses as Elijah and Moses. The first element mentioned, the power to shut the sky, must refer to the characteristic of Elijah described in 1 Kgs 17:1. The second element in Rev 11:6 refers to a characteristic from the Exodus-narrative on Moses: Exod 7:17-20 describes how God instructs Moses to change the water of the Nile into blood, and thereby introduces the series of plagues with which Egypt is struck. The verb used by John, πατάξαι, functions as one of the major terms used in the account Exodus gives of the plagues in Egypt.[9] It is finally important to note that these two major characteristics are mentioned as pertaining to both witnesses.

On the basis of the period John mentions (the 1260 days) the ministry of the two witnesses should be dated to the period in which John himself lives. His description of their prophecy is therefore actually a description of the prophecy of the Christ-movement, and the two witnesses are used then as a symbol for the developing church itself.[10] But what is the background to their picture in Revelation?[11]

David Aune considers the description given in Rev 11:3-6 as an elaboration of an earlier, Jewish prophecy the characteristics of which are also found in the so-called "Oracle of Hystaspes". This oracle is contained in the *Divine Institutes* of Lactantius, and since the characteristics of the two witnesses are indeed highly comparable to those of the prophet mentioned in that text, a brief look at Lactantius is necessary here. This is especially the case, since Aune considers the number of two witnesses to be a correction by John, on the basis of Zechariah 4, of the "original" picture of Hystapes.[11] His source-critical reconstruction of the background of Revelation 11 deserves some consideration.

b. Lactantius' Divine Institutes *7.17.1-8 and its Source*

In *Inst.* 7.17, Lactantius describes the advent of an eschatological opponent who will act against God and His prophet. The description of this prophet shows so many similarities with that of the two witnesses in Revelation 11 that David Aune concluded to a common source.[12] This common source would either be the *Oracle of Hystaspes* or an adapted version of that text. In translation the relevant passage goes as follows:

[9] See Exod 3:20; 7:20, 25; 8:12, 13; 9:15, 25; 12:12, 23, 27, 29.

[10] Cf. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 603: "With regard to the symbolic significance of the two witnesses, it is relatively clear that they represent the witness of the people of God in a godless world and that they, like their Lord, will ultimately triumph over suffering and death".

[11] See Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 588-93.

[12] Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 602-3.

> But I will more plainly set forth the manner in which this happens. When the close of the times draws nigh, a great prophet shall be sent from God to turn men to the knowledge of God, and he shall receive the power of doing wonderful things. Wherever men shall not hear him, he will shut up the heaven, and cause it to withhold its rains; he will turn their water into blood, and torment them with thirst and hunger; and if any one shall endeavour to injure him, fire shall come forth out of his mouth, and shall burn that man. By these prodigies and powers he shall turn many to the worship of God; and when his works shall be accomplished, another king shall arise out of Syria, born from an evil spirit, the overthrower and destroyer of the human race, who shall destroy that which is left by the former evil, together with himself. He shall fight against the prophet of God, and shall overcome, and slay him, and shall suffer him to lie unburied; but after the third day he shall come to life again; and while all look on and wonder, he shall be caught up into heaven. But that king will not only be most disgraceful in himself, but he will also be a prophet of lies; and he will constitute and call himself God, and will order himself to be worshipped as the Son of God; and power will be given him to do signs and wonders, by the sight of which he may entice men to adore him. He will command fire to come down from heaven, and the sun to stand and leave his course, and an image to speak; and these things shall be done at his word, –by which miracles many even of the wise shall be enticed by him. Then he will attempt to destroy the temple of God, and persecute the righteous people; and there will be distress and tribulation? such as there never has been from the beginning of the world.[13]

Since Aune has meticulously analysed the agreements with Revelation 11 a detailed comparison does not have to be undertaken here.[14] What should be established here is the relation between the two texts under discussion. Is Aune correct in regarding the *Oracle of Hystaspes* as the ultimate source for both Revelation 11 and Lactantius' *Divine Institutes*?

There are reasons to differ from Aune's choice. Several early Christian authors mention the *Oracle of Hystaspes*, but there is no certainty as to the date of the writing.[15] Lactantius' reference dates to the early fourth century, and the earliest mention of the text, in Justin's *Apology*, does not contain the passage relevant to our problem. This means that we can in no way be certain as to the date of the passage quoted in translation above.

With regard to the origin of the *Oracle of Hystaspes* some important information can be retrieved from Justin. He mentions Hystaspes together with the Sibylla, and this indicates the problems we have to face when

[13] Translation *ANF* 7.

[14] Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 590-3.

[15] H. Windisch, *Die Orakel des Hystaspes* (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, afd. Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks 28/3; Amsterdam: KNAW, 1929) 26-43 discusses the Christian authors who mention Hystaspes' oracle: Justin Martyr, Clement, and the Theosophy, and treats Lactantius and his sources on 44-95. Windisch did conclude to a syncretistic origin of the *Oracle*, but also stated a Christian redaction of it. As in 1929 many uncertainties still surround Hystaspes and his oracle.

using the Oracle as an explanation for Revelation 11.[16] The collection of Sibylline Oracles, as we now have it, evidently consists of Jewish as well as Christian parts.[17] These texts were written in the Graeco-Roman period probably to lend credibility to Jewish and Christian views by using the guise of a pagan genre. Justin's mention of Hystaspes puts his Oracle under the suspicion that something similar has happened here: there is no way of knowing whether or not this text was reworked to better fit the Jewish or Christian context in which it functioned. Furthermore, we cannot in any way be certain that a quotation of a fourth-century Christian scholar genuinely refers to a pagan text antedating the Christian era.[18] In other words, Aune's decision is dangerous from a methodological point of view. We will seriously have to reckon with the possibility of a reverse process. Methodologically it is safer to start from the idea that the older text has influenced the younger. In this case, Lactantius' description of the *Oracle of Hystaspes* is still an intriguing text, which calls for further study, but it cannot be identified as a source for Revelation 11.

c. Elijah and Moses as Prophetic Figures

How should we then account for the two witnesses in Revelation 11 if we cannot see them as an adaptation of the prophet mentioned in the *Oracle of Hystaspes*? Although Elijah and Moses are often regarded as a fixed pair, a closer look at Jewish literature of the Second Temple period points out that they are not explicitly mentioned as such. In fact, the earliest text to describe these two persons from Israel's past as a couple is Mark 9:2-8. That pericope contains the Transfiguration scene, and mentions Elijah and Moses as the two persons who miraculously appear in order to have a conversation with Jesus. The elaboration of this Markan passage by Matthew and Luke does not change the picture of these two figures much. Matthew adds little detail, and Luke mentions the subject of their conversation: they talk about Jesus' approaching end (ἔξοδος). It is obviously worth the effort to briefly look into this synoptic tradition and its backgrounds in order to obtain

[16] See Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 44.12. Windisch, *Orakel*, 32, concludes on the basis of Justin's mention of Hystaspes and the Sibylle "dass Hystaspes ebenso allgemein bekannt und allgemein gefurchtet war, wie die Sibyllinen und die prophetischen Schriften".

[17] On the origin, use, and tradition of *Sibylline Oracles* see R. Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles and its Social Setting with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (SVTP 17; Leiden: Brill, 2003) esp. 65-123.

[18] W.C. van Unnik, "Hystaspes", in *RGG*[3] III, 507-8, was very certain that only Clement used an adapted version, whereas Lactantius would have read from the original text: "Lactantius hat das Buch in seiner ursprünglichen Form vor sich gehabt. Clemens (apokryphes Pauluszitat!) und die 'Theosophie' scheinen es in einer christianisierten Fassung gelesen zu haben, in der die Erscheinung des Sohnes Gottes und sein Sieg beschrieben waren". Unfortunately, Van Unnik's observation on Lactantius is somewhat optimistic. This view is no longer expressed in *RGG*[4] III, 1984 (K. Rudolph).

some clarity in regard to the mysterious two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11.

The first thing to note in the description of Moses and Elijah in Mark 9 is that, although they seem to form a pair in that pericope, they are not introduced as such. In 9:4 they are introduced with Elijah as the primus and Moses as the secundus: ὤφθη αὐτοῖς Ἠλίας σὺν Μωϋσεῖ. Peter's reaction in 9:5 inverts the order when he speaks of "booths", "one for you (= Jesus), one for Moses and one for Elijah". This inversion of the sequence has led commentators to assume that the oral tradition on which this story is built mentioned Moses as the most important one, whereas Mark inserted Elijah for obvious redactional purposes (cf. the mention of Elijah in Mark 8:28 and 9:11-13).[19] If this reconstruction is correct, the pair of Moses and Elijah Mark originates in the redaction of the gospel, which would obviously account for the fact that there are no parallels that explicitly describe the two figures as a couple.

The fact that these two prophets of old come together in Mark should be understood against the background of their possible eschatological appearance. The context in Mark (cf. above) points out that for the redactor of the gospel the expectation of a coming of Elijah was real and vivid. This expectation is first mentioned in Mal 3:22-24, in combination with an admonition to keep the Mosaic Law. The fact that the expectation of Elijah's eschatological advent was not merely restricted to Malachi is evident from Sir 48:1-11. There, Malachi's prophecy of Elijah is apparently taken up in 48:10: "At the appointed time, it is written, you (= Elijah; LP) are destined to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury, to turn the hearts of parents to their children and to restore the tribes of Jacob" (NRSV).[20] Later Rabbinic texts point out that this idea indeed remained alive in Jewish circles.[21] But what about Moses? Malachi speaks of his Law, but was there any expectation about an eschatological coming of Moses himself?

Several passages in the gospels imply that there was indeed some kind of expectation of a "prophet like Moses". In Mark 9:7 the words ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ echo the instruction of Moses in LXX Deut 18:15. There, Moses announces the coming of a prophet like himself: "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall

[19] See e.g. J. Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus (Mk 8,27-16,20)* (EKKNT 2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag; Zürich: Benzinger, 1979) 30-2. This interpretation eventually goes back to D.F. Strauss.

[20] In Greek: ὁ καταγραφεὶς ἐν ἐλεγμοῖς εἰς καιροὺς κοπάσαι ὀργὴν πρὸ θυμοῦ ἐπιστρεψαι καρδίαν πατρὸς πρὸς υἱὸν και καταστῆσαι φυλὰς Ιακωβ.

[21] See e.g. C.G. Montefiore & H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974) 256-7. See also "Elijah", in *EncJud* 6, 632-8. For the eschatological appearance of Elijah together with Moses, see the texts mentioned on col. 638: *t. Sotah* 4:7; *t. 'Ed.* 3:4; *b. Sotah* 13a; *y. Sanh.* 10:1, 28a; *Exod. Rab.* 44:1; *Num. Rab.* 18:12; *Lam. Rab.* 1:2, no. 23.

heed such a prophet" (NRSV). The final words are translated in the LXX as αὐτοῦ ἀκούσεσθε. The textual history of Mark 9:7 shows that the words ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ have been inverted in a number of manuscripts,[22] which must be an assimilation to the LXX text of Deut. 18:15.

The influence of Deut 18:15 on Mark 9:7 is by no means an exception. There are more references to this expectation of a Moses-like prophet. Also Mark 8:28 (εἷς τῶν προφητῶν) may refer to this expectation, even if that cannot be shown. The prophecy of Deut 18:15 is taken up by Peter in his speech in Acts 3:22, and also Stephen refers to this verse in Acts 7:37.

That the verses mentioned do not reflect a Christian invention of "a prophet like Moses", but rather a Jewish tradition, is shown by the writings of Qumran. 4Q175 (*4QTestimonia*) is a collection of texts that apparently prophesy three eschatological agents who will act on behalf of God, and one antagonist who will represent Belial. In lines 5-8 the text of Deut 18:18-19 is taken up. Its context shows that the verses were interpreted as an eschatological prediction. The same phenomenon occurs in 4Q158 (*4QReworked Pentateuch*[a]) which in fragment 6 contains Exod 20:19-21 of the Samaritan Pentateuch. This Samaritan version of Exodus contains an insertion of Deut 18:18-19, thereby proving that the "Moses-like" prophet was indeed the subject of (eschatological) speculations.[23]

In their study of popular movements in the first century CE Richard Horsley and John Hanson issued a warning against any over-interpretation of such evidence as found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament itself: "Despite these striking texts (Deut 18:18 and Isa 61:1-2, 8; LP), there is little evidence that expectations of an eschatological prophet were very prominent in Jewish society".[24] Generally speaking, they are correct, but the case of Theudas does confirm that some kind of expectation of a Moses-like prophet was indeed alive. Such a tradition must have shaped Theudas' actions: Josephus points out that Theudas went down to the Jordan river in order to divide the water.[25] This action would have been totally pointless if Theudas would have instructed his followers to leave the Judean country and head for Perea, Nabatea or the Decapolis. In stead, he must have tried to symbolically re-enter the Holy Land in order to reclaim it. Such a symbolic action is only understandable if it was modelled after the example of Moses who is the only person in Jewish tradition of whom it is said that he divided the waters of the sea in order to cross it (Exod 14:16).

[22] A $f^{1,13}$, the Latin mss. b f ff^2 q and the Syriac tradition.

[23] Described by E. Tov, "4QReworked Pentateuch: A Synopsis of Its Contents", *RevQ* 16/64 (1995) 647-53, esp. 649.

[24] R.A. Horsley & J.S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs. Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1999 [= 1985]) 148-9.

[25] See Josephus, *Ant.* 20.5.1 (97-98). Theudas is also mentioned by Luke, though obviously in an anachronistic description, in Acts 5:36.

The evidence presented above points out that in the first century CE there was indeed something of an expectation of the eschatological coming of Elijah and also some idea of the coming of a prophet like Moses. In both cases we have to be very careful not to jump to conclusions as though these expectations were wide-spread.[26] But nevertheless they must have been there.

On the basis of the previous conclusion we will have to ask whether the combination of the two eschatological prophets, Elijah and Moses, is a Christian invention or not.[27] The evidence from Mark does point in that direction, but what about Revelation 11?

Unfortunately, we cannot draw any firm conclusions on the evidence in the chapter under discussion here. The author refers to the two witnesses in a manner that indicates that his audience would have known these two characters.[28] He identifies them as the two olive-trees and the two lampstands standing in front of the Lord of the entire earth. Hereby John identifies the two witnesses as the "two sons of oil" mentioned in Zechariah 4. But we can by no means be certain that the identification of these two witnesses in Zechariah 4 with the characteristics of Moses and Elijah actually predated the Book of Revelation. It is better again to err at the side of caution and regard this specific combination of characteristics as an invention by John of Patmos. Throughout his book he adapts existing images and expectations to a new context by creating new combinations, and this is exactly what he does in the case of the two witnesses. Apparently John leaned upon an existing identification of Moses and Elijah as the two prime eschatological witnesses, combined that tradition with an interpretation of Zechariah 4 as well as a number of other elements, and eventually came up with the scene as described in Revelation 11.

It follows from the reconstruction made so far that the two witnesses symbolically represent the Christ-movement. This representation of a movement as a whole by two prophetic witnesses is not as strange as it might seem. The second Beast of Revelation 13, for instance, symbolically represents the priesthood of the imperial cults in Asia Minor.[29] Since the first Beast symbolises the power of the Roman Empire and its Emperor,[30] the two witnesses should probably also refer to an element in John's day:

[26] For a cautious, recent discussion of eschatological figures in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Géza G. Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet. Positive Eschatological Protagonists of the Qumran Library* (STDJ 47; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003).

[27] For a recent suggestion that in the Qumran texts Elijah is the eschatological priest and Moses the eschatological prophet, see John C. Poirier, "The Endtime Return of Elijah and Moses at Qumran", *DSD* 10 (2003) 221-42.

[28] Also observed by Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 610.

[29] See Lietaert Peerbolte, *Antecedents of Antichrist*, 142-53.

[30] The Beast mentioned in Revelation 11 is no doubt the same Beast as that mentioned in 13:1-10.

the movement as a whole. The number of two witnesses may not only depend upon the exegetical tradition of Zechariah, but has probably also been influenced by the legal rule of Deut 17:16 and 19:15 ("On the evidence of two or three witnesses the death sentence shall be executed"; Deut 17:16, NRSV).[31] Both passages state that a case will stand at the testimony of two or three witnesses. It is probably not by accident that 11QT[a] LXI 6-7 refers to this rule immediately after mentioning the criterion to distinguish between a true and a false prophet (11QT[a] LXI 1-5 refers to Deut 18:18-22). It is very probable that the number of two witnesses should be accounted for against this background: a testimony by two witnesses at the same time must be trustworthy.

The fact that the identity of the two witnesses is that of two prophetic figures very much coincides with John's introduction of his book as a prophetic book and his view of the Christ-movement as a prophetic movement. For his depiction of the two witnesses John is heavily indebted to earlier traditions on Moses and Elijah, which he combined with Zechariah 4 to create a new imagery. The two witnesses share in their Lord's fate, die in the city where he was killed, and are resurrected again. Seen from this perspective Revelation 11 describes the Christ-movement as a prophetic movement that has to share in the fate of its Lord.[32]

2. The City Spiritually Called Sodom and Egypt

Having seen that John adapted traditions on Moses and Elijah and moulded them into a symbolic representation of the Christ-movement, we should now ask what the meaning is of his description of the city where they die. This city is identified as "the holy city" (Rev 11:2) and the city "where also their Lord has been crucified" (11:8; ὅπου καὶ ὁ κύριος αὐτῶν ἐσταυρώθη).[33] As said above, this leaves only one option open for the identification of the city mentioned: John refers to Jerusalem.

The only other city that the town of 11:8 has been identified with by commentators of the Book of Revelation is the city of Rome.[34] This inter-

[31] This legal practice also influenced the early Christian missionary movement, since it used to send out preachers in couples of two; cf. e.g. Mark 6:6; for various indications in Paul's letters see L.J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary* (CBET 34; Leuven, Paris, Dudley MA: Peeters, 2003) 189.

[32] It is remarkable that 11:8 contains the only mention of the κύριος in the Book of Revelation that expressly describes Christ, and does not refer to God on His throne.

[33] According to R.H. Charles and many critics of the nineteenth century, these words form an interpolation by a later scribe. See Charles, *The Revelation of St. John* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920) vol. 1, 287: "generally admitted by critics to be a later addition".

[34] G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 592-3, mentions five different interpretations of "the city" in 11:8 given in the course of history: 1) Rome; 2) Jerusalem in general; 3) the unbelieving Jerusalem; 4) the

pretation builds on the identification of the two witnesses with Peter and Paul. Both of them suffered martyrdom in Rome, and therefore that must be the city referred to in Revelation 11. The clause "where also their Lord has been crucified" would then be a symbolic reference: in the end it was Rome that killed Christ by condemning him to be crucified. However, this alternative option is highly speculative, and since the account of the two witnesses does not intend to depict the deaths of Peter and Paul at Rome, there is no link to Rome at all in Revelation 11. The mention of this city as "the great city" in 11:2 does not automatically identify this town as Babylon, that is mentioned elsewhere with these words (16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21).

As soon as the identification with Jerusalem is made, the purport of the words "spiritually called Sodom and Egypt" calls for our attention. What can be the meaning of this phrase?

a. "Spiritually"

Modern translations render the adverb πνευματικῶς with a number of words: the Revised Standard Version uses "allegorically", the King James Version "spiritually", the New International Version "figuratively", and the New Revised Standard Version "prophetically". Luther uses the word "geistlich" (spiritually), and Louis Segond "dans un sens spirituel" (in a spiritual sense). Dutch translations choose for "symbolically", "spiritually" or "in a figurative manner".[35] The fifth century lexicographer Hesychius uses the word πνευματικῶς as an equivalent for μυστικῶς.[36] This option seems to capture a sense of secrecy and hidden meaning. The early versiones translate the word as "spiritually" (cf. Vulgate: *spiritaliter*; Syriac: *ruḥana'it*). Given these testimonies the word πνευματικῶς should be taken to refer to a secret, hidden meaning of the word it defines. Therefore its meaning in the context under discussion here is, that it indicates the deeper meaning of the epithets

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antagonistic world; and 5) the apostate church. He correctly observes that "ὅπου ... elsewhere in the Apocalypse ... never introduces literal, but always symbolic, spiritual geography". Given Beale's arguments it is probable that the reference to Jerusalem in 11:8 turns that town itself into a symbol too. According to G.B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) 138, the conclusion is plain: "The city is Rome". Caird explains that "the city limits of Rome extended from the Euphrates to the Pillars of Hercules and from the North Sea to the Sahara Desert". For a brief discussion of Rome as the identity of the town mentioned in 11:8, see also E. Allo, *Saint Jean: L'Apocalypse* (Paris: Gabalda, 1933) 152-3. With regard to the possible identification of this city as Rome, see the classical comment of W. Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906) 321: "Wenn der Apokalyptiker hier Rom gemeint hätte, so hätte er das unbedingt sagen müssen".

[35] Respectively "symbolisch" (Willibrordvertaling 1995), "geestelijk" (Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap 1951, "in figuurlijke zin" (Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling, Werk in uitvoering).

[36] K. Latte (ed.), *Hesychii Alexandrini Lexicon* (2 vols.; Munksgaard; Hauniae, 1953, 1966).

"Sodom" and "Egypt". These designations clearly refer to the character of the city mentioned, not to its name.

b. "Sodom" and "Egypt"

As a result of the previous observations, the characterisation of Jerusalem as "Sodom" and "Egypt" calls for a further clarification. What does John express by using these identifications?

Sodom

To start with the latter question: early Christian literature mentions Sodom, with and without Gomorrah, as a paradigmatic example of sinful behaviour. Jesus, for example, refers to Sodom in a logion in Q 10:12 (= Matt 10:15, which adds "the country of" and "Gomorrah") when he discusses the fate of a city that will not respond to the preaching of the commissioned disciples: the Judgment Day will be more pleasant for Sodom (Luke) or "the country of Sodom and Gomorrah" (Matthew) than for this city.[37] A similar connection between the Day of Judgment and the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah is mentioned in 2 Pet 2:6, where the destruction of these two towns is regarded as an "example to the ungodly of the coming events" (ὑπόδειγμα μελλόντων ἀσεβέ[σ]ιν τεθεικώς). Similarly Paul refers to Isaiah's description of the two cities in Rom 9:29 (= Isa 1:9). The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah "and the surrounding cities" is also mentioned as an example in Jude 7. That verse explicitly states that it was the sexual misconduct of their inhabitants that caused the cities' downfall and destruction. This specific reputation goes back to the account in Gen 19:4-11, the narrative about Lot and his family living in Sodom.

The bad sexual reputation of especially Sodom is also mentioned in contemporary Jewish sources. *Jub.* 16:5-6, for instance, speaks of this characteristic as it interprets the fate of "Sodom and Gomorrah, Zeboim and all the Jordan region". After referring to their destruction the narrator adds the warning: "And God will execute a like judgement on places where men imitate the vices of the Sodomites, just as he judged Sodom".[38] It is remarkable that this warning only refers to Sodom, not to Gomorrah, Zeboim or the Jordan region.

A similar verdict on Sodom is given in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, which in its present form represents an early Christian writing. In *T. Naph.* 3:4 the sin of Sodom is described as an attempt to invert the cosmic order. Naphtali exhorts his sons: "you have recognized in the vault of heaven, in the earth, and in the sea, and in all created things, the Lord

[37] A comparable *logion* is found in Matt 11:24.

[38] Translation from R.H. Charles & C. Rabin, in H.F.D. Sparks (ed.), *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

who made them all, so that you should not become like Sodom which changed the order of its nature".[39]

It is remarkable that both *Jubilees* and the *Testament of Naphtali* refer to Sodom in combination with the history of the Watchers. The combination of these stories functions as an example of what happens when men act contrary to nature. Due to this reputation Sodom became a well-known example of ungodly behaviour (see e.g. Matt 11:23 and Luke 17:29).

The examples mentioned point out that Sodom was indeed known for its inversion of nature, to such an extent even that it was referred to as an example also in contexts in which its sexual reputation was unimportant. Since this element of sexual behaviour is not mentioned in Rev 11:8 either, the assumption lies at hand that in that verse Sodom is used as a the ultimate example of sin-city: a sinful town par excellence. The exceptional point in the present context is therefore the combination with Egypt. In order to understand that specific combination, we should now turn to Egypt as a symbol in early Christianity.

Egypt

It appears that "Egypt" as a symbol does not play a very important part in early Christian literature. Matthew, for example, is the only gospel that mentions the country, and there it is evidently introduced to create a mirror-story on Jesus to reflect Moses' childhood in Egypt (Matt 2:13-19).[40]

It is remarkable to see how often Egypt is mentioned in the farewell speech of Stephen in Acts 7.[41] Stephen first describes how Joseph rose to a prominent position at the Egyptian court (7:9-16), and then continues with the oppression that came upon Israel when a new pharaoh came who had not known Joseph (7:17-18). This leads to God's calling of Moses, and the subsequent freeing of his people (7:19-43). In the whole of Stephen's sermon it appears that this episode in Egypt is fundamental for his understanding of God's loyalty and his salvation. Egypt is evidently described in a historicising manner, first from a neutral perspective, and then as the country of the oppressor.

This picture of Egypt is also found in the epistle to the Hebrews. There, Egypt refers to the most basic experience of oppression and salvation in Israel's history (see Heb 3:16; 8:9; 11:26-27), and the letter of Jude mentions the same event in similar fashion (Jude 5).

[39] Translation from M. de Jonge, in Sparks (ed.), *The Apocryphal Old Testament*.

[40] Cf. J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, vol. I (HKNT; Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1986) 48, who compares the pericope with the haggadah on Moses as found in Josephus, *Ant.* 20.10.1 (225-230).

[41] Egypt is mentioned in Acts 2:10; 7:9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 34, 36, 39, 40; 13:17.

Closer study points out that the designation "Egypt" is not used for Jerusalem, but also that there are several texts in which Egypt is used as a metaphor for "the world". Clement, in book I of his *Stromata*, gives a retelling of the story of Abram and Hagar, in which he concludes that it was necessary that wisdom should first enter the secular world (= Egypt) before it was to encounter the world God had set apart for her:

> And Scripture will afford a testimony to what has been said in what follows. Sarah was at one time barren, being Abraham's wife. Sarah having no child, assigned her maid, by name Hagar, the Egyptian, to Abraham, in order to get children. Wisdom, therefore, who dwells with the man of faith (and Abraham was reckoned faithful and righteous), was still barren and without child in that generation, not having brought forth to Abraham aught allied to virtue. And she, as was proper, thought that he, being now in the time of progress, should have intercourse with secular culture first (by Egyptian the world is designated figuratively); and afterwards should approach to her according to divine providence, and beget Isaac.[42]

An allegorical exegesis of the meaning of Egypt in the Genesis narrative is also frequently found in the writings of Philo. Often Philo explains "Egypt" as a symbol for "the body", which is treated with less than positive regard. In *Migr.* 27.151, for example, Philo describes the task of the wise man who devotes himself to divine contemplation. He should

> ... leave Egypt, that is to say, the whole of the district connected with the body, being anxious to unlearn our subjection to the passions, in accordance with the language and precepts of the prophet Moses ...[43]

Also in *Conf.* 17.81, Philo refers to Egypt as the country of the body and its passions, a place that the wise man should flee:

> But to him who was self-taught the following injunction of scripture was given, "Do not go down," says the scripture, "to Egypt," that is to say to passion; "but dwell in this land, land which I will tell thee of," (Gen 26:9) namely, in the incorporeal wisdom which cannot be pointed out to the eye; and be a sojourner in this land, the substance which can be pointed out and appreciated by the external sense.[44]

These passages point out that Philo often refers to Egypt as the land of corporeal passions, a dangerous place for the wise and the pious. Whereas Clement refers to Egypt as the "secular world", Philo uses the image of Egypt as an expression of the body and its temptations. In both cases Egypt has a negative connotation, although the content widely differs. Both symbolisms do refer to Egypt as a negative place, and in both cases Egypt functions as a symbol for the place the wise man should shun.

[42] Clement, *Strom.* 1.5, translation in *ANF* 2.
[43] Translation from F.H. Colson & G.H. Whitaker, LCL.
[44] Translation from F.H. Colson & G.H. Whitaker, LCL.

If we go further back in time, the negative view of Egypt as a place of seduction appears to be closely connected to the description of Egypt found in *Joseph and Aseneth*.[45] In this writing Egypt functions as the implicit context of the narrative, and the religion of Egypt is depicted in a pejorative manner. In the opening section of the story the tower is described, that Pentephres had erected for Aseneth. The first of her ten chambers was dedicated to the Egyptian gods:

> And the first chamber was big and splendid, paved with purple stones, and its walls were faced with colored and precious stones, and the ceiling of that chamber was of god. And within that chamber gods of the Egyptians who were without number were fixed to the walls, (even gods) of gold and silver. (*Jos. Asen.* 2:2)[46]

The jewellery Aseneth wears is dedicated to these gods (3:10). When Aseneth meets Joseph and repents her idolatry, she first puts on a mourner's dress (10:11-12), and then casts out all her idols:

> And Aseneth hurried and took all her gods that were in her chamber, the ones of gold and silver who were without number, and ground them to pieces, and threw all the idols of the Egyptians through the window looking north from her upper floor to beggars and needy (persons). And Aseneth took her royal dinner and the fatlings and the fish and the flesh of the heifer and all the sacrifices of her gods and the vessels of their wine of libation and threw everything through the window looking north, and gave everything to the strange dogs. For Aseneth said to herself, "By no means must my dogs eat from my dinner and from the sacrifice of the idols, but let the strange dogs eat those". (*Jos. Asen.* 10:14)

In her prayer to God she confesses that "My mouth is defiled from the sacrifices of the idols and from the tables of the gods of the Egyptians" (12:5). In this writing the land of Egypt and the idols revered there are obviously closely intertwined. Again, Egypt is presented in a negative manner, this time as an idolatrous country. Aseneth can only serve the true and living God after casting out the Egyptian idols she formerly adhered to.

The three examples mentioned chronologically surround the Book of Revelation: *Joseph and Aseneth* predates John's apocalypse by at least a century, Philo's writings pre-date it by a number of decades, and Clement post-dates it by approximately a century. In all three these cases the country of Egypt is depicted in a negative fashion or even referred to symbolically as a place to shun. This negative verdict on Egypt appears to be linked up to its riches and its polytheism. Neither of these elements can be traced in Revelation 11, but the ungodly and sinful character of Egypt presupposed

[45] The most recent study is S. Docherty, "*Joseph and Aseneth*: Rewritten Bible or Narrative Expansion?", *JSJ* 35 (2004) 27-48.

[46] Translation from C. Burchard, in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2 (New York [etc]: Doubleday, 1985).

by Clement, Philo, and the author of *Joseph and Aseneth* does support the conclusion that Egypt is used more or less as a synonym to Sodom: as a pejorative designation of the ungodly character of the city referred to.

On the basis of the observations made so far, we should conclude that John refers to the city in which the two witnesses will die by labelling that city as sinful, oppressive, corrupted, and idolatrous: Sodom and Egypt. But how could he use these designations for Jerusalem and what message does this reference entail? It is to these questions the final paragraph of this contribution turns.

c. Sodom en Egypt as labels for Jerusalem

The identification of Jerusalem as Sodom has its roots in prophetic writings. An implicit equation of these two towns is found in Isa 1:9-10. In that passage the prophet appeals to the leaders of the city, and speaks to them as the leaders of Sodom and the people of Gomorrah: "If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we would have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah. Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!" (NRSV). Also Jeremiah makes a comparison with Sodom when he defames the prophets of Jerusalem: "all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like Gomorrah" (Jer 23:14 NRSV). And in Ezekiel 16 a long exposition on the sinful abominations of Jerusalem is given in which the city's deeds are compared with those of Sodom: "As I live, says the Lord GOD, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done" (Ezek 16:48 NRSV). In later times the Syrian Ephrem remembers these words and gives his view on the relation between the two cities: "Sodom is justified by Jerusalem as the prophet Ezekiel has said".[47]

The words of Isaiah also appear to have been remembered at the turn of the first and second centuries CE. The composite writing *Ascension of Isaiah* refers to the comparison of Jerusalem and Sodom. The passage narrates how Hezekiah's servants accused Isaiah and the prophets with him of prophesying against Jerusalem: "Isaiah himself has said to them, I see more than the prophet Moses. For Moses said, No man can see God and live; but Isaiah said, I have seen God, and behold I am still alive! You must know, o king, that he is a liar. Furthermore, he has called Jerusalem Sodom and addressed the princes of Judah and Jerusalem as people of Gomorrah".[48]

[47] Ephraem Syrus, *De Paenitentia* 96.9: ἐδικαιώθη Σόδομα ἀπὸ Ἰερουσαλήμ ὡς εἶπεν ὁ προφήτης Ἰεζεκιήλ. See J.S. Assemani, *Sancti patris nostri Ephraem Syri opera omnia*, vol. I (Rome, 1732).

[48] *Ascen. Isa.* 3:8-10; cf. the Greek version: και αυτός Ἡσαίας εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, βλέπω πλέον Μωυση του προφήτου. εἶπεν γὰρ Μωυσης ὅτι οὐκ οψεται ἄνθρωπος τὸν θ(εὸ)ν καὶ ζήσεται, Ἡσαίας δὲ εἶπεν εἶδον τὸν (θεὸν) κ(α)ὶ ἰδοὺ ζω. βασι(λ)εῦ (γι)νω[σ]κε ὅτι ψευδή(ς) ἐστιν και την Ἰ(ε)ρουσαλὴμ Σόδο(μ)α ἐκάλεσεν, κ(αὶ τους) ἀρχοντα(ς Ἰούδα) και Ἰσραήλ

As the texts mentioned point out, the comparison of Sodom and Jerusalem not only has its roots in writings of the prophets of old, it was also still remembered by the time John wrote the Book of Revelation. The use of this specific designation in combination with "Egypt" within this specific writing identifies the city of Jerusalem as a city of corruption, idolatry, and oppression.

One passage, to which the description in Revelation 11 is totally unrelated, does mention the combination of Sodom and Egypt. In Wis 19:15-17 an implicit reference to the story of Lot in Sodom is made in a passage that describes how sinners receive punishment from God. This theme is elaborated by a reference to the plagues with which God had struck Egypt (Wis 19:6-14). The sin the Egyptians committed is mentioned: they "made slaves of guests who were their benefactors" (19:14; NRSV). This fact links the description of Egypt to the reference to the Sodom-episode in 19:15-17. Apparently, the anonymous author of Wisdom connected Sodom and Egypt through the link of maltreatment of guests, an awful sin in his eyes. There can hardly be any doubt that also for the author of Wisdom the combination of Sodom and Egypt is a combination of archetypical evil and sin.

3. Jerusalem as the Stage for the Christ-Movement

The texts mentioned point out that there was a tradition of identifying Jerusalem with Sodom, and that Sodom and Egypt represent the symbols of gentile sin par excellence. But how should we understand the description of Jerusalem in these terms as the place for the two witnesses to act?

In the above it was argued that the city described can be no other than Jerusalem. John obviously characterises Jerusalem by the symbols Sodom and Egypt as a city polluted by gentile sins. The situation reflected here is therefore that of the Roman domination of Jerusalem. The Beast from the abyss symbolically represents the Roman Empire, and the fact that it is described as defeating the two witnesses in the holy city must somehow refer to the struggle of the Christ-movement with the ungodly Roman culture. The two witnesses evidently symbolise the movement as a whole, and it is their task to prophesy.[49] This is exactly what John himself is doing with his "book of prophecy" (Rev 22:7, 10, 18). The city of Jerusalem,

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(λαὸν Γο)μόρρας πρ(οσηγό)ρευσεν. See B.P. Grenfell & A.S. Hunt, *The Amherst Papyri being an Account of the Greek Papyri in the Collection of Lord Amherst of Hackney. I The Ascension of Isaiah and Other Theological Fragments* (London: 1900) 9.

[49] John evidently mentions the Christ-movement as a prophetic movement: the testimony on Jesus equals the Spirit of prophecy (Rev 19:10).

which is addressed as Sodom and Egypt, itself becomes a symbol for the situation in which the Christ-movement has to prophesy.[50]

Remarkably enough the theme of Jerusalem is taken up again in the vision of the new heaven and the new earth in Rev 21:9-22:5. There the New Jerusalem appears without a temple, because God will dwell among the people. Here, in Revelation 11, John himself is instructed with words reminiscent of Ezekiel to measure the temple. Seen from this perspective the account of the two witnesses in the town called Sodom and Egypt describes the counter-image of the New Jerusalem descending from heaven. The real Jerusalem of John's day was dominated by Gentiles and served as a stage for the Christ-movement to die on. The heavenly Jerusalem that will arrive in the end will set things straight. The temple of the real Jerusalem formed the background to the persecution of followers of Christ, whereas the New Jerusalem will no longer need a temple. But can we infer on the basis of this description that there was something like a persecution of followers of Christ in Jerusalem? In other words: does the author describe an actual event or situation from his day?

It would be very tempting to jump to such a historical conclusion, but the evidence does not allow us to do that. There is no information on the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem to match the data in Revelation 11, and solely on the basis of this description we cannot conclude to an event like that. It is therefore safer to interpret this description as an expression of the identity of the movement. In 12:17 the movement is referred to as "those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus" (NRSV). For this reason it is very likely that the Book of Revelation should be situated in an environment of Jewish Christ-followers, who did "keep the commandments of God", i.e. abide the Mosaic Law.[51] Hence any interpretation of Revelation 11 should regard the reference to Jerusalem in this chapter as an expression of the identity of the movement the author reckoned himself to belong to: a movement that prophetically proclaimed Christ in the heart of Judaism, dominated and ruled as that was by ungodly Gentiles.[52] The fact that the town in which John has the two witnesses act

[50] H.B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968 = London, 1907) 138, also considers the symbolism of the passage to consist of several layers, but he decided that the reference is ultimately to Rome: "In the ultimate meaning of the symbols, the City is doubless not Jerusalem, but Rome, the persecutor of the Saints, the mystic Sodom and Egypt of the early centuries, where Christ was crucified afresh in His Saints".

[51] Aune's decision to limit these words to the "*ethical* requirements of the Torah" is unnecessarily limited and interprets the Book of Revelation too much from a Pauline point of view; cf. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, "Excursus 12B", 710-2.

[52] See e.g. A. Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964) 133: "The state of God's Israel in the world after A.D. 70 is typified by a Jerusalem in which a heathen multitude tramples the old sanctities, while two prophetic voices, in mutual confirmation, maintain the cause of God".

is mentioned as "Sodom and Egypt" no doubt indicates the ungodly and oppressive character of the circumstances in which John lived. Already Oecumenius described these elements, ungodliness and oppression, in his eleventh century commentary on the Book of Revelation:

> He spiritually, not physically, calls Jerusalem Sodom, because of the violence and evil it once committed, and Egypt, since Jerusalem enslaved and maltreated the servants of Christ, just like Egypt did to Israel, where also their, he says, Lord, that is: the Lord of the two witnesses, was crucified.[53]

John evidently took two negative epithets from the traditional prophetic language of Israel and applied them to Jerusalem as the stage for the Christ-movement to act upon. He thus created a double symbolism in which Jerusalem, dominated by gentile oppressors, stands for the context of John's prophetic Christ-movement. According to John, this movement had to testify on Christ in Jerusalem, i.e. the heart of Judaism.

[53] Oecumenius, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin* 6.4: τὴν δέ γε Ἱερουσαλὴμ πνευματικῶς, οὐ γαρ παθητῶς. Σόδομα καλεῖ δια τὴν τότε ἀσέλγειαν και κακοδοξίαν, καὶ Αἴγυπτον ὡς καταδουλουμένην και αδικοῦσαν τοὺς Χριστοῦ δούλους, καθὼς ἐκείνη τὸν Ἰσραήλ, ὅπου και ὁ Κύριος, φησιν, αὐτῶν, τουτέστι των δύο μαρτύρων, ἐσταυρώθη. Taken from: M. De Groote (ed.), *Oecumenii Commentarius in Apocalypsin* (TEG 8; Leuven: Peeters, 1999) 166. These words were not new when Oecumenius wrote them down: he must have leaned upon an exegetical tradition also found in Arethas (see Migne, *PG* 106, cols. 651-2: Σόδομα, διὰ τὴν τότε ἀσέλγειαν ἐν αὐτῃ ἐσομένων Ἰουδαίων και κακονεξίαν· Αἴγυπτον, ὡς καταδουλουμένην και αδικοῦσαν τοὺς Χριστοῦ δούλους, ὡς ἐκείνη τὸν Ἰσραήλ).

SODOM AND GOMORRAH IN THE TARGUMIM

FLORENTINO GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ

Introduction

Despite its general title, my paper shall not attempt to describe the story of the two cities as retold in the Targumim. It will simply try to illuminate some differences encountered in the Aramaic translations of the biblical narrative about Sodom and Gomorrah, in the hope of showing how the biblical text was developed and transformed in the Aramaic translations. This paper will thus have the character of a collection of miniatures, small vignettes, each dealing with a different verse of the biblical narrative. It can be seen as a small triptych, with each panel depicting Gen 18:1, Gen 18:20 and Gen 18:21 respectively. But more than just portraying three stories, each panel will attempt to answer one of the following questions: 1. Who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah? 2. What were the sins of Sodom? 3. Who was Pelitit?

1. Who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah?

The Masoretic text of Genesis 18:1 starts directly with the apparition of God to Abraham. The text states straightforwardly: "And YHWH appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day" (Gen 18:1). But in the following verse (Gen 18:2) what Abraham sees are "three men (שלשה אנשים), and he ran to meet them (in plural, לקראתם)". In Gen 18:3 Abraham addresses himself to a single person "if I have found grace in your eyes (singular pronoun, בעינך), do not pass away (singular verb, תעבר)", but in 18:4 he requests that they wash (plural verb, ורחצו) their feet (plural pronoun, רגליכם). The same alternation of singular and plural forms is found in other consecutive verses of the same chapter. For example, in verse 9 the three men address Abraham, "and they said to him", (ויאמרו) but in verse 10 it is apparently God who addresses Abraham announcing that he will return and Sarah will have a son, "and he said" (ויאמר). Gen 18:22 solves this ambiguity by making clear that there are four protagonists in view, God and the three men: "And the (three) men turned their faces from there and went to Sodom, but Abraham stood yet before YHWH".

The Hebrew text thus presents a number of problems and it leaves many things unexplained.[1] When precisely did the apparition take place? The Hebrew text narrates the apparition to Abraham directly after his reference to his circumcision, but without establishing any temporal link between the two narratives, thus leaving this fundamental meeting without a precise timeframe. Why was Abraham sitting out in the heat of the day? Was he lazy and preferred to sit instead of working? Or was he slightly out of his mind, to do such a thing instead of sitting in the shade? Even more importantly, who were these three men who, in the narrative, sometimes seem to be confused with God himself?

The Aramaic translations have a ready answer to all these obvious questions, of course, and to many more, some of them rather unexpected.

The Aramaic translation of Gen 18:1 in Pseudo-Jonathan reads:[2]

> ואתגלי עלוהי יקרא דה׳ בחיזוי ממרא והוא מרע מכיבא דמהולתא
> יתיב תרע משכנא לתוקפא דיומא
> And it was revealed upon him the glory of the Lord in the vision of Mamre when, sick from the pain of the circumcision, he was sitting at the door of the tent in the strength of the day.

The answer as to why Abraham was sitting at that time of day is clear: Abraham was sick from the pain of the circumcision and consequently was unable to work. Pseudo-Jonathan is less clear concerning the timeframe because it simply uses a nominal sentence (והוא, "and he was", which I have translated by "when"), but it clearly links the narrative with the previous narrative of Genesis 17 and implies that both stories follow each other closely. That God does not appear directly to Abraham, but rather יקרא דה׳ "the glory of YHWH" is revealed to him, was to be expected, since the targumim avoid anthropomorphism. However, the transformation of באלני ממרא, "in the oaks of Mamre", into בחיזוי ממרא is more difficult to explain, though it is the usual translation in Pseudo-Jonathan of the Hebrew phrase (Gen 13:18, 14:13, etc.). בחיזוי ממרא can also be translated as "in the crossroad of Mamre",[3] which would change the locative reference (at the cross-

[1] Among the many studies dedicated to the problems of the biblical text, see, for example, W.W. Fields, *Sodom and Gomorrah. History and Motif in Biblical Narrative* (JSOTSS 231; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); R.I. Letellier, *Day in Mamre, Night in Sodom. Abraham and Lot in Gen. 18 and 19* (BIS 10; Leiden: Brill, 1995); J.A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities. Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, Early Jewish and Early Christian Traditions* (CBET 1; Kok: Kampen, 1990); T. Rudin-O'Brasky, *The Patriarch in Hebron and Sodom. A Study of the Structure and Composition of a Biblical Story* (Jerusalem: Simor, 1982) [Hebrew].

[2] According to the text edited in the *Polyglotta Matritensis*, IV: Targum Palestinense in Pentateuchum. L. 1 Genesis (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1988) 109.

[3] "Crossroad" is other possible meaning of the word חיזוי used in the Targum (see Jastrow, 442 sub חזוא).

road instead of by the oaks). I prefer to translate it as "the vision", which is the first meaning of the Aramaic word in any case, because Targum Neofiti omits, in this instance, all reference to Mamre and translates it as "the Valley of the Vision".[4] To me, this seems to imply that the apparition to Abraham had become the designation of the site itself in the Palestinian targumic tradition.

The answer as to when precisely the apparition took place is most clearly answered by one Fragment-Targum, the MS 110 in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris.[5] After quoting the beginning of Gen 18:1 in Hebrew, the manuscript continues: "At the time (בזימנא) when Abraham circumcised the flesh of his foreskin three angels were sent to him", leaving no doubt as to when the apparition happened, namely, the very same day of Abraham's circumcision.[6]

The targumim also left no doubts as to the nature of the three "men" of the biblical text. As expected, they are identified as angels, an identification most probably prompted by the biblical text itself, which (in Gen 18:22) asserts that the "men" went towards Sodom and that that "two angels" came to Sodom in the evening (on Gen 19:1).[7] Neither Neofiti nor MS 440 open the verse with a time reference but rather with the assertion that the three men were angels: "Three angels (תלתא מלאכין) were sent to our father Abraham at the time he circumcised the flesh of his foreskin".[8]

[4] Neofiti translates "the oaks of Mamre" with במישריה חזוה די בחברון, "the plain of the vision of Hebron", in Gen 13:18, and with במישרי חזוה דממרא, "the plain of the vision of Mamre", in Gen 14:13, but here only with במשרי חזוה, "the plain of the vision". The same reading is found in MS 110 במישרי חיזוה. The reading of MS 440 במישרי חזוא, could be considered as a scribal error (confusion of *waw* and *zayin*) and identical with the others, or could be translated as a geographical name: "the plain of Hazoza".

[5] According to the text edited in the *Polyglotta Matritensis*, 108.

[6] The Talmud (*b. B. Mesi'a* 86b) is even more precise: God appears to Abraham on the third day after his circumcision exactly.

[7] One of the manuscripts from Qumran cave 4, 4Q180, makes the same identification explicit. In frag. 2 ii 3-4 it is flatly asserted: "The three men [who] appear[ed to Abraha]m at the oak of Mamre are angels". Cf. *DSSSE*, 372-3, and the contribution by Tigchelaar in this volume, above, esp. 52-7.

[8] *Gen. Rab.* 50:2 explains the reason for calling them both angels and men: "[*And the two angels came to Sodom.*] Here you call them angels, whereas earlier they were termed men? Earlier, when the Shechinah was above them, they were men; but as soon as the Shechinah departed from them they assumed the form of angels. R. Levi said: To Abraham, whose [religious] strength was great, they looked like men; but to Lot they appeared as angels, because his strength was feeble. R. Hunia said: Before they performed their mission they were called men; having performed their mission, they assumed the style of angels. R. Tanhuma said: They may be likened to a man who received a governorship from the king. Before he reaches the seat of his authority, he goes like an ordinary citizen. Similarly, before they performed their mission, they are called men; having performed it, they assumed the style of angels". English translation by H. Freedman, *The Midrash Rabbah. Genesis* (London: The Soncino Press, 1977) 435.

All this is interesting, but without an apparent link to the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and consequently of no help in answering the question of who destroyed Sodom. Nevertheless, it helps us understand the following text, in which both the link and the answer are provided. The Aramaic translation of Gen 18:1 in the Targum Neofiti, needs to be quoted in full.[9]

תלתא מלאכין אשתזלחו לוות אבונן אברהם בזימנא די גזר ית בשר ערלתה
ותלתיהון] אשתלחו לתלת מילין ארום לית אפשר לחד ממלאכי מרומא
די ישתלח בידה יתיר מן חדה מילה
מלאכא קדמאה ישתלח למבשרא לאבונן אברהם די שרה ילדה לה ית יצחק
ומלאכה תניינה אשתלח למשיזבה ללוט מגו הפכתא
ומלאכה תליתאה אשתלח למיפך סדם ועמורה אדמה וצבויים
ואתגלי ממרי]ה דיי על אברהם במשרי הזוה
והוא הווה יתיב בתרע משכניה בתקפה דיומא מתחמם מן אדם גזירתיה במי]חם
יומא

Three angels were sent to our father Abraham at the time he circumcised the flesh of his foreskin. The three were sent for three things, because it is impossible for any angel from on high to be sent for more than one thing. The first angel was sent to announce to our father Abraham that Sarah would bear him Isaac; and the second angel was sent to deliver Lot from the destruction; and the third angel was sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim. And the Word of the Lord was revealed to Abraham in the Valley of the Vision as he was sitting at the door of his tent in the strength of the day, warming himself because of the blood of his circumcision in the heat of the day.[10]

Neofiti is more precise here than Pseudo-Jonathan. Since Neofiti already specified at the very beginning the "when" of the story, at the end it can explain more clearly "why" Abraham was sitting: Abraham needed to warm himself because he was bleeding after a circumcision done when he was ninety-nine years old. Neofiti consistently uses the Memra d-YHWH, "the Word of YHWH", instead of the Yiqara d-YHWH, "the Glory of YHWH", preferred by Pseudo-Jonathan, as an intermediary figure in order to emphasise the divine distance from the creatures, and, as already said, it does not mention Mamre at all, locating the "where" of the action in the Valley of the Vision. For the rest, the general tenor of this translation of Gen 18:1 is very similar to the one found in the other Palestinian targumim.[11] The surprising element is Neofiti's long preamble before the actual translation of Gen 18:1, with the explanation that the three "men" were indeed three an-

[9] According to the edition by A. Díez Macho, *MS. Neofyti 1. I: Genesis* (Madrid, Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1968) 95.

[10] English translation by M. McNamara in A. Diez Macho, *MS. Neofyti 1. I: Genesis*, 538.

[11] Except for one marginal gloss in Neofiti after the Valley of the Vision, which reads: "because of this, there was a word of prophecy from before the Lord unto Abraham the just saying ... And he (was sitting)".

gels with their peculiar individual functions explained on the basis of the principle that no angel can be sent to earth for two different tasks.

This midrashic expansion is not exclusive to Neofiti. With a few customary variants, we also find it in the Vatican Ms 440 and in MS 110 (two manuscripts of Fragment-Targum) in Gen 18:1. Pseudo-Jonathan does not have it in Gen 18:1, but does include it in the translation of Gen 18:2, although there, only Sodom and Gomorrah (and not the four cities of the plain) are mentioned,[12] and it is specified that the only angels who cannot be sent for two things are the angels דשיריתא, "of the service", i.e. the ministering angels. Pseudo-Jonathan is also explicit on the matter of these three angels being תלתא מלאכין בדמות גוברין, "three angels in the form of men", a detail missing in Neofiti in Gen 18:1 but appearing in Neofiti's translation of Gen 18:2.

This midrashic expansion of Neofiti clearly answers our question: the destruction of Sodom was realised by one of the three angels. The mention of the four cities which form the limits of Canaan in Gen 10:19 and which are the cities against which the four Kings of the North wage war in Gen 14:2, 8, is rather surprising because in the biblical narrative the destruction is explicitly restricted to Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24). This extension of the destruction to the other cities of the plain in Neofiti may have been prompted by the more general expression of destruction found in Gen 19:29: "when God destroyed the cities of the plain", which could be interpreted as "all the cities" except Zoar, preserved on account of the request of Lot (Gen 19:19-23). Or it may have been prompted by the reference to the destruction of Admah and Zeboiim in Hos 11:8. But I think it more likely that the targumist is aligning the Genesis text here with the text of Deuteronomy, where the destruction is explicitly extended to the four cities of the plain:

> And that the whole land is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor bears, nor any grass grows on it, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath (Deut 29:22)

Neofiti, and all other Palestinian targumim quoted, specify that the angel sent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah was the third one, but they do not give a name to this angel. In order to find out his name we need to cast our net wider and take a look at the rabbinic traditions on the cities' destruction.[13]

[12] Curiously, the same midrash is also repeated in the margin of Neofiti's translation of Gen 18:2, and there only Sodom is mentioned.

[13] For a discussion of the topic in mediaeval Jewish commentaries, see Y. Rachaman, "The Story of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Light of Selected Jewish Commentaries", in S.

Pirqe R. El. 25,[14] which also specifies the functions of the angels and contains many aggadoth on the destruction of the cities, does not give us the name of the angel sent to destroy the city. Neither do the loci classici on Sodom in the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Sanh.* 54b and 109a-b). But in *b. Baba Meṣi'a* we find the specific identification: the angel was Gabriel.

> Who were the three men? – Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Michael came to bring the tidings to Sarah [of Isaac's birth]; Raphael, to heal Abraham; and Gabriel, to overturn Sodom. But is it not written, And there came the two angels to Sodom at even? – Michael accompanied him to rescue Lot. [The Writ] supports this too, for it is written, And he overthrew those cities, not, and they overthrew: this proves it. (*b. B. Meṣi'a* 86b)[15]

The identification of the angel with Gabriel is clear in this text, but the details of the tradition are a little muddled. The second angel, Raphael, true to his name's etymology, is sent to heal Abraham, not to deliver Lot, as was the case in the targum, which implies that two of the angels remained with Abraham while the other one went to fulfil his mission. Hence the question derived from the clear assertion of Gen 19:1. This solution is a little clumsy however, as having Michael go with Gabriel and giving him the new mission of rescuing Lot clearly goes against the principle that one angel cannot perform two missions. But, at least, it makes clear that Michael's new mission had nothing to do with the destruction of Sodom, and was only concerned with rescuing Lot, thus the principle that two angels cannot perform one single mission is preserved. Scriptural proof is found in the use of the singular in Gen 19:25: "He overthrew those cities". Therefore it was Gabriel, and not "they", Gabriel and Michael.

The same identification can also be found in the biggest repository of rabbinic aggadah, the Genesis Rabba:

> Then the two angels came, etc. But He is at one with Himself, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth (Job 23:13). It was taught: One angel does not perform two missions, nor do two angels together perform one mission, yet you read that two [angels came to Sodom]? The fact is, however, that Michael announced his tidings [to Abraham] and departed: Gabriel was sent to overturn Sodom, and Rafael to rescue Lot; hence, Then the two angels came, etc. It is written, He sent forth upon them the fierceness of His anger, Wrath, Indignation, and Trouble, a sending of messengers of evil (Ps 78:49); yet you say, Two [Angels]! But the fact is that Michael announced his tidings and departed; Gabriel was

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Japhet (ed.), *The Bible in the Light of Its Interpreters. Sarah Kamin Memorial Volume* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1994) 463-84.

[14] G. Friedlander, *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* (The Judaic Studies Library; New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981[4]) 179-86.

[15] English translation by H. Freedman, in S. Daiches, H. Freedman & I. Epstein, *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud. Baba Mezi'a* (London: The Soncino Press, 1962) loc. cit.

sent to overturn Sodom, and Rafael to save Lot. Hence, Then the two angels came. (*Gen. Rab.* 51.2)[16]

In the commentary of the biblical narrative, which proceeds verse by verse, this passage present two objections which can be made to the expression used in Gen 19:1 on the basis of principle quoted by Neofiti and put forward in *b. B. Meṣi'a* 86b. The core of the first one is that only one angel should go Sodom, based on the והוא באחד of the biblical verse quoted (Job 23:13). The answer is that Gabriel's and Rafael's missions were two different missions, and therefore two angels were needed. The second objection, that three angels should have to go to Sodom and not two, because the three expressions of God's anger "cast upon them", which are mentioned in Ps 78:49, are understood as three angels, is answered in the same way.

If the writer of Genesis Rabba had read the targum Pseudo-Jonathan carefully, none of this complicated exegesis would have been necessary. The Aramaic translation of the Hebrew text of Gen 19:17: ויהי כהוציאם אתם החוצה, reads in Pseudo-Jonathan:

והוה באפקתהון יתהון לברא והדר חד מנהון לסדום לחבלותא
וחד אשתאר עם לוט ואמר לה ...
And when they had taken them outside, one of them returned to Sodom to destroy it, and the other remained with Lot and said to him: etc.

But then, of course, we should have been deprived of the names of the two angels, we may even have thought that the one who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah was the same God who in Gen 19:24 "rained brimstone and fire from heaven" and not the "he" who in Gen 19:25 overthrew the cities, i.e. the angel Gabriel.

2. What were the sins of Sodom

This question may seem nonsensical, particularly in view of the discussion of "sodomy" by Vandermeersch.[17] But our reading of the targumim suggests that in the earlier interpretations of the biblical story the sins that brought about the destruction of Sodom were not understood in the way our use of the words "sodomites" or "sodomy" may suggest, at least not primarily. The only possible connection between Sodom and sexual misconduct is to be found in Gen 19:5, where the people of Sodom demand that Lot give them the two men to "know" them (ונדעה). This verb is translated

[16] English translation by H. Freedman, *The Midrash Rabbah. Genesis* (London: Soncino, 1977) 433-4.

[17] See below, 149-71.

in Pseudo-Jonathan very explicitly with ונשמש, "couple with".[18] Neofiti uses the verb ונחכם, a verb which very seldom conveys the sexual connotation of the Hebrew ידע. The Hebrew verb used in the story, and the subsequent offer of Lot's two virgin daughters as sexual objects for the men of Sodom, show that the intention of the inhabitants of Sodom was to rape the man-like angels. But, as was shown by Mulder,[19] this rape has more to do with the popular misoxenia contrasted with the hospitality offered by Lot than with any sort of "sodomy". In any case, the connection between Sodom and "sodomy" is not reflected in the aggadah of the targumim, which, as we will see in the analysis of Gen 18:20, gives us another definition of the sins of Sodom.

This is less surprising than might appear at first sight. In the whole of Abraham's dialogue with God, which, as proved by Noort's contribution,[20] serves as a prologue to the story of the destruction, the contrast is between the "righteous" (צדיק) and the "wicked" (רשע), and there is no hint at all in the text to what the wickedness of the men of Sodom may have consisted of. This is not, of course, the first biblical reference to the sinfulness of Sodom. In Gen 13:13 we find: ואנשי סדם רעים וחטאים ליהוה מאד, "But the men of Sodom were wicked (רעים) and sinners (וחטאים) before the Lord exceedingly (מאד)". These two qualifications of the biblical text for the sins of Sodom are general enough to cover every sin we can imagine. But because they are two, they need to be explained. Neofiti translates:

> ועמה דסדם בישין גבר לחבריה וחייבין בגילוי עריתה ובשפיכות אדמייה
> ובפלחנא נכרייה קדם יי לחדה
>
> And the people of Sodom were evil, one towards the other, and were very guilty before the Lord of revealing (their) nakedness and of the shedding of blood[21] and of foreign worship. (*Tg. Neof. Gen* 13:13)

The wickedness of the people of Sodom is interpreted here as "being evil one towards the other", and among their sins only the first ("revealing the nakedness") has a sexual connotation, although the expression used is too general to possibly be identified with any form of sodomy. Pseudo-Jonathan provides a similar interpretation:

> ואינשין דסדם בישין בממונהון דין לדין וחייבין בגופיהון בגילוי ערייתא
> ושדייות אדם זכוי ופלחן פולחנא נכראה ומרדין לשמא דהן לחדא
>
> And the men of Sodom were evil in their riches one with the other, and sinners in their bodies revealing (their) nakedness, and pouring innocent

[18] Translated by M. Maher as "that we may have sexual relations with them". See *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis* (The Aramaic Bible 1B; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992) 70.

[19] M.J. Mulder, *Sodom en Gomorra: een verhaal van dode steden* (Exegetische Sudies 4; Kampen: Kok, 1988) 41.

[20] See above, 3-15

[21] In the margin, "innocent" is added to "blood".

> blood, worshipping foreign idols, and revolting very much against the name of the Lord. (*Tg. Ps.-J. Gen* 13:13)

Pseudo-Jonathan specifies that being evil towards one another was understood in economic terms, and adds the men of Sodom's revolt against the name of the Lord to the list of sins. But here, too, the link with sodomy is absent. The same can be said of the rabbinic tradition, as a single example of the interpretation of the sentence in *b. Sanh.* 109a-b shows:

> The men of Sodom have no portion in the world to come, etc. Our Rabbis taught: The men of Sodom have no portion in the future world, as it is written, But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly (Gen 13:13) wicked – in this world, and sinners – in respect of the world to come. Rab Judah said: [They were] wicked – with their bodies [i.e. immoral] and sinners – with their money [i.e. uncharitable]. Wicked – with their bodies, as it is written, How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? (Gen 39:9) And sinners – with their money, as it is written, and it be sin unto thee. (Deut 15:9) Before the Lord refers to blasphemy; exceedingly – that they intentionally sinned. A Tanna taught: Wicked – with their money; and sinners – with their bodies Wicked – with their money, as it is written, And thine eye be wicked against thy poor brother (Deut 15:9); and sinners – with their bodies, as it is written, and I will sin against God. (Gen 39:9) Before the Lord – this refers to blasphemy. Exceedingly – this refers to bloodshed, as it is written, Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood exceedingly (2 Kgs 21:16). (*b. Sanh.* 109a-b)[22]

A quick look at the other biblical references to the sins of Sodom within the Bible yields some more clues; nevertheless, the precise definition of these sins remains elusive, and the link with sodomy totally absent. Jeremiah, for example, reads:

> But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: they commit adultery (שערורה נאוף) and walk in lies, and strengthen also the hands of evil-doers, so that none returns from his wickedness; they are all of them to me like Sodom, and its habitants like Gomorrah. (Jer 23:14)

More concrete is Ezekiel when describing the iniquity (עון) of Sodom:

> Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: pride, surfeit of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters; and she did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me; therefore I took them away when I saw it. (Ezek 16:49-50)

Here, not even "adultery" is mentioned, and the only term used that could carry a "sexual" connotation, among many others, is תועבה, "abomination".

[22] English translation by H. Freedman, in *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin.* New Edition (London: The Soncino Press, 1969) loc. cit. (with the references inserted).

The emphasis in this long list of Sodom's sins is on what could be described as "social sins" in the first instance, and as pride and haughtiness in the second. In the rabbinic tradition these two elements are the ones most often commented upon. I cannot resist quoting here one extract from the Babli that describes the iniquities of the men of Sodom, and shows how Eleizer, Abraham's servant, outwitted them:

> There were four judges in Sodom, [named] Shakrai, Shakurai, Zayyafi, and Mazle Dina. Now, if a man assaulted his neighbour's wife and bruised her, they would say [to the husband], 'Give her to him, that she may become pregnant for thee.' If one cut off the ear of his neighbour's ass, they would order, 'Give it to him until it grows again.' If one wounded his neighbour they would say to him [the victim], 'Give him a fee for bleeding thee.' He who crossed over with the ferry had to pay four zuzim, whilst he who crossed through the water had to pay eight. On one occasion, a certain fuller happened to come there. Said they to him, 'Give us four zuzim [for the use of the ferry].' But, protested he, 'I crossed through the water!' 'If so,' said they, 'thou must give eight zuzim for passing through the water.' He refused to give it, so they assaulted him. He went before the judge, who ordered, 'Give them a fee for bleeding and eight zuzim for crossing through the water. Now Eliezer, Abraham's servant, happened to be there, and was attacked. When he went before the judge, he said, 'Give them a fee for bleeding thee.' Thereupon he took a stone and smote the judge. 'What is this!' he exclaimed. He replied, 'The fee that thou owest me give to this man [who attacked me], whilst my money will remain in statu quo.' Now, they had beds upon which travellers slept. If he [the guest] was too long, they shortened him [by lopping off his feet]; if too short, they stretched him out. Eliezer, Abraham's servant, happened to go there. Said they to him, 'Arise and sleep on this bed!' He replied, 'I have vowed since the day of my mother's death not to sleep in a bed.' If a poor man happened to come there, every resident gave him a denar, upon which he wrote his name, but no bread was given him. When he died, each came and took back his. They made this agreement amongst themselves: whoever invites a man [a stranger] to a feast shall be stripped of his garment. Now, a banquet was in progress, when Eliezer chanced there, but they gave him no bread. Wishing to dine, he went and sat down at the end of them all. Said they to him, 'Who invited thee here?' He replied to the one sitting near him, 'Thou didst invite me.' The latter said to himself, 'Peradventure they will hear that I invited him, and strip me of my garments!' So he took up his raiment and fled without. Thus he [Eliezer] did to all, until they had all gone; whereupon he consumed the entire repast. (*b. Sanh.* 109b)[23]

With all this in mind we can now understand the second targumic text I want to present, Pseudo-Jonathan of Gen 18:20. The Hebrew text reads: "And the Lord said: because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous". Pseudo-Jonathan translates:

[23] Freedman, *Sanhedrin*, loc. cit.

ואמר הן למלאכי שיריתא קבילת סדם ועמרה
דאניסין מסכינין וגזרין דכל דיהיב פיתא לעניא ייקד בנורא
ארום סגיאת ותובתהון ארום תקיפת לחדא
And the Lord said to the ministering angels: the plaint of Sodom and Gomorrah – that they oppress the poor and legislated that all who gives bread to the poor should be burnt by fire – is surely great and their sin has increased greatly.

The echo of Ezekiel's text is clear, and it proves that the sins of Sodom were not understood as sexual deviations of any sort. In our text only the social dimensions of the sins of Sodom are brought to the fore. In the social world of the targumist they were thought of as more important than sodomy. This verse brings us directly to our third point, Pseudo-Jonathan's translation of Gen 18:21.

3. Who was Pelitit?

One of the most surprising characters in the story of Sodom, as it is told in Pseudo-Jonathan, is the girl Pelitit, who appears suddenly in the translation of Gen 18:21. The Hebrew text reads, in the King James Version:

> I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

In the Aramaic translation of Pseudo-Jonathan[24] this becomes:

אתגלי כדון ואחמי הא כקבילתא דריבא פליטית דעלת קומוי עבדו נמירא הינון
חייבין ואם עבדין תחובא הלא הינון קדמיי זכאין כמא דלא ידעית ולא איתפרע
I will now be revealed, and I will see if they have done according to the clamour of the girl Pelitit which has ascended before me; (if this is so) they merit destruction; but if they do penance they will be innocent before me as (if) I did not know, and I will not take revenge.

The descent of God is, as is usual in Pseudo-Jonathan, translated in the terms of divine revelation. That God should have given the people of the city the possibility to repent is in line with Ezekiel's text and with the theological outlook of the targumim.[25]

Even the presence of a girl could somehow be expected. In fact, the Hebrew word הכצעקתה in the MT has a clear feminine suffix, which already posed a problem to the ancient translators. The LXX and the Vulgata opt

[24] The targumic text has been thoroughly studied by Mulder, *Het meisje van Sodom.*

[25] This possibility of repentance is also asserted in the other targumim, including Onqelos, albeit with different wording. In Neofiti we read: "They are sinners and if they ask to do penance, and they expect in their souls that their evil works may not be manifest before me, behold they are before me as if I did not know them". Very similar is the wording of the Fragment-Targum MS 440 and 110. In the margin of Neofiti, we find a short formulation: "They are sinners but if they ask to do penance, behold they are before me as if I did not know". The possibility of repentance is also asserted in *Gen. Rab.* 49:6.

for ignoring it. Onqelos changes the feminine singular suffix into a third plural masculine form, referring the cry to the men of Sodom (הכקבילתהון, "their cry", or "the cry over them"); Neofiti reads a second person masculine suffix (כקבילתיה, "his cry"), which refers back to the word "the people" (דעמא) of Sodom and Gomorrah, which was used in the translation of verse 20. The Fragment-Targum (MS 440 and 110) have a plural suffix, (הכקבילתהון) but specify directly afterwards that it refers to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (דעמא דסדום ועמורה): "their cry over the people of Sodom and Gomorrah".

It is perfectly possible that the MT with the feminine suffix does not represent the original text. The Qumran manuscript 4Q180, as completed by Strugnell,[26] reads הזעקתמה, (with a third person masculine suffix), and this is the reading adopted in the *DSSSE*.[27] This reading may already be a correction of the more difficult masoretic reading, or may represent the original. In any case, Pseudo-Jonathan takes the lectio difficilior of the Hebrew text seriously, with a singular feminine pronoun, and translates it as כקבילתא דריבא פליטית, "according to the outcry of the girl Pelitit".

The interpretative function of Pseudo-Jonathan's gloss is clear; but where does the girl come from? And who was she? A midrash, preserved in the *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer*, provides the answer. She was the daughter of Lot:

> R. Jehudah said: They made a proclamation in Sodom (saying): Everyone who strengthens the hand of the poor or the needy with a loaf of bread shall be burnt by fire. Peletith, daughter of Lot, was wedded to one of the magnates of Sodom. She saw a certain very poor man in the street of the city, and her soul was grieved on his account, as it is said: "Was not my soul grieved for the needy? (Job 30:25). What did she do? Every day when she went out to draw water she put in her bucket all sort of provisions from her home, and she fed that poor man. The men of Sodom said: How does this poor man live? When they ascertained the facts, they brought her forth to be burnt with fire. She said: Sovereign of all worlds! Maintain my right and my cause (at the hands of) the men of Sodom. And her cry ascended before the Throne of Glory. In that hour the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "I will now descend and I will see" (Gen 18:21) whether the men of Sodom have done according to the cry of this young woman. I will turn her foundations upwards, and the surface thereof shall be turned downwards, as it is said, "I will now descend, and I will see whether they have done altogether according to her cry, which is come unto me" (ibid.). "According to their cry" is not written here (in the text), only "According to her cry". (*Pirqe R. El.* 25)[28]

[26] J. Strugnell, "Notes en marge du volume V des 'Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan' ", *RevQ* 7 (1969–70) 163–276 at 253-4.

[27] *DSSSE*, 372.

[28] Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 182-3.

The beginning of the midrash shows such clear correspondence with the Aramaic translation of Pseudo-Jonathan of Gen 18:20 that it seems certain that both are related, and it is very probable that Pseudo-Jonathan is here dependent on and summarising the midrash. Both are related to the Ezek 16:49 text already quoted. The end of the midrash makes the exegetical function of the story clear, as is the explicit desire of preserving and defending the masoretic reading as it was known to the authors. The *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer* does not reveal where the story comes from. Mulder[29] has placed it in connection with a similar story, found in the Babylonian Talmud:

> A certain maiden gave some bread to a poor man, [hiding it] in a pitcher. On the matter becoming known, they daubed her with honey and placed her on the parapet of the wall, and the bees came and consumed her. Thus it is written, And the Lord said, The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah, because it is great (רבה) (Gen 18:20): whereon Rab Judah commented in Rab's name: On account of the maiden [ריבה] (*b. Sanh.* 109b)[30]

In this story, the girl is anonymous and the exegetical sleight-of-hand different (a play on the reading רבה in the Hebrew text, understood as ריבה); but I think Mulder is right in considering it another version of the same story, and in considering the Pelitit version as secondary. These two versions of the story have been blended together in one of the comments to Gen 18:21 found in *Genesis Rabbah.*

> R. Levi said: [God said]: 'Even if I wished to keep silent, justice for a certain maiden (ribah) does not permit Me to keep silent.' For it once happened that two damsels went down to draw water from a well. Said one to the other, 'Why are you so pale?' 'We have no more food left and are ready to die,' replied she. What did she do? She filled her pitcher with flour and they exchanged [their pitchers], each taking the other's. When they [the Sodomites] discovered this, they took and burnt her. Said the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Even if I desired to be silent, justice for that maiden does not permit Me to keep silent. Hence it does not say, whether they have done according to their cry; but according to her cry – the cry of that maiden. (*Gen. Rab.* 49:6)[31]

Here, the girl remains anonymous but she is burned, and the midrash blends both exegetical clues: the reading of ריבה for רבה of the Talmud, and the defence of the feminine suffix of the targum.

One final note before closing. The unnamed girl of the Talmud died consumed by bees, the girl of *Genesis Rabbah* was consumed by fire, while we may assume that Pelitit, as one of the two daughters of Lot, was saved, and as such obtained progeny by her father, thus giving thus birth either to

29 Mulder, *Het meisje van Sodom*, 63-4.
30 Freedman, *Sanhedrin*, loc. cit.
31 Freedman, *The Midrash Rabbah. Genesis*, 425.

Ammon or to Moab. By this unholy means, she became one of the ancestors of the expected Messiah.

LŪṬ AND HIS PEOPLE IN THE KORAN AND ITS EARLY COMMENTARIES.

FRED LEEMHUIS

1. Introduction

On or around the 11th of May 2001 fifty-five Egyptian men were arrested in Cairo in connection with a police raid on the Queen Boat, alleged to be a gay hangout, and where, according to one of the claims at the time, a gay wedding party was going on. Of the fifty-five men arrested, three were immediately released. The others were brought to trial accused of deriding religion and "habitual debauchery" with men. The conviction of these men was later overturned for all but two of them.[1]

An interesting accompanying phenomenon of the whole incident was that at least a number of the men involved were reported to have been members of an organization, called *wikālat junūd al-rabb*, "The Agency of God's Soldiers", and to have referred to themselves as *qawm Lūṭ al-kirām*, "Lūṭ's (Lot's) honourable people". According to the weekly *Rūz al-Yūsuf*,[2] which reported to have obtained a copy of the book with the principles of this organization, their creed was: "our religion is that of Lūṭ's people, our prophet and preacher Abū Nuwās".[3] They regularly had to go on pilgrimage to the Dead Sea to be blessed by bathing in its water.

In itself it is not remarkable that gay Muslims would regard Lūṭ's people somewhat differently from the common view, but this is the only time I am aware of that in an Islamic context *qawm Lūṭ*, "Lūṭ's people", i.e. the

[1] For some background information on the incident and the trial see the following articles of *Al-Ahram Weekly Online*: "The circus is in town", Issue No. 534, 17–23 May 2001, http://www.ahram.org.eg/weekly/2001/534/eg9.htm; "Outcry over Queen boat trial", Issue No. 548, 23–29 August 2001, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/548/eg6.htm; "Contradictions emerge in 'debauchery' case", Issue No. 551, 13–19 September 2001, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/551/eg7.htm; "Trying times" Issue No. 561 22–28 November 2001, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/561/eg6.htm; "Queen boat case overturned", Issue No. 588, 30 May-5 June 2002, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2002/588/eg2.htm and of the internet edition of Cairo Times "Morality police crackdown", Vol. 5, Issue 11, 17–23 May 2001, http://www.cairotimes.com/news/gay2.html; "Uncertain future" Vol. 5, Issue 19, 12–18 July 2001, http://www.cairotimes.com/news/gay3.html and "180 degrees" Vol. 6, Issue 13, 30 May-5 June 2002, http://www.cairotimes.com/news/gay8.html.

[2] "Al-nass al-kāmil li-wathīqat tanzīm al-shawādh" *Rūz al-Yūsuf* (*Rose El Yossef*), No. 3806, 19-25/5/2001, 16. An English translation of the article appeared on the website of GayEgypt.com: http://www.gayegypt.com/rosalyousar1.html.

[3] The famous Abbasid poet well known for his homoerotic verse, see *EI*2, I, 143-4.

people of Sodom are referred to in a positive sense. In the present Islamic tradition, as in traditional Christianity, their wickedness appears indeed to be primarily associated with the practice of homosexuality,[4] which is regarded as sinful. There are some exceptions. In some cases, nowadays, the real sin of the people of Lūṭ appears not to be viewed as homosexual behaviour as such, but rather their immoderateness without repentance.[5] And in a controversial publication for children *Si le coran m'était conté*, which caused uproar, especially in more traditional Muslim circles, in France and Tunisia, homosexuality is not mentioned at all as one of the sins of Lūṭ's people. There their sins are characterised as aberration, corruption and specified as falsehood and lying. This looks like an echo of some of the early Islamic traditions as will be seen later on, but it appears to be an exception for the present time as the Arabic words *lūṭī*, "sodomite, pederast, bugger", and *liwāṭ*, "sodomy, pederasty, buggery", alone already show.[6] These terms, of course, are not derived from the prophet Lūṭ, but from the people among whom he lived, before their towns were overturned, *qawm Lūṭ*. In Arabic they are thus the exact counterpart of "Sodomites"; even to the degree that bestiality is included and for which in the classical doctrine of most legal schools of Islam severe punishments are stipulated as outlined

[4] Numerous sites can be found on the internet which are dealing with homosexuality from an Islamic point of view. Most of them refer to the "people of Lūṭ". See e.g. for the traditional, totally condemnatory view M. Siddiqui, "Homosexuality and Islam (Submission)", http://www.submission.org/sex/homosexuality.html; Arafat K. El-Ashi, "Islam and Homosexuals", http://mworldwide0.tripod.com/mworldwide0/id18.html; "Sex and Sexuality in Islam. Islamic Rulings on Homosexuality", http://www.islamic-paths.org/Home/English/Issues/Sexuality/Homosexuality_Fatwah.htm; "Sex and Sexuality in Islam. Politically Incorrect: Islam's Position on Homosexuality", http://www.islamic-paths.org/Home/English/Issues/Sexuality/Homosexuality03.htm. Somewhat more subtle is e.g. Mikail Juma Tariq, "Islam and homosexuality", http://www.geocities.com/mikailtariq/homo.htm. Muslim gay sites, of course, treat the matter with more nuances, e.g. "Islam and homosexuality", http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_isla.htm and "L'homosexualité et l'islam", http://beurgay.free.fr/islam.htm . See also Deborah Wheeler, Islam, Community, and the Internet: New possibilities in the digital age: Section 3: Being Gay and Muslim, How the Internet Can Help, and Hurt, http://www.bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2002/03/islam.php#Anchor-SECTION-14210. For a good summary of present positions on homosexuality see http://www.al-fatiha.net/pamphlet.html

[5] At least that seems to be suggested by the present Shaikh al-Azhar, Muhammad Sayyid Ṭanṭawī who in his *Al-qissa fī al-qur'ān al-karīm* (vol. 1; Cairo, 1996) 283, as in his earlier Koran commentary, *Al-tafsīr al-wasīṭ*, vol. *Surat al-aʿrāf* (Cairo, 1983²) 108 condemns homosexual practice, but also explains the words *bal antum qawmun musrifūn*, "you are a people that do exceed", of *Surat al-aʿrāf* (7): 81 with "You, oh people, are not of those who commit indecency once and then abandon it and turn to God in repentance, but you are excessive in it and in the rest of what you do, you do not stop at the limit of moderation in any act". Ṭanṭāwī clearly tows the same line as *Tafsīr al-manār* nearly a century earlier and which had used nearly exactly the same words in the commentary on the same passus, *Tafsīr al-manār* (Cairo: General Book Organization, 1973) 9:454.

[6] See "liwāṭ", *EI2*, V, 776-9.

by al-Qurṭubī in his *tafsīr*.[7] As in Christianity, where it happened under the influence of Augustine, other aspects of the wickedness of Lūṭ's people are "superseded by the sexual aspect, resulting in the creation of common words as 'sodomy' in which only the sexual aspect of the tradition is remembered".[8]

2. Lūṭ in the Koran

In the Koran quite a few longer and shorter passages mention or allude to (parts of) the story of Lūṭ and the people of Sodom, although their city of sin is not mentioned by name. They nearly all are part of middle and late Meccan sura's and belong to the so-called punishment stories[9] which refer to the fate of sinful peoples from the past who did not heed the warnings of the messengers God had sent to them. These stories all serve the purpose to warn the people of Mecca to mend their ways, to believe in the one and only God who has sent Mohammed as his messenger. Sometimes only the evocation of the names of the ancient messengers is sufficient to call their stories to mind; more often, parts of their stories are highlighted to show how they warned their respective peoples who, because they did not heed the warnings, were punished severely. It is obvious that these stories must have been known in Mecca in some form or other, otherwise the reference to them would have been pointless. It is also clear that they were to serve as a kind of foreshadowing of what would happen to the Meccans if they would continue to turn a deaf ear to the warnings of Mohammed.

By then, the Meccans had been warned for many years to mend their anti-social behaviour especially towards women, orphans and slaves and to stop their idol worship. The message of the one God who not only demands to be worshipped, but whose just commandments also have to be obeyed in daily life had been heard by the Meccans, but was rejected by the majority and certainly by the elite. This was the period during which the first emigration of some of the adherents to the new religion to the safety of Christian Ethiopia took place. And it would not be long before Mohammed himself, whose life was made more and more difficult by the Meccans, would feel forced to seek refuge in the midst of a faithful group of followers

[7] Ad *Sūrat al-aʿrāf* (7): 80. Abū ʿAbdallāh Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jamiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān* (Beirut, 1988) 4:155-6. Only the school of Abū Ḥanīfa holds the view that it should not be punished with the *ḥadd* punishment for unlawful intercourse, but as a minor offense for which the judge can give a *taʿzīr* punishment.

[8] J.A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities. Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, Early Jewish and Early Christian Traditions* (CBET 1; Kampen: Kok, 1990) 140.

[9] See "al-Ḳurʿān", in *EI2*, V, 424.

who had invited him to come to their town, which later became known as Madīnat al-Nabī, "the town of the Prophet".

As a messenger of God Lūṭ is in the Koran clearly not seen as one of the more obscure predecessors of Mohammed. There are probably many reasons for that, but one important reason is obvious from the Koran itself. The Meccans, from their own observation or from eyewitness accounts, were familiar with the site of the destroyed towns. Following the trade routes to the north, their caravans of course, passed by the Dead Sea or Baḥr Lūṭ, "the sea of Lūṭ". This is evoked in the Koran: *Al-Hijr* (15): 76-77: "It is on a road that is still there. Surely, in that is a sign for the believers"; *Al-Furqān* (25): 40: "And they have passed the town upon which an evil rain had rained. Did they not see it? But of course they do not expect resurrection"; *Al-Sāffāt* (37): 137-138 "You pass by them in the morning and at night. Will you not understand?" The manifest evidence, known by Meccans, served as a potent reminder of that particular story.

In some enumerations Lūṭ is mentioned in the Koran in the following manner among other prophets who warned their countrymen, e.g.: *Al-Anʿām* (6): 86 as one of God's chosen; *Hud* (11): 89, Lūṭ's people is not far from you; *Al-Ḥajj* (22): 43, the people of Lūṭ charged him with lying; *Ṣād* (38): 13, his people rejected Lūṭ as God's messenger; *Qāf* (50): 13, the brethren of Lūṭ rejected him as God's messenger; *Al-Taḥrīm* (66): 10-12, Lūṭ's wife.

Different overlapping parts of the story of Lūṭ are found in the following longer passages: *Al-Aʿrāf* (7): 80-84; *Hūd* (11): 69-83; *Al-Ḥijr* (15): 51-77; *Al-Anbiyāʾ* (21): 70-75; *Al-Shuʿarāʾ* (26): 160-175; *Al-Naml* (27): 54-58; *Al-ʿAnkabūt* (29): 26-35; *Al-Ṣāffāt* (37): 133-138 and *Al-Qamar* (54): 33-39. Also connected with the story of Lūṭ are the references to *al-muʾtafika(-āt)* which is usually, but not always, interpreted as the overturned town(s) in *Al-Tawba* (9): 70; *Al-Najm* (53): 53-54; *Al-Ḥāqqa* (69): 9. They occur in the same lists, as do Lūṭ and his people, i.e., in the punishment stories. The above-mentioned passage in *Al-Furqān* (25): 40 also is considered to refer to the destroyed town of Lūṭ's people.

According to the chronologies of both the Islamic and the modern western scholarly tradition, the two earliest passages are *Al-Najm* (53): 53-54 and *Al-Ḥāqqa* (69): 9 which belong to the early Meccan period. With the exception of *Al-Tawba* (9): 70, *Al-Ḥajj* (22): 43 and *Al-Taḥrīm* (66): 10-12 which date from the Medinan period, the rest of the material about Lūṭ is from the middle and late Meccan periods. This may lead us to suppose that the combined elements of the story, which occur in these passages, probably reflect the story, as it must have been known among Mohammed's contemporaries in Mecca. The synthesis of these elements is, as it were, provoked by the passages themselves, because they overlap. In the European tradition of Islamic studies such a synthesis was put together by Heinrich

Speyer in his work on the biblical stories in the Koran,[10] but there some elements are missing. In the following synthesis the elements which are missing in Speyer, but which nevertheless are present in the Koran, are printed in italics.

Synthesis of the story of Lūṭ and the sinners of Sodom

Tell them about the guests of Ibrāhīm (Abraham). God's messengers came to him. They exchanged greetings and he offered them a roasted calf. When he saw that their hands did not touch it, he became afraid. They said: "Fear not, for we have been sent to the people of Lūṭ". *His wife, standing by, then laughed.* She got the glad tidings of a knowing boy, Isḥāq (Isaac) and of Ya'qūb (Jacob) after Isḥāq. Ibrāhīm and his wife doubted the message because of their old age. The messengers however stated that one should not wonder at God's decree and that the good tidings were the truth. Ibrahīm answered: "Only those who go astray despair of the mercy of my Lord".

When Ibrāhīm's fear had gone, he began pleading with God for Lūṭ's people. But the messengers said: "Stop it, God's decree has come; an unavoidable punishment comes to them. We shall annihilate the people of this town, for its people are evildoers". Ibrāhīm said: "Lūṭ is there". They said, "We know very well who is there. Surely we shall deliver him and his family *except his wife. She shall be among those who lag behind*".

Lūṭ, to whom God had given wisdom and knowledge, believed in Ibrahīm's mission and he himself was one of those who were sent by God. Lūṭ told his people who did not believe in the messengers: "Will you not fear God? I am a truthful messenger. So fear God and obey me. I ask no reward from you for this. It is only for the Lord of all beings to reward me. Do you commit lewdness such as nobody in the world did before you? You come lustfully to men and leave the women whom God has created for you to be your mates? *You commit highway robbery and practise wickedness in your assemblies. You are an ignorant, criminal people that exceed all bounds*". But his people rejected his warning and said: "Bring us God's punishment if you speak the truth". They demanded that he should stop or be thrown out of the town. They said: "Drive Lūṭ's followers out of your town, for they are men who want to be clean and pure". Lūṭ said: "I detest what you do".

When God's messengers came to Lūṭ and his family he was anxious and worried about them and said: "You are unknown to me!" But they said: "But we have come to you to accomplish what they are doubting, and we have come to you with what is true. We tell the truth". God made known His decree to him that the last of them should be extirpated by morning. Lūṭ said: "This is a distressful day. O my Lord, deliver me and my family from what they do".

But his people *rejoiced* - they had been doing evil deeds already before - and came rushing toward him and tried to get hold of his guests. Lūṭ said: "These are my guests, disgrace me not, and fear God and do not

[10] H. Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran* (Gräfenhainichen: Schulze, 1931; Hildesheim: Olms, 1988[3] reprint) 122.

shame me". They said: "Did we not forbid you to associate with (other) people". He said, "Oh my people, these are my daughters; they are purer for you. So fear God, and do not put me to shame concerning my guests. Is there not a man of right mind amongst you?" They said: "You know that we have no right with your daughters, and you know quite well what we desire". He said: "Would that I had power over you, or that I could take refuge with a mighty supporter".

By your life, in their intoxication they wander blindly. So God blotted out their eyes.

His guests said: "Oh Lūt, we are your Lord's messengers; they will not reach you. So set forth with your family in a part of the night, and follow in the rear. Go on to where you are ordered and let not any one of you look behind. *But your wife will be among those who remain behind, for what befalls them shall befall her.* We are going to bring down on the people of this town a punishment from heaven, because they have acted immorally. Their appointed time is the morning. Is the morning not near?"

Then the mighty blast overtook them at sunrise, *and God turned the town upside down* and rained on them a storm of flint-like stones *provided in God's presence with marks*; they are never far from those who do evil. How evil is the rain of those who have been warned!

See then, how was the end of the evildoers. God has indeed left a clear sign for people who understand. It is on a road that is still there. Surely, in that is a sign for the believers. You pass by them in the morning and at night. Will you not understand? These are the towns that were overthrown. They disobeyed the messenger of their Lord. From the town that had been doing vicious deeds God rescued Lūt and his family, except his wife - *an old woman who had betrayed him. She was destined to be with those who lingered. God annihilated them all, but Lūt entered God's mercy, for he was one of the righteous.*

On the whole this story follows what is known from the Tenach and from later Jewish and Christian sources.[11] Nevertheless it is a different story. Not so much for a few different elements, such as the announcement in advance to both Ibrāhīm and later to Lūṭ that Lūṭ's wife would not be saved, Lūṭ's reluctance to receive the messengers and especially the fact that the subsequent history of Lot and his daughters does not occur in the Koran. It is the identification of Lūṭ himself as a messenger of God who had preached to his fellow citizens, summoning them to fear God and rebuking them for their anti-social behaviour. In the Koran, Lūṭ is clearly on a par with others who had been sent by God to warn their people, like Nūḥ (Noah), Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Shu'ayb, Ibrāhīm and Mūsā (Moses) who are the other prophets who figure in these punishment stories and who are enumerated in *Al-Ḥajj* (22):

[11] See L. Ginzburg, *The Legends of the Jews vol. I* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Soceity, 1909; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998 reprint) 240–57; Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*, 146-58; Loader, *Tale of Two Cities*, passim, and especially 116-7 & 138-40.

42-44[12] and also Dāwud (David), Sulaymān (Solomon), Ayyūb (Job), Yūsuf (Josef), Harūn (Aaron), Zakariyyā (Zacharia), Yaḥyā (John the Baptist), ʿĪsā (Jesus), Ilyās (Elijah), Ismāʿīl (Ishmael), Al-Yasaʿ (Elisha) and Yūnus (Jonah) who are all mentioned in Al-Anʿām (6): 84-86. Moreover Lūṭ is mentioned in the Koran as a *rasūl* "messenger, apostle". As such he is one of the only eight predecessors of Mohammed who are accorded this dignity in the Koran, the others being Nūḥ, Ismāʿīl, Mūsā, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Shuʿayb and ʿĪsā.[13] Like the other punishment stories, the story of Luṭ functions in the Koran as a specific warning to the Meccans to fear God, to change their anti-social behaviour and to heed the message of the prophet Mohammed or else they certainly would suffer a fate similar to the people of Lūṭ.

But already in the time of Muhammad the example of Lūṭ could apparently also be applied to others who had to flee for their religion. This at least appears from a remark of the famous muʿtazilite scholar ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 415/1025), who mentions in his *Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa* that the prophet had compared the later caliph ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān, who during the first *hijra* fled to Ethiopia with his wife, Muhammad's daughter Ruqayya, with Lūṭ: "He bade them farewell, embraced ʿUthmān and said: 'He is the first after Lūṭ who because of his religion expatriated with his household'".[14] In other words, not only was Lūṭ an illustrious predecessor of Mohammed, but also, as with other prophets and messengers of God, Lūṭ's example of rightfulness and steadfastness in warning ungodly fellow citizens was worthy of imitation. Lūṭ's status in the Koran clearly is an elevated one.

3. The Story of Lūṭ in the Early Koran Commentaries

It is no wonder then that the story of Lūṭ received quite some attention in the early commentaries of the Koran. These *tafsīr*s, which date from around the middle of the second Islamic century, fill in details that are

[12] The list is different in other places, some are omitted and others like Yūnus are included. See "al-Kurʾān" in *EI2*, V, 424 and R. Paret, *Der Koran, Kommentar und Konkordanz* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971) 279-80 where attention is paid to J. Horovitz's ingenious identification of the *al-mathānī* in *Al-Hijr* (15): 87 and *Al-Zumar* (39): 23 with these punishment stories. Nevertheless it should be noted that the earliest extant commentaries of the Koran, those of Muqātil b. Sulaimān (d. 150/767), Warqā's (d. 160/776) version of Mujāhid, Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777) ,ʿAbdallāh b. Wahb (d. 197/812) Al-Farrāʾ (d. 207/822) and ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Sanʿānī (d. 211/827), on *Al-Hijr* (15): 87 give no hint at all for such an identification. The identification of the *sabaʿ min al-mathānī* with the seven verses of the first sura of the Koran appears to be widely accepted in the first two centuries of islam.

[13] See *EI2*, VIII, 454-5.

[14] ʿAbd al-Jabbār b. Ahmad al-Hamadhani, *Tathbīt Dalā'il al-Nubuwwa* (edited by ʿAbd al-Karīm ʿUthmān; Beirut, n.d.) 218.

missing from the story of Lūṭ in the Koran, even though there it is already more than just schematic and sketchy. Some of these details are familiar from other sources, especially Jewish, but others are not. Although the early commentaries are mostly not very elaborate as they mainly inform about the meaning of difficult words or passages and identify unnamed persons etc., they add interesting detail to Lūṭ's story. The works by Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767),[15] Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. between 100/718 and 104/722),[16] Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161/777)[17] and ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī (d. 211/827)[18] are the earliest surviving sources of Koranic commentary that provide this narrative material which appears to be taken from a common stock. A few other more specialised early works, which deal with the Koran, also supply explications to the text of the Koran. All these authors profess to record older, traditional narrative material from the generation of the *tābiʿīn* or "successors", i.e. the generation after Mohammed's contemporaries, that had been transmitted to them and which they, except for Muqātil, dutifully authenticate by a chain of transmitters for every single tradition.[19] In other words, they provide us with the early Islamic reception of the story of Lut. Their point of departure is the Koranic story and the material they record is discussed in the light of the Koranic data. As it happened with other Koranic stories,[20] for the edification of the believers Lūṭ's story is supplemented with information to fill in gaps or with sometimes, for these earliest commentaries, quite lengthy narratives to put more flesh on its bones.

[15] *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaimān* (5 vols.; edited by ʿAbdallah Mahmud Shahāta; Cairo, 1979-1989). Different from the three others, this *tafsīr* mostly does not offer a chain of transmitters to the explanations it provides.

[16] Of this *tafsīr*, three major versions are known, which all date from the middle of the second Islamic century. See my "Origins and Early Development of the *tafsīr* Tradition", in A. Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 13-30, at 19-25. The version by Warqāʾ b. ʿUmar (d. 160/776) is known from the *tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī and from an independent redaction by Adam b. Abī Iyyās (d. 220/835): *Tafsīr Mujāhid* (edited by ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān al-Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad al-Sūrati; Islamabad, 1976; reprint Beyrouth n.d.), *Tafsīr al-imām Mujāhid ibn Jabr* (edited by Muhammad ʿAbd-al-Salām Abu al-Nil; Cairo, 1989).

[17] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Karīm lil-imām Abī ʿAbdallah Sufyān ibn Saʿīd ibn Masrūq al-Thawrī al-Kūfī* (edited by Imtiyāz ʿAli ʿArshi; Rampur, 1965; reprint Beirut [without some of the indices], 1983).

[18] *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān lil-imām ʿAbd-al-Razzāq ibn Hishām al-Sanʿānī* (edited by Muṣṭafā Muslim Muhammad; Riyadh, 1989). Most of this *tafsīr* actually is material of al-Sanʿānī's teacher Maʿmar b. Rāshid (d. 153/770).

[19] Muqātil's traditional sources are mentioned at the beginning of the work. Sporadically traditions are also mentioned with their transmitters. It appears, however, that these are later inclusions.

[20] See e.g. my "Ibrahīm's Sacrifice of his Son in the Early Post-Koranic tradition", in E. Noort & E.J.C. Tigchelaar (eds.), *The Sacrifice of Isaac: the Aqedah (Genesis 22) and its Interpretations* (TBN 4; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 125-39.

The following presentation of the early supplementary material will be limited to the four above-mentioned *tafsīr*s. From each of these works their additions to the Koranic story will be presented. Not all the references will always be given, because the material is often repeated at other relevant passages of the Koran. The material thus provided may be arranged as follows:

1. The coming of the messengers to Ibrahīm. Ibrāhīm's fear and Sāra's laughter. Ibrāhīm's intercession for Luṭ's people

Muqātil: [*Hūd* (11): 69] The messengers who came to Ibrāhīm were Jibrīl (Gabriel) and two angels, the angel of death, and Mīkā'īl (Michael), but elsewhere [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 51] they were two, Jibrīl and Mīkā'īl. [*Hūd* (11): 69] Ibrāhīm thought they were human. When their hands did not touch the roasted calf he became afraid that they had evil intentions, [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 52] because if in the time of Ibrāhīm a man came to eat at an other man's place the host was safe from his evil.

[*Hud* (11): 70] The angels told him not to fear and that they were sent to punish the people of Lūṭ [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 59] but not him and his household, except his wife. [*Hud* (11): 71] Sāra laughed at Ibrāhim's fear of only three men, whereas he had his whole retinue and servants around him and then Jibrīl announced her the birth of their son Isḥāq.

[*Hūd* (11): 74] When his fear had left Ibrāhīm, he started to argue with God about Lūṭ's people. He said: "Lord, will you destroy them if there are fifty believing men?" Jibrīl said; "No". Then Ibrāhīm went on asking each time diminishing by five until he came down to five households.

[*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 60] The angels went from Ibrāhim in the Holy land to Lūṭ in the land of Sudūm (Sodom).

Al-Ṣan'ānī: [*Hūd* (11): 70-74] If a guest came to them and he did not eat of their food, they thought that he was up to no good and had made up his mind to do evil.

Then the messengers told him for what they had come. His wife laughed at that, amazed at the stupidity (or negligence) of the people and the punishment that would come to them. Then they announced her the good news of Isḥāq. Another tradition says that she laughed when she saw the fear they had inspired in Ibrāhim, another that she laughed out of amazement at the stupidity (or negligence) of Lūṭ and the punishment that would come to his people and again another that "she laughed" means "she menstruated".

When the messengers told Ibrāhīm that they were sent to the people of Lūṭ and that it was not him they wanted, he said: "Have you seen if in them were not fifty Muslims?" They said: "If there are fifty we will not punish them". He said: "Forty?" They said: "Forty". He said: "Thirty?"

They said: "And thirty". He said: "Twenty?" Until they came to ten. He said: "And if there were ten?" He said: "What (kind of) people is it amongst which there are not ten with good in them?" [*Al-ʿAnkabūt* (29): 32] About Ibrāhīm's words: "But Lūṭ is in there". Qatāda said: "You will not find a believer who does not protect a believer wherever he is".

2. Lūṭ and his preaching

Muqātil: [Hūd (11): 71] Lūṭ, identified as Lūṭ b. Ḥāzān (or: bi-Ḥarrān), but elsewhere [*Al-Shuʿarāʾ* (26): 160] as Lūṭ b. Harrāz b. Āzar, [Hūd (11): 71] was the brother of Sāra bint Ḥāzān and Ibrāhīm was his uncle and through Sāra his brother-in-law. [*Al-Anbiyāʾ* (21): 75] Lūṭ entered Gods mercy means: God granted him prophethood. [*Al-ʿAnkabūt* (29): 26] Lūṭ was the first who believed in Ibrāhīm when he saw that the fire did not harm him. And Lūṭ had emigrated with Ibrāhīm and his sister Sāra to the Holy Land when Ibrāhīm was 75 years old.

That his people did not believe his warnings that the punishment would come down upon them and called him a liar is repeatedly mentioned, but Lūṭ's preaching to his people is not much elaborated upon, except for the definition of their sins, which will be mentioned later.

Mujāhid (Warqāʾ): [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 63] Lūṭ had told his people that the punishment would descend upon them and they had said that he lied.

For the rest, Lūṭ's preaching to his people is not much elaborated upon, except for the definition of their sins, which will be mentioned later.

3. Lūṭ's reluctance to receive the messengers as guests

Muqātil: [*Hūd* (11): 77] When Jibrīl, Mīkāʾīl, Isrāfīl (Israfel) and the angel of death came to Lūṭ, he disliked that, because of what his people did to men and he feared that they would rape them. [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 62-63] Lūṭ did not know them and he thought that they were men, because they were in the shape of men. They told him that they had come to him with the punishment of his people of which they did not believe that it would descend upon them.

Mujāhid (Warqāʾ): [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 62-63] God's prophet Lūṭ did not know them. [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 63] They said to Lūṭ: "But we come to you with the punishment of your people.

Al-Thawrī: [*Hūd* (11): 81] When the messengers came to Lūṭ, they were followed by the people of his town. They had camels with them and said nothing to them. When they entered Lūṭ's house and saw his excitement

(*mawjida*) over them and his apprehension (or fear *khashya*) for them, they said: "We are the messengers of your Lord, we shall not strike at you".

Al-Ṣanʿānī: [*Hūd* (11): 74] The angels came to Lūṭ while he was working on a piece of land he had and said: "We ask your hospitality tonight". And he rushed along with them and when he had walked with them for an hour he addressed them and said: "Do you not know what the people of this town do? I do not know townspeople who are worse than them on the face of the earth". Then he walked an hour and said: "Do you not know what the people of this town do? I do not know townspeople who are worse than them on the face of the earth". And he said it three times. They had been ordered not to punish them before Lūṭ had witnessed three times against them.

4. Identification of the towns of the people of Lūṭ, their wickedness and evil intentions with Lūṭ's guests

Muqātil: The Koranic references to *al-muʾtafika(-āt)* in *Al-Tawba* (9): 70, *Al-Najm* (53): 53-54; and *Al-Ḥāqqa* (69): 9 are all explained as referring to the four towns of Lūṭ's people.[21] The meaning of the word is interpreted as "denying",[22] i.e. they did not believe Lūṭ's announcement of their punishment. The passage in *Al-Furqān* (25): 40 also is considered to refer to the destroyed town of Lūṭ's people.

[*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 74] The four towns of the people of Lūṭ are identified as Sudūm, ʿĀmūrā, Ṣābūrā en Dāmūrā and [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 76] they are on a

[21] An early identification of *al-muʾtafikāt* with the towns of the people of Lūṭ, Hūd and Ṣāliḥ is found in the work of al-Farrāʾ (d. 207/822). Cf. Abu Zakariyāʾ Yahyā b. Ziyād al-Farrāʾ, *Maʿāni al-qurʾān* (vol. 1, edited by Aḥmad Yūsuf Nagāti & Muḥammad ʿAli al-Naggār; Cairo, 1955[2]) 446.

[22] Of course, mostly the word is taken to mean "overturned", which by later European scholars was seen as a transposition of the Hebrew *mahpeka*, "overthrow, overturn". Cf. "Lūṭ" in *EI2*, V, 832. Muqātil, however, is not the only one to make a connection with the Arabic root *ʾ f k*, which denotes lying and falsehood. To give two later examples: in al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310/923) commentary on *Al-Najm* (53): 53-54 and *Al-Ḥāqqa* (69): 9 a tradition going back to Ibn ʿAbbas is given with this meaning. See Abu Jaʿfar Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī al-Musammā Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (12 vols.; Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1412/1992) 11:539 and 12:211. In al-Samarqandi's (d. between 375/983 and 393/1003) commentary on *Al-Tawba* (9): 70 (with reference to Muqātil) and *Al-Najm* (53): 53-54 this meaning is, in addition to the generally accepted meaning, also mentioned. See *Tafsīr al-Samarqandī al-musammā Baḥr al-ʿUlūm li-Abī al-Layth Naṣr ibn Muhammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Samarqandī* (3 vols.; edited by Ali Muḥammad Muʿawwad, ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd & Zakariyya ʿAbd al-Majid al-Nūti; Beirut, 1413/1993) 2:61 and 3:295. An early harmonisation attempt was made by al-Nahhās (d. 338/949) in his commentary on *Al-Tawba* (9): 70: The language experts say that they are called *muʾtafikat*, because they were distorted, i.e. overturned. It comes from *ʾifk* and that means falsehood, because it is *maqlūb*, "distorted, overturned" and turned away from the truth. See Abu Jaʿfar al-Nahhās, *Maʿānī al-qurʾān al-karīm* (6 vols.; edited by Muḥammad ʿAlı al-Sābūnī; Mecca, 1988/9) 3:232.

clear road which is frequented by the people of Mecca and others, between Mecca and Syria, [*Al-ʿAnkabūt* (29): 35] between Medina and Syria and [*Al-Ṣāffāt* (37): 138] the Meccans pass by them on their trade route to Syria [*Al-Ṣāffāt* (37): 133] Each of the four towns had 100.000 inhabitants.

The great sin of the people of those towns was [*Al-Aʿrāf* (7): 81] their coming to men and not to women and they were extravagant in their great sin. What *ityān al-rijāl*, "the coming to men", and *azwājukum*, "your mates", "your spouses", exactly mean is specified as follows: [*Hūd* (11): 78; *Al-Shuʿarāʾ* (26): 165-166] the former is explained as *nikāḥ al-rijāl*, "the copulation with men", and "your mates" as *furūj nisāʾikum*, "the vulvae of your women", [*Al-Naml* (27): 55] as the coming to men out of lust and not to women. Or, more specific, [*Al-ʿAnkabūt* (29): 28-29] they came to men in their behinds at night. Nobody before them did that and they did it only to strangers. They committed highway robbery, i.e., they did it to travellers. In the places where they gathered they threw and catapulted stones to travellers and robbed them. They did not believe that they would be punished in this world.

[*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 67] The men of Sudūm rejoiced when the men came into Lūṭ's house and [*Hūd* (11): 81, *Al-ʿAnkabūt* (29): 33] they said: " You have men with you who have bewitched our eyes". and [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 70] also: "Did we not tell you not to offer hospitality to anyone".

Mujāhid (Warqāʾ): [*Al-Najm* (53): 53-54] *al-muʾtafika* is identified as Lūṭ's people.

[*Al-Shuʿarāʾ* (26): 166] The phrase *wa-tadharūn mā khalaqa lakum rabbukum min azwājikum* "and leave those whom God has created for you to be your mates" is specified as "you have left the fronts of your women for the behinds of men and women". And this [*Al-ʿAnkabūt* (29): 29] they did in the places where they gathered.

Al-Ṣanʿānī: The Koranic references to *al-muʾtafika*(*-āt*) are explained as referring to Lūṭ's people, whose land was turned around, upside down.
[*Hūd* (11): 74] Qatāda said: "It is reported to us that they were four thousand thousands".

There is no further direct elaboration of what the sins of Lūṭ's people were, only indirectly by mentioning the opinion of some authorities on how those who do what Lūṭ's people did should be punished:

[*Hūd* (11): 83] From Qatāda: Who does what Lūṭ's people did will be stoned if he is *muḥṣan* and if he is a virgin [*bikr*] a flogging of a hundred lashes. From Al-Zuhrī similarly: He will be stoned if he is *muḥṣan* and be flogged if he is a virgin [*bikr*] and he will be treated harshly in confinement and banishment. From ʿĀʾisha: The first time someone was charged with

the disgusting matter - i.e. the act of Lūṭ's people - was in ʿUmar's time. A man was charged with it and ʿUmar ordered some of the young men of Quraysh not to keep him company. From Al-Zuhrī about who comes to an animal: He will be flogged with a hundred lashes, whether he is *muḥṣan* or not. From Al-Zuhrī: Who [falsely] accuses a man of an animal will be flogged the *ḥadd* punishment of false testimony.

5. Lūṭ's wife and daughters

Muqātil: [*Hūd* (11): 78 and passim] Lūṭ had two daughters: Rīthā and Zaghūthā. [*Hūd* (11): 81] Lūṭ's wife was punished, because she looked back and was hit by a stone and killed. [*Al-Taḥrīm* (66): 10] Lūṭ's wife and Nūḥ's wife contravened their religion; because of their unbelief Lūṭ and Nūḥ were of no avail to them.

Al-Ṣanʿānī: [*Hūd* (11): 77-78] When the messengers entered Lūṭ's house the old woman of evil went away and went to her people and said: "Lūṭ is giving hospitality tonight to people with faces I have never seen so beautiful among people".

Of Lūṭ's wife [*Hūd* (11): 81] it is reported to us that she heard a sound and she turned around and was hit by a stone, but that is apocryphal [*shādhdh*] from the people and we know where it comes from.[23]

[*Al-Taḥrīm* (66): 10] About Nūḥ's wife and Lūṭ's wife: the righteousness of both of these was of no avail to them and Pharao's unbelief did not harm Pharao's wife [*Hūd* (11): 83] Sulaymān b. Qutta told: "I heard Ibn ʿAbbās being asked while he was next to the Kaʿba about God's word (in *Al-Taḥrīm* (66): 10) *fa-khānatāhumā* "they both betrayed both of them" and he said: "That was not *zinā'*, "adultery", but the one was telling people that he was mad and the other was pointing out the guests and then he read.

[*Al-Ṣāffāt* (37): 135] She was among those who stayed behind and did not go out with him.

6. Lūṭ's offering of his daughters to the attackers

Muqātil: [*Hūd* (11): 78, *Al-Ḥijr* (15): 71] Lūṭ offered, out of shame, to give his daughters in marriage to the men, who wanted his guests, but the attackers told him that he knew very well that they wanted the guests.

Al-Thawrī: [*Hūd* (11): 78] explains that he did not offer his daughters literally. Every prophet is the father of his people and Lūṭ had only two daughters.

[23] Apparently Muqātil is meant, because he is often accused of relating *tafsīr al-nās* "popular commentary", cf. Muqātil above.

Al-Ṣanʿānī: [*Hūd* (11): 78] Lūṭ commanded them to marry women.

7. The beating off of the attackers of Lūṭ's guests

Muqātil: [*Al-Qamar* (54): 37] God blotted out their eyes i.e. God changed their eyes to blindness, because they had broken the door and wanted to do with the guests what they did with others and Jibrīl struck them with his wing and their eyesight went.

Al-Thawrī: [*Hud* (11): 81] And when they came near they took (text: he took) the dust and they threw it at them and they gouged out their eyes. That is why the Koran says *fa-ṭamasna aʿyunahum*, "so We blotted out their eyes". And they returned to their comrades and said: "With witchcraft they bewitched us".

Al-Ṣanʿānī: [*Hūd* (11): 74] Then they came hastily and Lūṭ dealt with (*ʿālaja*, or *ʿājala* "hastened to") them at the door and an angel stood up and tied up the door i.e. he blocked it. And Jibrīl asked his Lord's permission to punish them and permission was given. So, Jibrīl hit them with his wing and left them blind and they spent a very bad night. Then they said: "We are messengers from your Lord".

8. The punishment of the towns

Muqātil: [*Hūd* (11): 81] Lūṭ wanted Jibrīl to destroy their attackers immediately, but Jibrīl said: "Is the morning not near?" [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 73] The mighty blast which overcame them was the mighty blast of Jibrīl. [*Hūd* (11): 82] The towns were sunk into the earth and stones [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 75] of *sijjīl*,[24] i.e. stone mixed with clay rained on those who were outside the four towns. Perhaps a man would be in another town and then the stone would come to him and kill him. [*Al-Shuʿarāʾ* (26): 173] God sank the towns of Lūṭ. [*Al-Najm* (53): 53-54] Jibrīl put his wing under them and lifted them up to the heavens so that the angels of the nearest heaven could hear the voices of the cocks and the barking of the dogs. Then he turned the towns around and they fell upside down from the heavens on the earth. The stones, which covered them, hit those who had gone outside the town or who were on their fields (*zarʿ*) or with their cattle (*darʿ*).[25]

[24] About the meaning of *sijjīl* see my "Qur'anic *siggīl* and Aramaic *sgyl*", *JSS* 27 (1982) 47-56 and "Sidjdjīl", *EI*2, XI, 538.

[25] An interesting expansion of the notion that the stones were meant for those who were outside the towns when these were overturned is transmitted from Muqātil in Al-Thaʿlabī's (d. 427/1035) book on the stories of the prophets:

Mujāhid (Warqā'): [*Al-Najm* (53): 53-54] Jibrīl lifted it up to heaven and turned it upside down. [*Hūd* (11): 82] stones of *sijjīl* i.e. in Persian the beginning of stone and the end of clay.

Mujāhid (Shibl): [*Hūd* (11): 82] When they woke up in the morning Jibrīl rushed to their town and tore it from its supports, then he brought in his wing and carried it on the coverts of his wing. Then he rose with it to heaven, till the people of heaven heard the barking of their dogs. Then he turned it around and her highest parts fell down first. To no people has happened what happened to them. God had blotted out their eyes, then overturned their towns and rained on them stones of *sijjīl*.

Al-Thawrī: [*Hūd* (11): 81-82] And Lūṭ said to the messengers: Now, now, i.e. their destruction! But they said, their appointment is the morning. Jibrīl lifted the town with his wing and lifted it up (? *fa-daḥadahā*) till he made the people of the nearest (heaven) hear their voices. Then he overturned it and followed those who were outside with stones of *sijjīl* i.e. in them is clay.

Al-Ṣan'ānī: [*Hūd* (11): 74] Qatāda said: It was reported to us that Jibrīl took the support of the middle town and then hoisted it up to heaven till the people of heaven heard the yelping of their dogs. Then he crushed (*damdama*) it together and put it upside down and then followed on them the stones [*Hūd* (11): 82-83] of *sijjīl manḍūd musawwama*, i.e. of clay, coated - on them is a sprinkling with dust of red brick (? *bihā naḍḥun min humra*) - arranged in rows. After them no sinner is immune to them.

9. Lūṭ's deliverance and afterwards

Muqātil: [*Al-Ḥijr* (15): 65)] Lūṭ had to go to al-Shām. [*Al-'Ankabūt* (29): 35] After the destruction of his people Lūṭ got two other daughters and his children after him were believers.

I said to Mujāhid: "Oh Abu al-Hajjāj, did anyone of Lūṭ's people survive?" He said: "No, except for one man, who survived for forty days. He was in Mecca and a stone came to hit him in the sacred precinct (*al-haram*). The angels of the sacred precinct went to it and said to the stone: 'Go back to where you came from, because this man is in God's sacred precinct'. Then the stone halted outside the sacred precinct for forty days between heaven and earth until the man had done what he wanted to do. When he went outside, the stone hit him outside the sacred precinct and killed him".

Cf. Abu Ishāq Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Nīsābūrī al-ma'rūf bi-l-Tha'labī, *Qisas al-Anbiyā'*, *al-musamma 'Arā'is al-Majālis* (Cairo: 'Īsā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d.) 93.

Conclusions

These earliest commentators apparently could draw on an abundant more or less common stock. Where they are recorded, most of the details that are added to the Koranic story are similar in the four commentaries. They convey the impression that they had even more material at their disposal, which they did not include in the commentaries,[26] probably because a word would be enough for those who knew. In later times more and more details of the story were recorded, as the later commentaries and specialised works on stories of the prophets show. The additions of these early commentaries are nevertheless telling.

The expansions focus on matters and questions the Koran with its often terse wording does not mention explicitly or only suggests. Thus names and numbers are given. How were the daughters of Lūṭ called? What were the names of the towns and how many people lived there? Obscure words are explained. What does *al-mu'tafika* or *sijjīl* exactly mean? Succinct passages are expanded. What exactly was the great sin of Lūṭ's people? What was the sin of Lūṭ's wife that she was not saved? Reasons are given for behaviour of the protagonists that seemed strange on first thoughts. Why did Sāra laugh? Why was Lūṭ so anxious and worried about his guests that he nearly seemed to refuse to give them hospitality? More elaborate descriptions are given about how exactly events took place. How were the attackers of Lūṭ's guests blinded? How was the punishment of the towns executed?

The purpose of these elaborations is, however, not merely to satisfy curiosity. The commentators new very well that the stories of the Koran serve the purpose of teaching lessons. The elaborations clearly served the same purpose. Sāra did not laugh in the face of Ibrahīm's guests, because she thought that it would be impossible for her to conceive a child, but she laughed out of relief that the messengers had not come to do them harm, or for any other reason. Of course, as a prophet Lūṭ did not just offer his daughters to the attackers, but he offered to marry them off in all decency, or with the words "my daughters" he meant women in general. And, most certainly, any suggestion that Lūṭ would have committed incest with his daughters is out of the question. On the contrary, he continued to live a decent, god-fearing life and his descendants were also believers. Lūṭ's wife was punished because she did not believe and had betrayed his guests.

In these commentaries it is also clear that in addition to only the sexual one there is still attention for other aspects of the wickedness of the people of the four towns. Certainly, they practised unnatural sexual relations, which

[26] For an example see the previous note.

may or may not be equated with *zina'* "adultery" for which a *ḥadd* punishment should be exacted, but the anti-social aspect is not forgotten: they robbed travellers, attacked them with stones and, sexually or otherwise, mistreated strangers in their assemblies, to whom they should have given hospitality. Nevertheless, it seems that the development of focussing more and more on the sexual aspect of their sins had already begun. However, the exclusive focussing on homosexuality apparently has not yet come about. The presentation of Al-Ṣan'ānī of some juridical opinions about how the crime of Lūṭ's people should be punished shows that agreement was not yet reached. Certainly not everyone would agree with the harsh punishment al-Qurṭubī, some five hundred years later, thought was prescribed by the *shari'a*. The mention of the tradition of 'Ā'isha that 'Umar ordered some of the young men of Quraysh not to keep a man, who had committed the sin of Lūṭ's people, company is revealing in this respect. Nevertheless, a reference to the Sodomites as *qawm Lūṭ al-kirām* "Lūṭ's *honourable* people", clearly would have been beyond understanding.

PART THREE

THEMES

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE DEAD SEA: *MARTYRDOM OF PIONIUS* 4.20 AND ITS PRECEDENTS IN BEN SIRA AND AFRICANUS

TON HILHORST

The land of Sodom and Gomorrah shares in the punishment of its inhabitants – it is stricken with barrenness. The neighbouring Dead Sea, on the other hand, is spared; at any rate, nowhere in the Hebrew Bible do we read anything about this, although its saltiness could certainly be explained as part of the Sodom disaster. On the other hand, as early as in Gen 14:3, before the account of the disaster, the Sea bears the name Salt Sea. Ezek 47:8-10 prophesies a healing of the Sea, but it does not associate its brine with punishment. In later times this thought also rarely occurs, although it is not wholly absent. In this essay we would like to present some passages dealing with it.

1. Ecclesiasticus 39:22-24

The book of Ecclesiasticus or Wisdom of Ben Sira was written in Hebrew in the first third of the second century BCE. It has always been known in its Greek and Syriac versions, and in its translations from the Greek. Only as late as 1896 and subsequent years did a good part of the text in Hebrew turn up among the manuscripts of the Cairo Genizah; in the 1950s, some scraps came to light among the Qumran Scrolls, and a substantial fragment was found in 1964 in the East wall of the fortress of Masada. The Greek version can fairly well be dated to *c.* 130 BCE, while the Latin version was probably produced in the third century CE[1] and was adopted by the Vulgate without alterations.[2]

Our attention here concerns Sir 39:22-24, which we will study in its Hebrew, Greek, and Latin text forms. We will take for granted that the only witness to the Hebrew text of our passage, MS B, reflects the text as it circulated in Antiquity, and that the Greek depends on the Hebrew, and the Latin on the Greek. Since the verse numbering of the Latin is different from the numbering in Greek (which is also employed for the Hebrew), we will

[1] Cf. G. Sauer, *Jesus Sirach/Ben Sira* (ATD, Apokryphen 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000) 22, 27-8.

[2] As far as can be judged from the edition of the Vetus Latina by P. Sabatier. The new Beuron edition has not yet reached chapter 39.

number the lines (cola) of the verses with letters for all three text forms. The texts, then, with their English translations, read as follows:[3]

a ברכות כיאר הציפה
b וכנהר תבל ריותה׃
c [כן] זעמו גוים יוריש
d ויהפך למלח משקה׃
e [ארחו]ת תמים יישרו
f כן לזרים [יס]תוללו׃

a His blessing[4] overflows like the Nile
b And like the Euphrates it saturates the earth.
c So his wrath dispossessed nations
d And turned fertile land into salt.[5]
e For the blameless his paths[6] are level;
f So to the strangers[7] they are heavy going.

a Ἡ εὐλογία αὐτοῦ ὡς ποταμὸς ἐπεκάλυψεν
b καὶ ὡς κατακλυσμὸς ξηρὰν ἐμέθυσεν·
c οὕτως ὀργὴ αὐτοῦ ἔθνη κληρονομήσει,
d ὡς μετέστρεψεν ὕδατα εἰς ἅλμην.

[3] Editions used: P.C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (SVT 68; Leiden, New York, Cologne; Brill, 1997), completed for the lacunas with H.L. Strack, *Die Sprüche Jesus', des Sohnes Sirachs: Der jüngst gefundene hebräische Text mit Anmerkungen und Wörterbuch* (Schriften des Institutum Judaicum in Berlin 31; Leipzig: Deichert, 1903); J. Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum 12.2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 1980[2]); *Biblia Sacra iuxta Latinam Vulgatam Versionem* 12 (Rome, 1964). Copious bibliographies in A. Lehnardt, *Bibliographie zu den Jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* (JSHRZ 6.2; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag, 1999) 303-35; Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, 7-15.

[4] Reading ברכתו with the Greek and Syriac and what may have been the marginal reading in MS B. N. Peters, *Das Buch Jesus Sirach oder Ecclesiasticus* (EHAT 25; Münster in Westf.: Aschendorff, 1913) 331, feels ברכות to be grammatically possible, but suspects ברכתו is the original reading.

[5] For the use of the tenses in this verse, see W.T. van Peursen, *The Verbal System in the Hebrew Text of Ben Sira* (Dissertation Leiden 1999) 67, 100, 132.

[6] Reading ארחותיו לתמים in accordance with the Greek and, for ארחותיו, also with the marginal reading (see Beentjes, *Book of Ben Sira*, 68), cf. A. Minissale, *La versione greca del Siracide: Confronto con il testo ebraico alla luce dell'attività midrascica e del metodo targumico* (AnBib 133; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1995) 158, 168; Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, 271 note 182.

[7] Most editions read לזרים, "to the impious", with the ancient translations. However, although the confusion of *dalet* and *resh* is common enough, the manuscript reading לזדים, for which Strack, *Sprüche Jesus'*, 34 compares Ps 54:5, may be right after all; Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, 271 translates "aber den Fremden werden sie zu verschlungenen Wegen", cf. ib. 274; G.L. Prato, *Il problema della teodicea in Ben Sira: Composizione dei contrari e richiamo alle origini* (AnBib 65; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1975) 104 note 101.

e αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ τοις ὁσίοις εὐθεῖαι,
f οὕτως τοις ἀνόμοις προσκόμματα.

a His blessing covered as a river
b And saturated the dry land as a flood.
c In such a way his wrath will take possession[8] of the nations
d As he has turned the waters into saltiness.
e His ways are plain unto the holy,
f Likewise, they are stumbling-blocks unto the wicked.

a Benedictio illius quasi fluuius inundauit.
b Et quomodo cataclysmus aridam inebriauit,
c sic ira ipsius gentes quae non exquisierunt eum hereditabit.
d Quomodo conuertit aquas et siccata est terra,
e et uiae illius uiis illorum directae sunt,
f sic peccatoribus offensiones in ira eius.

a His blessing overflowed as a river.
b And as a flood saturated the dry land,
c So his wrath will take possession of the nations that did not seek him.
d Like he turned the waters and the land dried,
e And his ways were made straight to be their ways,
f So for the sinners there were stumbling-blocks because of his wrath.[9]

The three versions convey the message that God's works are a blessing to the pious but a source of evil to the wicked. In the Hebrew, this statement is in three parts, each taking a bicolon: first we hear about God's blessing (*ab*), then about his wrath (*cd*), and finally the fates of the good and the bad

[8] The Hebrew verb ירש usually means "take possession of", "inherit". The Septuagint rendering is predominantly κληρονομέω, which means "inherit" in classical and also "acquire, obtain" in post-classical Greek, cf. R. Helbing, *Die Kasussyntax der Verba bei den Septuaginta: Ein Beitrag zur Hebraismenfrage und zur Syntax der Koινή* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1928) 138-41. This rendering was also used in contexts where ירש, "take possession of", had a hostile connotation, e.g. Deut 9:1; 11:23; Judg 11:23; Isa 54:3; Hos 9:6 τὸ ἀργύριον αὐτῶν ὄλεθρος κληρονομήσει; Sir 19:3 (no Hebrew text remaining) σήτες και σκώληκες κληρονομήσουσιν αὐτόν. The same is no doubt true for the Latin (*hereditabit*); it is hard to imagine that the readers took *hereditare* in the sense of "expellere, delere", as W. Ehlers, "hērēdito", *TLL* 6.3 (Leipzig 1936-1942) 2643-5 at 2643 suggests.

[9] Those preferring a literary style will appreciate Mgr Ronald Knox's rendering: "His blessings flow like a stream in full flood, like rain pouring down to refresh the parched earth. But the nations that never look to find him, shall be the prey of his vengeance; did he not turn the waters into firm ground, and dry up the floor of them, so that it made a path for the passage of his own people, and yet a trap to punish the wicked?"

are contrasted (*ef*). This division is maintained in the Greek, but the translator generalises in *ab*, changing the individual rivers of the Hebrew into common waters, although we should bear in mind that the designations for Nile and Euphrates, יאר and נהר, are also common names meaning "river" – evidently the translator took them in this sense.[10] The lines *cd* in the Hebrew juxtapose two punishments, the expulsion of the Canaanite nations[11] and the destruction of Sodom.[12] The Greek transforms the lines into a comparison in which God's future crushing of the nations is illustrated by his turning the waters into saltiness. The "waters" (ὕδατα) here cannot have been an equivalent of the "fertile" or even "watery land" (משקה) of the Hebrew. The most natural interpretation is that the translator thought of the Dead Sea becoming salty; in any case, this is how a Greek reader must have understood it.[13] Lines *ef* agree pretty well in both versions, but note that they are only partially preserved in the extant Hebrew witness.

The Latin translator has a reputation of rendering freely and adding where he thinks fit.[14] This short passage is a case in point. To begin with the latter aspect: to "nations" in line *c* he adds "that did not seek him", which betrays a Christian concern not to contradict the Gospel being intended for all nations; and in *f* he adds "because of his wrath". But he also thoroughly reinterpreted most of the passage. First of all, obviously the κατακλυσμός of line *b* in the Greek reminded him too much of the flood of Genesis 7 for it to be able to express a positive idea such as the beneficent periodic flooding of the Nile (described already by Herodotus with the verb κατακλύζειν). Therefore, he took *b* as a description of disaster and combined it with *c*. This reading of the Greek has much to its credit. For one thing, the order ὡς ... οὕτως strikes one as less constrained than οὕτως ... ὡς. For another, God's overpowering of the enemies is more naturally com-

[10] Cf. Prato, *Problema della teodicea*, 102.

[11] Cf. Exod 34:24; Deut 4:38.

[12] Gen 13:10; 19:25; cf. Ps 107:34: "(He turns) a fruitful land into a salty waste because of the wickedness of its inhabitants". Earlier, Ecclesiasticus evoked Sodom in 16:4, 8.

[13] For the opinion that ὕδατα meant "watery places", cf. C.A. Wahl, *Clavis librorum Veteris Testamenti apocryphorum philologica* (Leipzig: Barth, 1853), s.v. ἅλμη: "*salsugo,* ita de terra salsa et sterili Sir. 39, 23"; I. Lévi, *L'Ecclésiastique ou la Sagesse de Jésus, fils de Sira: Texte original hébreu édité, traduit et commenté* (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études, Sciences religieuses 10.1; Paris 1898) 8, ad 39:23: "G. [i.e. the Greek translator] a peut-être compris; mais si on n'avait pas le texte hébreu, on traduirait: « il changea les eaux en eau salée ». ὕδατα doit signifier, dans sa pensée, les *lieux arrosés*". W.O.E. Oesterley, *The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus in the Revised Version with introduction and notes* (The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; Cambridge, 1912) 262, translates "As he hath turned the waters into saltness", but explains: "As God turned the well-watered plain of Sodom into a salt marsh, so will He punish the heathen; cp. Ps. cvii. 34". Minissale, *Versione greca*, 189 incorrectly records the Greek rendering under "more generic expressions". But the Latin translator also obviously did not conceive of the u¢data as "watery land": *conuertit aquas et siccata est terra.*

[14] Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, 27.

pared with a flood invading the dry land than with a transformation of sweet into salty water. But how then to fit in line *d*? It would be far-fetched to explain it in the sense that the impious differed as much from the holy as salty from sweet water. The Latin translator had a better idea: he thought of the crossing of the Sea of Reeds, Exodus 14, where the water proved as saving for the Israelites as it was pernicious to the Egyptians, an appropriate event to illustrate the blessing of the pious and the punishment of villains.

Our approach here has been to suppose that the translators worked essentially from the same parent texts as the ones that have come down to us. But of course some of their alleged rewritings may have been faithful renderings of readings differing from ours. Thus, the Greek translator no doubt read לזדים, "to the impious", in line *f*.[15] The Latin translator may have found in *a* the more plausible ἐπέκλυσεν instead of the transmitted ἐπεκάλυψεν. Conversely, in the awkward line *e*, in which we miss a mention of the holy, his *uiis illorum* may be based on a corrupt reading ταῖς ὁδοῖς instead of τοῖς ὁσίοις, unless *uiis* itself is a corruption of *piis*.[16]

Returning to our subject proper, we find that the share of the Dead Sea in the destruction of Sodom is not in the original Hebrew text of Sir 39:22-24, that it was introduced in sober words by the Greek translator, and that it was abandoned again by whoever translated the Greek into Latin. And even the Greek just mentions the fact, without stating expressly why God transformed the waters.

2. *Julius Africanus apud Syncellus* Ecloga Chronographica *187-189*

In spite of his double name, which might suggest otherwise, Julius Africanus was neither a Roman nor an African but a Palestinian Christian possibly of Jewish descent who lived in the late second and the first half of the third century. He was a many-sided author who in addition to encyclopaedic and exegetical writings wrote the first Christian chronicle of which anything has remained. This chronicle, the Χρονογραφίαι, may date roughly to 225 CE; fragments of it are preserved in Eusebius and especially George Syncellus.[17] Among these, the following three passages transmitted by Syncellus are of interest to our subject:[18]

> Λὼτ σὺν τῇ γαμετῇ καὶ ταῖς θυγατράσιν ἐκπεμφθεὶς εἰς Σηγὼρ περισώζεται, τῆς γυναικὸς μόνης ἐπιστραφείσης καὶ διὰ τοῦτο

[15] See supra note 7. Minissale, *Versione greca*, as a whole is devoted to text-critical aspects of this sort.

[16] Peters, *Buch Jesus Sirach*, 332.

[17] See F. Winkelmann, "Iulius Africanus", *RAC* 19 (2001) 508-18.

[18] In chapters 187, 188 and 189 of his *Ecloga Chronographica*; p. 113 ll. 19-24, p. 114 ll. 12-16 and p. 114 ll. 23-4 of A.A. Mosshammer's 1984 edition in the Bibliotheca Teubneriana.

παγείσης εἰς στήλην ἁλὸς ἀδιάλυτον, ἣν εἰσέτι πολλοὶ χάριν ἱστορίας ὀρῶσιν ἐρχόμενοι. Σηγὼρ δὲ ἡ πόλις διὰ τὸν Λὼτ ἐσώθη τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ διαφθαρέντων ἀνδρῶν, ὥς φασι, καὶ τῆς λίμνης ἅμα τῇ γῇ ἀνατραπείσης.

Lot escaped death when he and his wife and daughters were sent away to Segor. Only his wife turned around and as a result was frozen into an indissoluble pillar of salt; in the pursuit of knowledge, many even to this day come to look at it. The city of Segor survived because of Lot, although its citizens perished, so it is said, and the lake, along with the land, was overturned.[19]

This passage resumes the statements of Gen 19:15, 20-26 and presumably uses the mention in Wis 10:7 that there is still an ἀπιστούσης ψυχῆς μνημεῖον ἑστηκυῖα στήλη ἁλός, "monument to an unbelieving soul, a pillar of salt standing". To these facts he adds two more: the "touristic" visits to the pillar of salt, known to us also from pilgrim reports,[20] and, which interests us here, the lake together with the land being overthrown.

συνέβαλλον δὲ παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τὴν ἁλικήν, ἣ καλεῖται νυν θάλαττα νεκρά· ἐν ταύτῃ πλεῖστα τῶν θαυμασίων τεθέαμαι. ζῴων τε γάρ οὐδὲν ἐκεῖνο φέρει τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ νεκροὶ μὲν ὑποβρύχιοι φέρονται, ζῶντες δὲ οὐδ' ἂν ῥᾳδίως βαπτίσαιντο. λύχνοι δὲ καιόμενοι μὲν ἐπιφέρονται, σβεννύμενοι δὲ καταδύουσιν.

They met by the Salt Sea, which is now called the Dead Sea. In this sea, I have witnessed a great many marvellous things. For that body of water sustains no living thing. Corpses are carried beneath its depths, but the living would not easily even dip under it. Lighted torches are borne upon it, but when they are extinguished they sink (trans. W. Adler & P. Tuffin).

This passage connects a number of things worth knowing about the Dead Sea but not found in the Scriptures to the reference to Gen 14:3, where the kings come to "the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea)". The name Dead Sea may have been coined first in Latin (*Mare Mortuum*), in the entourage of Pompey when, at the end of the Third Mithridatic war, in 63-62 BCE, he was for some time in Judea.[21] It is attested in Greek since the

[19] Translation by W. Adler & P. Tuffin, *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 141, except for λίμνης, which they (thinking of Gen 13:10?; cf. supra note 13) render as "marsh" instead of "lake".

[20] Cf. P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient: Histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête arabe* (Paris: Cerf, 1985) 192-3, 284. Earlier, Josephus *A.J.* 1.203 remarks: ἱστόρησα δ' αὐτήν, ἔτι γαρ καὶ νυν διαμένει. "I have seen this pillar which remains to this day" (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray); his ἱστόρησα may have inspired Africanus' ἱστορίας.

[21] As argued by A. Barzano, "La conoscenza e la denominazione del Mar Morto nell'antichità classica: dalla geografia alla teologia" in M. Sordi (ed.), *Geografia e storiografia nel mondo classico* (Contributi dell'Istituto di storia antica 14; Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1988) 178-93 at 184 and 19 note 36.

second century CE, in Pausanias and Galen. Where, however, did Africanus learn of the "wonderful things" he saw there? At first sight the answer seems obvious: he actually saw them, which he states in so many words, and as a native Palestinian, who had probably lived for some time in Emmaus,[22] he could easily have visited the lake. However, since dead human bodies do not differ very much from living ones in specific gravity, his claim to have seen that the former sink while the latter remain afloat cannot be correct, to say nothing of the rare opportunities to see corpses in the Dead Sea, and that underneath the surface. At the same time, this claim may be read in so many words in Pausanias 5.7.5, where it is said that τὰ μὲν ζῶντα πέφυκεν οὐ νηχόμενα ἐποχεῖσθαι, τὰ δὲ θνήσκοντα ἐς βυθὸν χωρεῖν, "living creatures float in it naturally without swimming; dying creatures sink to the bottom". So the suspicion is that Africanus got this information less from personal inspection than from reading Greek authors. His characterization of the Dead Sea water just after our passage as παντὶ ὕδατι πάσχον τὰ ἐναντία, "having the opposite qualities to those of any water" only serves to reinforce this impression, for Pausanias introduces the words just cited with the sentence: ἡ δὲ θάλασσα ἡ Νεκρὰ πάσχει παντὶ ὕδατι ἄλλῳ τὰ ἐναντία, "The Dead Sea has the opposite qualities to those of any other water". Also, his remark on burning versus extinguished lamps seem to be copied from a source.[23] Africanus acts here as the *Buntschriftsteller* rather than as the exact observer.

> ὑπονοεῖται δὲ ἀνατετράφθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν τῶν περιοικούντων ἀσέβειαν.
>
> And it is believed that the sea was overturned by God because of the impiety of the neighbouring peoples.[24]

This passage is an important complement to the first one. There, we read that the destruction of the land of Sodom brought with it the transformation of the Dead Sea; here, it is said expressly that that transformation has happened because of the impiety of the inhabitants.

Taking the statements together, we can observe a double increase compared to the passage in Ecclesiasticus. First, the combined punishment of people, land and sea because of the impiety of the first-mentioned is made explicit. Second, the author dishes up information from Greek sources, information that has no connection with the punishment topic.

22 Winkelmann, "Iulius Africanus", 510.

23 Cf. Barzanò, "La conoscenza", 188.

24 Translation by Adler & Tuffin, *Chronography*, 142, except for ἀνατετράφθαι, which they render by "was made sterile". I wanted to keep the rendering of the first passage.

3. Martyrdom of Pionius *4.18-21*

Among the hundreds of texts that narrate the deaths of Christian martyrs, few are reliable as historical documents. One of these is the text devoted to the presbyter Pionius who died a martyr in Smyrna during the persecution of Emperor Decius in 250 CE. This *Martyrdom of Pionius*,[25] preserved in one Greek manuscript and a number of ancient translations, is not, however, without its problems. Was it written – apart from the account of his death – by Pionius himself? Were the speeches it contains actually delivered? Was it composed in one go, or are there layers in the text? We will not discuss these questions here.[26] Suffice it to say that most scholars hold that the *Martyrdom* as we know it was circulating in the last part of the third century; Eusebius (who erroneously thought Pionius was a contemporary of the second-century martyr Polycarp) summarises its contents in his *Ecclesiastical History* 4.15.47.

The text begins by narrating how Pionius was invited to sacrifice to the gods, in accordance with the edict of the emperor. As he refused, he was led amid great public interest to the forum of Smyrna to be questioned there. As soon as he was allowed to speak, he delivered a speech explaining why he could not possibly worship the "so-called gods". In this speech, which fills chapter 4, he dwells on an imminent judgment of the world. Many indications, he argues, point to this judgment; to quote his own words, *Martyrdom of Pionius* 4.18-21:

> [18]ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἀποδημήσας καὶ ἅπασαν τὴν Ἰουδαίαν περιελθὼν γῆν περάσας τε τὸν Ἰορδάνην ἐθεασάμην γῆν ἕως τοῦ νῦν μαρτυροῦσαν τὴν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γενομένην αὐτῇ ὀργήν, δι' ἃς ἐποίουν οἱ κατοικοῦντες αὐτὴν ἁμαρτίας, ξενοκτονοῦντες, ξενηλατοῦντες, βιαζόμενοι. [19]εἶδον καπνὸν ἐξ αὐτῆς ἕως τοῦ νῦν ἀναβαίνοντα καὶ γῆν πυρὶ τετεφρωμένην, ἄμοιρον παντὸς καρποῦ καὶ πάσης ὑγρᾶς οὐσίας. [20]εἶδον καὶ θάλασσαν νεκράν, ὕδωρ ὑπηλλαγμένον καὶ ἔξω τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν φόβῳ θείῳ ἀτονῆσαν καὶ τρέφειν ζῷον μὴ δυνάμενον καὶ τὸν ἐναλλόμενον εἰς αὐτὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐκβαλλόμενον εἰς ἄνω καὶ κατέχειν ἀνθρώπου σῶμα παρ' ἑαυτῇ μὴ δυναμένην. ὑποδέξασθαι γὰρ ἄνθρωπον οὐ θέλει ἵνα μὴ δι' ἄνθρωπον πάλιν ἐπιτιμηθῇ. [21]καὶ ταῦτα μακρὰν ὑμῶν

[25] The more recent editions include H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (OECT; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) xxviii-xxx and 136-67; A. Hilhorst, in A.A.R. Bastiaensen et al., *Atti e Passioni dei Martiri* (Scrittori greci e latini; Vicenza: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, 1987) 150-91 and 453-77; L. Robert, G.W. Bowersock & C.P. Jones, *Le Martyre de Pionios, prêtre de Smyrne* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1994).

[26] As for the authorship of Pionius, I have ventured to express my doubts in "Heidenen, joden en christenen in Smyrna: De verdedigingsrede van de martelaar Pionius in de vervolging van Decius", *Hermeneus* 66 (1994) 160-6 at 163-5. Also, Eusebius speaks of της *περὶ* αὐτοῦ γραφῆς (*Hist. Eccl.* 4.15.47).

ὄντα λέγω. ὑμεῖς ὁρᾶτε καὶ διηγεῖσθε Λυδίας γῆν Δεκαπόλεως κεκαυμένην πυρὶ καὶ προκειμένην εἰς δεῦρο ὑπόδειγμα ἀσεβων.

[18]Once on a journey I travelled all through Palestine, and crossing the Jordan river I saw a land that bears witness even to this day of the divine anger that has afflicted it by reason of the sins committed by its inhabitants, who killed foreigners, drove them out, or did them violence. [19]I saw smoke rising even until now, and a land scorched by fire, deprived of all produce and water. [20]I saw, too, the Dead Sea, a body of water transformed and depleted beyond its natural state by the fear of God, unable to nurture any living thing; indeed, anybody jumping into it is expelled upwards by the water, and it cannot hold even a man's body within it. It refuses to receive man lest it ever again be punished because of man. [21]But here I speak of things that are far away. You yourselves see and testify how the land of the Lydian Decapolis is scorched by fire and remains as an example of men's impiety even to this day.[27]

The speaker evokes a journey he made to the Holy Land, where the sight of the barren region near the Dead Sea and the Dead Sea itself with its remarkable qualities impressively reminded him of God's punishing the impious during the Sodom disaster; and the same experience, he argues, his listeners can have themselves when visiting the land of "Scorched Lydia" (Λυδία Κατακεκαυμένη), a region some 120 km East of Smyrna as the crow flies.[28] We will leave aside the question of whether this passage was actually pronounced by the martyr or whether it stems from a redactor; from now on, when using the name Pionius, we mean the character in the text, not the real person. What interests us here is the origin of his statements: do they reflect traditional material or are they fresh elements, found here for the first time?

a. Biblical elements

Several features in Pionius' account are of biblical origin. The Sodomites doing violence to strangers were painted in Gen 19:4-9. Earlier, in Gen 13:13, they were said to be "wicked, great sinners against the Lord", and in 18:20, their sin was "very grave". The prophets referred to their violence, adultery, lying and pride, Isa 1:10, 15 (quoted in *Martyrdom of Pionius* 13.2!); Jer 23:14; Ezek 16:49; and Wis 19:14 mentions them as "refusing to welcome unknown men on their arrival" (a mild disapproval, needed to show that the Egyptians are still much worse than the Sodomites). The destruction of the land, described by Pionius in §19, "I saw smoke rising even until now, and a land scorched by fire, deprived of all produce and water", recalls Gen 19:25, 28; cf. Deut 29:23; Wis 10:7. Furthermore, in

[27] Translation by Musurillo, *Acts*, but rendering τὸν ἐναλλόμενον in §20 by "anybody jumping" rather than "anything thrust".

[28] See Robert, *Martyre de Pionios*, 60.

the Old Testament the destruction of Sodom is often brought up as a warning to show that God will punish any sinners: Deut 29:22-28; Ps 11:6; 107:33-34; Sir 16:8; Wis 10:6-8; cf. also *T. 12 Patr*, *T. Ash.* 7:1; *Jub.* 16:5-6. This continues in the New Testament: Matt 10:15; 11:23-24; Luke 10:12; 17:28-29; Jude 7 and 2 Pet 2:6. Finally, the *Martyrdom*'s §21 is interesting; there, the Lydian region is entered as a warning example in words recalling similar statements about Sodom in biblical and parabiblical texts:

Martyrdom 4.21	προκειμένην εἰς δεῦρο ὑπόδειγμα ἀσεβῶν
Jude 7	πρόκεινται δεῖγμα πυρὸς αἰωνίου δίκην ὑπέχουσαι
2 Pet 2:6	ὑπόδειγμα μελλόντων ἀσεβεῖν τεθεικώς
3 *Macc.* 2:5	παράδειγμα τοις ἐπιγινομένοις καταστήσας.

This application of the warning example of Sodom to a comparable landscape shows the author's ability to combine traditional and novel elements. Pionius' indebtedness to the biblical and parabiblical literature also makes itself felt in the vocabulary:

μαρτυροῦσαν 4:18	- μαρτύριον Wis 10:7
καπνὸν 4.19	- καπνιζομένη Wis 10:7
πυρὶ 4.19	- πυρὶ *3 Macc.* 2:5
τετεφρωμένην 4.19	- τεφρώσας 2 Pet 2:6
προκειμένην ... ὑπόδειγμα 4.21	- πρόκεινται δεῖγμα Jude 7
ὑπόδειγμα 4.21	- ὑπόδειγμα 2 Pet 2:6,
	- παράδειγμα *3 Macc.* 2:5,
	- δεῖγμα Jude 7.

b. Secular Greek elements

On the other hand, the *Martyrdom* has elements that, while lacking in biblical writings, are strongly reminiscent of secular Greek literature. Paradoxically, they have mainly to do with the Dead Sea. That Sea is only rarely mentioned in the Old Testament, and never in the New Testament, and understandably so. Its salty character was not sensational for people used to it, and economically the lake was hardly of interest, since it lacked fish. Quite the contrary was the case with the Greeks. Salt lakes were an unknown phenomenon in their world, and apart from the saltiness – in reality because of it – the Sea had a number of qualities which highly intrigued the Greeks. Reports about them appear as early as the fourth century BCE, with Aristotle, and return every now and then in the writings of historians and

geographers, Greeks as well as Romans.[29] Several of these qualities are indicated by Pionius: the nature of the water is transformed; the Sea is unable to nurture any living being; living beings and objects thrust into it are pushed up; it is unable to hold a human body within it. Like Africanus, he uses the name "Dead Sea" rather than one of the biblical names, "Salt Sea", "Sea of the Arabah", "Eastern Sea".[30] Pionius' observations more than once recall the formulations of the classical authors. Thus, Diodorus the Sicilian 2.48.7 (cf. 19.98) says that the water of the Sea is so very bitter, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι μήτ' ἰχθὺν τρέφειν μήτ' ἄλλο τῶν καθ' ὕδατος εἰωθότων ζώων εἶναι, "that it cannot nurture fish or any of the other animals which commonly live in water", cf. Pionius' §20 τρέφειν ζῷον μὴ δυνάμενον, "unable to nurture any living thing".

c. Original features

We have already seen that the author was able to combine items previously unrelated, such as his application of the idea of a warning example, usually used for the barren plain near the Dead Sea, to the scorched region of Lydia in §21. In §20, however, a still more striking instance of this ability is met with. There, we are told that the Dead Sea is "transformed and depleted beyond its natural state by the fear of God, unable to nurture any living thing; indeed, anybody jumping into it is expelled upwards by the water, and it cannot hold even a man's body within it. It refuses to receive man lest it ever again be punished because of man".[31] Pionius gives evidence here of a view of the Dead Sea as a living being, a vision known in literary criticism as "pathetic fallacy" and used in all sorts of literature, not least the Bible and classical literature.

However, there is an ambiguity here that cries out for some analysis. The crucial element is the little word πάλιν at the end of §20: ἵνα μὴ ... πάλιν ἐπιτιμηθῇ, "lest it *ever again* be punished". If this word were lacking, the Dead Sea would not have been punished as yet, and its determination not to admit human beings into its waters would be solely the result of its own decision, a decision inspired by the concern to ward off a possible future punishment. However, πάλιν is there; and the Latin translation of the passage, *ne iterum ... aut crimen incurrat aut poenam*, "lest it *again* incurs either a reproach or a punishment", helps to make it unadvisable to explain it away as an error in the textual transmission. The conclusion,

[29] The texts may be found in M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism Edited with Introductions, Translations and Commentary* (3 vols.; Publications of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Section of Humanities; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974-1984).

[30] See Barzanò, "La conoscenza", 179 for these names.

[31] The word ἐπιτιμάω, which normally means "to censure", is here used for "to punish". See for this meaning BDAG s.v. 2.

then, that the Sea has already been punished before is inescapable and we have to ask ourselves what punishment the speaker is alluding to. The answer may be found in the context, which is about natural disasters serving as examples of God's punishments. Just before our §20 there was the destruction of the plain of Sodom, just after it we hear about the scorched region of Lydia. So the sterility and inaccessibility of the Dead Sea, we must suppose, are also presented as a punishment by God. God punishes the Sea by transforming its water – obviously by making it salty – and as a result the Sea can no longer nurture any living beings nor hold a human body within it. This punishment frightens the Sea to such an extent that it tries as hard as it can not to be subjected to punishment again; what punishment is meant we are not told, perhaps a total annihilation. The punishment already undergone was "because of man"; evidently the Sea has been struck just like the plain of Sodom because of its dealings with the impious local population. Therefore, it is man that should be kept away, and indeed, from now on, the Sea ὑποδέξασθαι ... ἄνθρωπον οὐ θέλει ἵνα μὴ δι᾽ ἄνθρωπον πάλιν ἐπιτιμηθῇ, "refuses to receive man lest it ever again be punished because of man". Here, however, the speaker loses sight of something he said just before. God had punished the Sea by making it impossible for its water to hold a man's body within it. Now, if one is unable to do something, it makes no sense to say that that person has decided not to do it again; an act of will presupposes that one has the choice to do so or not. At best we might say that the Sea after being punished wants to be punished, that is, acquiesces in the punishment. But that is certainly not what is meant at the end of §20. There the keeping away of human beings is the free decision of the Sea. So there is an inconsistency in our passage: the inaccessibility of the Dead Sea for men is presented both as part of the punishment by God and as a measure taken of its own accord by the Sea.[32]

More important, however, is the positive side of the author's exposition. We have seen already that Julius Africanus produced bits of secular information unconnected with the theme of God's punishment. Pionius also presents elements discussed in Greek authors, but, unlike Africanus, he does combine them with the leading theme. The impossibility for man to dive into the Sea, stressed time and again by scholars from Aristotle onward, receives here its profound meaning: it is because the Dead Sea does not want to be punished again because of man, as it was punished during the Sodom catastrophe. In this way, he manages to establish a logical connec-

[32] In Lev 18:25 we have the sequence land committing a crime by being defiled by its inhabitants – punishment of the land by God for this crime – subsequent decision of the land to "vomit out" its inhabitants, but here God's punishment and the land's decision do not coincide.

tion between the biblical and the classical items, a connection which, to the best of the present author's knowledge, is entirely his own achievement.

4. Conclusion

In the centuries between 200 BCE and 300 CE, so far we have found only three passages connecting the salty nature of the Dead Sea with the punishment of the Sodomites. Sir 39:23 in its Greek version of *c.* 130 BCE only mentioned that God's wrath changed the water from sweet to salty; its Latin translation from the third century CE dropped that idea. About the same time, however, in *c.* 225 CE, Julius Africanus, amid physical information about the Dead Sea borrowed by him from Greek sources, expressly stated that the lake as well as the land of Sodom were overthrown by God because of the impiety of the Sodomites. Some decades later, the *Martyrdom of Pionius*, in a discussion of the Dead Sea, again uses biblical as well as secular Greek elements but now combines them into a meaningful and daring vision not found anywhere else: the Dead Sea does not admit human beings into itself (a feature stressed by secular authors and lacking in Scripture) in order not to be punished again as it was punished during the Sodom disaster. Curiously, the author overlooked the fact that he ascribed the inaccessibility of the Sea both to God's punishment and to a decision by the Sea itself.

Why did the motif of the punishment of the Dead Sea meet with so little success? Of course, we can only speculate, but the explanation might simply be that man is attached to the land he inhabits, whereas the sea, even if quite near, remains unfamiliar. Therefore, punishing the land together with the inhabitants seems natural in a sense (it is already in Gen 3:17); punishing the sea is involving an outsider.[33]

[33] I have gratefully taken advantage of critical remarks by Carolien Hilhorst-Böink and Eibert Tigchelaar, and of suggestions by the members of the Groningen Societas Graeca et Latina, where I presented a version of this paper, especially Roos Meijering, Ruurd Nauta and Stefan Radt.

DON'T LOOK BACK: FROM THE WIFE OF LOT TO ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

JAN BREMMER

Introduction

One of the most striking scenes of the Sodom and Gomorrah episode is the metamorphosis of the wife of Lot into a pillar of salt. Yet the scene occupies only one verse in the whole of the Genesis account: "But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt" (Gen 19:26).[1] It is rather surprising to observe that the scene has attracted very little attention from biblical scholars. Of the two recent monographs on the episode, Weston Fields manages not to say anything, whereas Jimmy Loader observes only: it "may have been an etiological element which explained some bizarre figure in the rock formation near the Dead Sea", and "the injunction 'not to look back ...' is a widespread motif found often in folklore of widely differing cultures". Lot's wife meets her end because of (to cite Loader), "her own, individual transgression of the express command given in verse (Gen 19:)17", and he concludes that "If human beings are punished by Yahweh, it is because of their own fault, not because of that of a community".[2] This interpretation is hardly persuasive, since the whole of Sodom and Gomorrah is destroyed, whereas there must have been people in those cities, for example women and children, who had not participated in the attempt to violate the angels visiting Lot's house (Gen 19:1-11).

The episode does not fare much better in the two most recent authoritative commentaries on *Genesis*. Horst Seebass passes over the episode and Claus Westermann comments only: "ein Mensch darf dem Vernichtigungsgericht Gottes nicht zusehen" and "dieses Gebot begegnet häufig und ist weit verbreitet, z.B. Orpheus und Eurydike".[3] Yet in the case of Orpheus there is no destruction by God, and the examples are therefore hardly com-

[1] All biblical translations are from the NRSV.

[2] W.W. Fields, *Sodom and Gomorrah: History and Motif in Biblical Narrative* (JSOTSS 231; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); J.A. Loader, *A Tale of Two Cities. Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament, Early Jewish and Early Christian Traditions* (CBET 1; Kampen: Kok, 1990) 41, who refers to the studies by Dillmann, Gunkel, Von Rad and Harland (note 54).

[3] C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36* (BKAT I/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981) 371 (quotes), 375; H. Seebass, *Genesis II, I. Vätergeschichte I (11,27-22,24)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997) 148.

parable in this manner. The fullest attempt at explanation is perhaps that by the polymath Theodor Gaster, who noted:

> Within the dramatic context of the story this means, of course, that they must set their faces hopefully toward the future, not nostalgically toward the past. This, however, is simply a clever "literary" twist to an element of the older folktale which really had its origin in magic and in religious convention, for it is a common rule in ancient rituals that one must not turn one's gaze backward.[4]

Although there is some truth in these words, we must point out that Gaster's older folktale is not attested at all and neither can we state that in ancient rituals it was "a common rule" that people should not look back.

These few comments seem to confirm the words of Anna Akhmatova's famous poem *Lot's Wife* (§7):

> Who will grieve for this woman? Does she not seem
> too insignificant for our concern?

Yet in itself it is not that strange that scholars and commentators on the Old Testament are a bit at a loss as to what to make of the episode of Lot's wife. It is not referred to elsewhere in the Old Testament and mentioned only once in the New Testament (§7). Moreover, there is no other parallel in the bible for the prohibition on looking back and neither does the theme seem to occur in the literature of the Ancient Near East,[5] although it may be attested once in Hittite ritual: after an exorcism of demons, the witch "goes away [and while *walking off*] she does not turn around".[6]

On the other hand, it is quite widespread in Greco-Roman antiquity with as its most famous example, of course, the already mentioned case of Orpheus and Eurydice. It might therefore be useful to try to achieve greater clarity in this area and to take a closer look at the classical examples, even though in that field the theme has also received little attention until now.[7] Most studies think it sufficient to refer to Rohde's classic study,[8] but Rohde did not much more than list a few examples.[9] We will therefore

[4] Th. Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament* (2 vols.; New York; Harper & Row, 1969) 1:159-60, 366 at 159.

[5] With thanks to Marc Linssen and Martin Stol.

[6] Gaster, *Myth*, 1:159, who manages to misquote both the reference and translation of KUB XXVII.67.iv.3 (tr. A. Goetze) in *ANET* 348. However, J.V. García Trabazo, *Textos religiosos hititas. Mitos, plegarias y rituales* (Madrid: Trotta, 2002) only sees "[...] regres[a...]".

[7] I know only one detailed discussion: M. Teufel, *Brauch und Ritus bei Apollonius Rhodius* (Diss. Tübingen, 1939) 171-85, to whose collection of passages I am much indebted, but see also J.G. Frazer on Ovid, *F.* 6.164; A.S. Pease on Cicero, *Div.* 1.49; A.S.F. Gow on Theocritus 24.96; M.L. West on Hesiod, *Theog.* 182 and F. Bömer on Ovid, *F.* 5.439.

[8] See, for example, M. Bettini, *Anthropology and Roman Culture: Kinship, Time, Images of the Soul* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins, 1991) 283 note 10.

[9] E. Rohde, *Psyche* (2 vols.; Leipzig and Tübingen, 1898[2]) 2:85 note 2.

divide the Greco-Roman material into five sections: contact with the underworld and chthonic powers (§1), magic (§2), purifications (§3), going abroad (§4) and creations (§5), even though the boundaries between these categories are sometimes a bit fuzzy. Subsequently, we will try to arrive at a preliminary conclusion (§6), and we will conclude with looking at the moving story of Orpheus and Eurydice before returning to Lot's wife (§7).

1. Underworld and chthonic powers

When Circe gives Odysseus instructions for his visit to the underworld, she also tells him to slaughter black lambs male and female and to turn their heads towards Hades. He himself "must face away looking towards the streams of the river" (*Odyssey* 10.528), i.e. the river Okeanos, the direction from which he arrived. The passage immediately raises the question whether this ritual prohibition is identical with that on not looking back when moving away, but we will look at that problem in the preliminary conclusion (§6). There are several examples of this Greek fear at looking Hades straight in the face,[10] but there is only one comparable Roman example, viz. Apuleius (*Metam.* 2.11). This strongly suggests that Apuleius derived the theme from the Greeks. As many details from Homer's necromantic ritual derive from the Ancient Near East,[11] it is no surprise that we encounter the prohibition on looking back in Assyrian ghost rituals too.[12] An Oriental influence is certainly possible, perhaps even likely.

There are also some examples from contacts with chthonic powers. When Athenians passed by the grove of the Eumenides in Colonus, they had to remain silent and, having finished their visit to the sanctuary, they had to return without looking back.[13] In a strange ritual in Temesa (Southern Italy), which probably goes back to ancient rites of deflowering, the inhabitants had to bring a nubile girl to a ghostly comrade of Odysseus and to return without looking back.[14] In Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*,

[10] See Headlam-Knox on Herondas 3.17.

[11] M.L. West, *The East Face of Helicon. West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) 426-7.

[12] J.A. Scurlock, Magical Means of Dealing with Ghosts in Ancient Mesopotamia (Diss. U. of Chicago, 1988) 45-6, 65.

[13] Sophocles, *Oed. col.* 126ff, 156ff, 489f; cf. N. Loraux, "Alors apparaîtront les Erinyes", *L'Écrit du temps* 17 (1988) 93-107 at 98.

[14] Dieg. on Callimachus F 98. For this ritual see most recently A. Mele, "L'eroe di Temesa tra Ausoni e Greci", in *Forme di contatto e processi di trasformazione nelle società antiche* (Palermo, 1984) 848-88; M. Visintin, *La vergine e l'eroe: Temesa e la leggenda di Euthymos di Locri* (Bari: Edipuglia, 1992); J.N. Bremmer, "Rituele ontmaagding in Simon Vestdijks De held van Temesa", in G. Jensma & Y. Kuiper (eds.), *De god van nederland is de beste. Elf opstellen over religie in de moderne Nederlandse literatuur* (Kampen: Kok

Medea tells Jason to bring a libation to spooky Hekate and impresses upon him: "let no footfall or barking of dogs cause you to turn around, lest you ruin everything and do not yourself return to your companions in the condition you should" (3.1038-41, tr. R. Hunter). According to Ovid's *Fasti* (4.437-40), during the Roman Lemuria, the festival for the ancestors in their more ghostly manifestations, worshippers threw black beans away with face averted. While they pronounced a ritual formula, the shade of the ancestor was thought to gather the beans and "to follow unseen behind". It is evidently felt as *unheimlich* that the shade follows behind. And indeed, as we will see, behind one's back is where not so propitious powers can lurk (§6).

2. Magic

A second early case is the prohibition on looking back in the case of magic. This, too, is very early attested. In the *Odyssey* we read that Leukothea gives Odysseus a veil to save him from the perils of the sea, but she orders him to throw it back into the sea when he has safely reached the main land and "you yourself turn away" (5.350). Apparently, there is something in this "magical" veil that Odysseus should keep away from. A similar attitude we find in Sophocles' *Root-Cutters* (F 534 Radt), where Medea "turns her head backwards" to pick the roots of magical herbs. Our source Macrobius (*Sat.* 5.19.9-10) clearly no longer understood the gesture and interpreted it as a way to avoid being killed by the awful smell of the herbs. It seems a reasonable guess that Medea picked the roots for rejuvenating Pelias,[15] and it is therefore not surprising that in Ovid's description of this magical act Medea orders everybody to turn away their eyes (*Metam.* 7.256). The prohibition also recurs in the description in Ovid's *Fasti* (6.164) of the magical ceremony during which the nymph Crane restored the cheeks of a child that had been deformed by *striges*.

In fact, the prohibition on looking back during medical and magical ceremonies (two categories often hard to separate in antiquity)[16] was particularly frequent in Roman and Late Antique times. Pliny provides several

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Agora, 1997) 80-98; B. Currie, "Euthymus of Locri: a Case Study in Heroization in the Classical Period", *JHS* 122 (2002) 24-44.

[15] See Radt *ad loc.*; for Medea and Pelias, H. Meyer, *Medeia und die Peliaden: eine attische Novelle und ihre Entstehung. Ein Versuch zur Sagenforschung auf archäologischer Grundlage* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1980); M. Schmidt, "Sorceresses", in E. Reeder (ed.), *Pandora. Women in Classical Greece* (Baltimore: The Walter's Art Gallery, 1995) 57-62.

[16] See, for example, F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Revealing Antiquity 10; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) *passim*.

examples,[17] and walking backwards after the ceremony regularly occurs in the Greek magical papyri.[18]

3. Purifications

In the decade before 450 BCE a *lex sacra* was put up in the sanctuary of Zeus Meilichios in Sicilian Selinous. This recently discovered text stipulates that if a man wants to be purified from *elasteroi* (a kind of avenging spirit) he must perform a ritual that ends with "and having sacrificed a piglet to Zeus, let him go out from it, and let him turn around" (B 5). The editors persuasively suggest that "perhaps, as in a number of magical and suchlike practices, he is to turn around and not turn back".[19] The formulation of the editors indicates that they find it hard to pin down exactly what kind of ritual is taking place in their text, but their primary comparison with magic is not quite felicitous, since the text itself seems to speak of a purification (B 1-2: ἀποκαθαίρεσθαι). And indeed, in the virtually contemporaneous *Choephoroi* of Aeschylus, which was performed first in 458 BCE, Electra wonders how to perform her mother's libations for her father Agamemnon: "am I to go away again without looking round, when I have thrown the vessel, like one who casts away the residue of a purificatory sacrifice" (98-9, tr. A.F. Garvie, slightly adapted). The Greek verb used for "to cast away", (*ekpempô*), although

> normally applied to humans, is sometimes used of the disposal of the polluted remains, as though there were something slightly animate about them. The purifier would emphasize separation from them by "throwing them over his shoulder", and "walking away without looking back".[20]

These comments by the best modern scholar of ancient pollution clearly focus attention on a highly important aspect of the ritual and one to which we will have to return. In the *Agamemnon*, a tragedy from the same trilogy, it is said of Justice that "the gold-bespangled mansions where there is filth upon the hands she forsakes with eyes averted and goes to what is clean" (776-8, tr. E. Fraenkel). The Greek word for clean, *hosia*, regularly stands in opposition to that what is polluted.[21] Thus once again we notice that the Greeks averted their eyes from polluted objects, and an old scholion on the

[17] Pliny, *Nat.* 21.176, 24.104, 29.91; similarly, the late antique Marcellus Empiricus 1.54, 8.52, 25.11.

[18] *PGM* I.38; IV.45, 2493; VII.439.

[19] M.H. Jameson, D.R. Jordan & R.D. Kotansky, *A Lex Sacra from Selinous* (GRBM 11; Durham NC: Duke University, 1993) 43.

[20] R. Parker, *Miasma. Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) 230.

[21] Parker, *Miasma*, 330.

Choephoroi (98) indeed tells us that the Athenians, having purified a house with a clay censer, threw out the pot on a triple crossroads and went home without looking back.[22] The notice is confirmed by Eustathius (on *Od.* 22.481), who mentions that some Greeks threw out the residues of purificatory sacrifices on the streets, averted their eyes and returned home without looking back.

In a discussion of offerings to the dead, the fourth-century Athenian exegete Cleidemus (*FGrH* 323 F 14) prescribes that one should

> dig a trench on the western side of the grave. Then standing beside the trench face the west, and pour over it water, reciting these words: "Water for cleansing to you for whom it is meet and lawful." After that pour scented oil.

As in the case of Electra (above), we see here a close connection between a libation to the dead, a purification and standing with one's back to the grave.

An influential passage was the burning with "wild firewood" of the serpents that tried to strangle the infant Heracles in his cot. Theocritus (24.95-6) lets Teiresias order Heracles' mother Alcmene:

> And at dawn let one of your handmaids gather up the ashes of the fire and cast them away, bearing them over the river to the rugged rocks beyond our boundaries; and then return without a backward glance (tr. A.S.F. Gow, adapted).

It was indeed customary to burn monstrous births and other abominations with wild or worthless wood.[23] On the other hand, the further acts seem to be somewhat overdone, since it was normal to remove abominations either over the borders or to leave them behind in the mountains,[24] but not both at the same time. Yet the act itself is clearly part of a purification process, since Teiresias continues with ordering to purify the house.

There is nothing comparable in Roman ritual, but Theocritus' passage was used as an intertext by Virgil (*Ecl.* 8.101) and Nemesianus (*Ecl.* 4.63ff.).

[22] For crossroads as a negative place and used for the removal of impure substances see Eupolis F 132 Kassel-Austin; J.N. Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 91; Parker, *Miasma*, 229; S.I. Johnston, "Crossroads", *ZPE* 88 (1991) 217-24.

[23] Parker, *Miasma*, 221.

[24] Over the borders: Bremmer, *Early Greek Concept*, 91; Parker, *Miasma*, 45. Mountains: Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (New York & London: Routledge, 1988^2) 44.

4. Going Abroad

One of the Pythagorean prescriptions was: "When going abroad, don't look back at the border(s)".[25] The idea had perhaps spread beyond Pythagorean circles, as according to Artemidorus' *Dreambook*: "To see one's head turned backwards so that one can see the things behind, is a hindrance to leaving one's fatherland, since it predicts a change of mind regarding leaving home" (1.36). Interestingly, late antique versions of the Pythagorean prescription added as explanation: "if not, the Erinyes, allies of Justice, will come after you".[26] Teufel provided the following explanation:

> die Unterweltsgeister sind hinter einem her, von denen sich der primitive Mensch in allen kritischen Momenten des Lebens, so auch bei der Abreise, umgeben und bedroht fühlt.[27]

The interpretation was typical of the preferred kind of approach of scholars at the end of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century when ghosts were seen everywhere. Yet Teufel's explanation is already contradicted by the fact that Hippolytus calls the Erinyes "allies of Justice". The expression is clearly derived from Heraclitus' statement that the sun should not transgress its measure: else the Erinyes, "allies of Justice", will discover it (B 94 Diels-Kranz), and points to the Erinyes as guarantors of the natural order.[28]

Pythagoras' prescription, if it is really his, belonged to those of his prescriptions that codified folk wisdom.[29] Psychologically, it is excellent advice: once a decision is taken, stick to it and do not look back.[30] We may compare the modern Greek custom that a bride should not look back when leaving her ancestral home,[31] and Jesus' remark to somebody who first wanted to say farewell to his relatives before following him: "No man who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). In both cases we can see the same connection between looking back and wavering, even if there is no mention of travelling abroad.

[25] Demetrius of Byzantium *apud* Athenaeus 10.452D; Plutarch, *Mor.* 12F; Diogenes Laertius 8.1.17; Porphyry, *Vit. Pyth.* 42; Suda, π 3124.

[26] Hippolytus, *Haer.* 6.26: ἐὰν ἀποδημῃς, μὴ ἐπιστρέφου· εἰ δὲ μή, Ἐριννύες Δίκης ἐπίκουροί σε μετελεύσονται; Iamblichus, *Protr.* 21.

[27] Teufel, *Brauch*, 171.

[28] Note also the combination of Eriny(e)s and Justice in Sophocles, *Ajax* 1390; Euripides, *Medea* 1389-90; Schol. Lycophron 1140 and *PGM* IV.2857; E. Rohde, *Kleine Schriften* (2 vols.; Tübingen and Leipzig, 1901) 2:241.

[29] For the prescriptions and their antiquity see W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1972) 166-92.

[30] Compare the Dutch expression: "Doe wel en zie niet om".

[31] J.K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage. A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964) 136.

In later antiquity the custom of not looking back could thus become a sign for the absence of worry: Pythagoras walked around "leisurely and unconcernedly (literally: without turning backwards)", and, according to Artemidorus' *Dreambook*, to dream of Dionysos and his followers meant freedom for slaves because of the lack of worry (τὸ ἀνεπίστρεπτον) of the divine company.[32] From there, the development into "heedlessness" was only a small step.[33]

5. Creations

The creations of a goddess, heroes and humankind are clearly connected but not that easy to understand. Having cut off Ouranos' member, Kronos threw it away backwards: it produced Aphrodite; Deucalion and Pyrrha threw behind them stones which turned into men and women, and the Idaean Dactyls were created when the nurses of Zeus took dust and threw it behind them.[34] The idea behind these reports is perhaps that the event of creation is too impressive to be seen, but our texts do not really give us any clear clues.

6. Preliminary conclusion

When we now look again at our material, we immediately notice that most of it is Greek. In fact, several Roman examples seem to have been inspired by Greek ones, and one may well wonder to what extent Ovid, an important source for the custom, drew his inspiration in this respect from Greek models.

As regards the meaning of the custom of not looking backwards, there seems to be room for at least three observations. First, the custom is clearly connected with the act of separation, as was already observed by Robert Parker (§3). This is in particular clear with purifications, starting a journey abroad and, perhaps, magic. Separation also seems clear in the case of Euripides' *Andromache* (293-4, tr. D. Kovacs) where the chorus sings of Hermes: "Would that the mother who bore him had cast him over her head to an evil end before he came to dwell on a ridge of Ida".

Second, there is also something of avoidance, of ensuring distance from events that are larger than life such as creations, from the *unheimliche* world

[32] Pythagoras: Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 15: σχολαίως τε καὶ ἀνεπιστρεπτι βαίνων, tr. J. Dillon & J. Hershbell. Dionysus: Artemidorus 2.37, note also 3.42 (lack of worry among drunks).

[33] Cf. Arrian, *Epict.* 2.5.9; Vettius Valens 43.27; Diog. Laert. 6.91.

[34] Aphrodite: Hesiod, *Th.* 182. Deucalion/Pyrrha: Acusilaus FGrH 2 F 35 = F 35 Fowler; Ovid, *Metam.* 1.383. Dactyls: Et. Magnum 465.35, which does not go back to Stesimbrotos, cf. Jacoby on Stesimbrotos FGrH 107 F 12 (contra Teufel, *Brauch*, 175).

of magic and the dead, where we have to deal with powers that cannot be trusted in the normal manner, or from events that are too terrible to watch, such as Jason's murder of Medea's brother Apsyrtos, when Medea "turned away her eyes and covered her face with her veil" so that she should not have to see the slaughter of her brother.[35] Similarly, when in Achilles Tatius' novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* (3.15.5) the heroine was gruesomely sacrificed, the soldiers and the general "averted their eyes from the sight". Here we may perhaps also compare reactions expressing an unwillingness to see things that are not meant to be seen, as when Shem and Japhet heard about the nakedness of their father Noah. They "took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness" (Gen 9:23). The *aversio oculorum*, as the Romans called it,[36] is thus a ritualized form of a natural human reaction. This aversion sometimes seems to go together with a fear of what lies behind our backs. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Erythraeans worshipped ὄπισθε θεαί, the "behind goddesses", whose *personae* we do not know in any detail, but whose ritual was clearly marked by reversals such as receiving a pig instead of a sheep and a nightly festival.[37]

Third, there is also a more banal reason that we have not yet met. People simply flee or run away without looking back in order to run as fast as possible. That is undoubtedly the reason why during the Delphian Septerion festival those run away "without looking back" who had put alight the hut of the dragon Python.[38] Similarly, after the sacrifice of Leucippe two attendants put her body in the coffin, overturned the altar on which she had been sacrificed and "fled away without looking back" (3.15.6).

In fact, to flee without looking back is a regularly occurring *topos* in Greek and Roman literature, starting with Xenophon (*Symposium* 4.50) and Plato (*Laws* 9.854C),[39] but Philo was also rather fond of the theme: it is not only his Moses who "runs away without looking back" from Pharaoh (*LA* 3.14).[40] Instead of fleeing, soldiers could also pursue their opponents

[35] Apollonius Rhodius 4.465-6, cf. my "Why Did Medea Kill Her Brother Apsyrtus?", in J.J. Clauss & S.I. Johnston (eds.), *Medea. Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy and Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) 83-100, reprinted in J.A. Lopez Férez (ed.), *Mitos en la literatura griega arcaica y clásica* (Madrid; Ediciones Clásicas, 2002) 495-513.

[36] F. Bömer on Ovid, *Metam.* 7.789.

[37] See F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte. Religionsgeschichtliche und epigraphische Untersuchungen zu den Kulten von Chios, Erythrai, Klazomenai und Phokaia* (Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana 22; Rome, Institut Suisse de Rome, 1985) 194-5.

[38] Plut. *Mor.* (= *Def. orac.*) 418A.

[39] Appian, *Bell. civ.* 2.9.62, *Syr.* 91, 186; Lucian, *Nigr.* 28; Dio Cassius 47.54.4; Eustathius on Homer, *Il.* 3.250, 4.389, *Od.* 2.291; scholion on Homer, *Il.* 20.188-94 (sign of extreme cowardice).

[40] Philo, *Conf.* 40, *Her.* 305, *Praem.* 17, 62, 117, *Sobr.* 13.

"without looking back",[41] and in the same manner one could pursue a noble cause.[42] According to *3 Maccabees*, when Ptolemy IV Philopator intended to enter the temple after his victory at Raphia in 217 BCE, all inhabitants of Jerusalem hurried to the temple. "Even young women who had been secluded in their chambers rushed out with their mothers" (1:18) and "mothers and nurses abandoned even newborn children here and there, some in houses and some in the streets, and without a backward look they crowded together at the most high temple" (1:20). Yet the urge to look back is always strong and, when the Flood starts, Philemon and Baucis are told to make for the heights, but they look already back when still an arrow's flight from the summit (Ovid, *Metam.* 8.696).

But even in this case, the borders between the different categories are perhaps not always that clear cut. When in Plautus' *Mostellaria* Tranio and Theopropides hear voices from within the haunted house, the former shouts to the latter: "Don't look back! Flee! Cover your Head!".[43]

7. Orpheus and Eurydice; Lot's wife

Having prepared, so to speak, the ground, we can finally return to the most famous prohibitions on looking back: Orpheus and Eurydice and Lot's wife. However, after all the early parallels it is remarkable that the evidence for the famous condition on which Orpheus could take his wife away from the underworld is so late. In fact, it is not attested before Roman times when Virgil is the first to mention the condition in his fourth *Georgic* (487). Strangely though, neither of the two main modern commentaries on the *Georgics* has anything of interest to say on the motif and neither has the most recent monograph on Orpheus.[44] In fact, the last detailed discussion of the motif in Latin poetry was by Maurice Bowra in a well known, influential article of more than fifty years ago.[45]

Unfortunately, Bowra's analysis is hardly satisfactory. Admittedly, he rightly observes that the motif is treated so allusively by Virgil that a source is probable,[46] but this does not necessarily imply a poem as he sug-

[41] Appian, *Hisp.* 25.99, 27.106

[42] Philo, *Deus* 116, *Migr.* 25, *Virt.* 30; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 4.17.133; Marcus Aurelius 8.5.1; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.1.8

[43] Plautus, *Most.* 523: cave respexis, fuge, operi caput.

[44] Cf. R.F. Thomas, *Virgil: Georgics* (2 vols.; CGLC; Cambridge, 1988) 2:230; R.A.B. Mynors, *Virgil Georgics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) 314-7; C. Segal, *Orpheus. The Myth of the Poet* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

[45] C.M. Bowra, "Orpheus and Eurydice", *CQ* NS 2 (1952) 113-26, reprinted, if slightly altered, in his *On Greek Margins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970) 213-32 at 231, which does not supersede J. Heurgon, "Orphée et Eurydice avant Virgile", *MEFRA* 49 (1932) 6-60.

[46] Bowra, *On Greek Margins*, 213.

gests. Moreover, Bowra could not rise above speculations regarding the dependence of the various poets on the lost source or on each other, and Mynors rightly concludes that his efforts "only show how hard it is for us to form any idea of such a work".[47]

Bowra's chronological framework is flawed too, as he wanted to date Conon before Virgil and also the *Culex* rather early. However, the earliest certain date of the appearance of the motif is shortly before 13 Augustus 29 BCE, when the whole of the *Georgics* was recited to Augustus.[48] Now the name Eurydice for Orpheus' wife is not attested in surviving Greek literature before the early first-century *Lament for Bion* (124), which does not mention the prohibition on looking back. Older studies often refer to the occurrence of the name Eurydice on a relief of the altar of the Twelve Gods in the Athenian Agora or on a (nowadays missing) Apulian volute krater. Yet, more recent investigations have demonstrated that the name has been added later on the former and does not refer to Orpheus' wife on the latter.[49]

Hermesianax (fr. 7.2 Powell) still called Orpheus' wife Agriope. The name Eurydice will therefore have been introduced in a later third-century or early second-century (BCE) work of history, mythology or literature, perhaps with a special interest in Thrace and/or Macedonia, as Eurydice was a favourite name of Macedonian queens and princesses, and Orpheus' place of origin, Leibethra, was situated in Macedonia.[50] In fact, Virgil may well have taken over both the name Eurydice and the prohibition on looking back from his source, since from the *Cypria* (F 31 Bernabé = 23 Davies) and the *Ilias parva* (F 22 Bernabé/Davies) until Ennius, Eurydice had been the name of the wife of Aeneas.[51] Virgil's source probably was a local historian or mythological compendium; the latter is perhaps even likelier, since Apollodorus (1.3.2) too mentions the motif, and his dependence on Greek summaries and excerpts is well established.[52]

The next authors to mention or allude to the motif are Conon and Ovid. Bowra suggested that the account by Conon (*FGrH* 26 F 1, 45) might be earlier than Virgil, since he dedicated his work to the Cappadocian king

[47] Mynors, *Georgics*, 315.

[48] For the date see N.M. Horsfall, *A Companion to the Study of Virgil* (Leiden: Brill, 2000²) 17, 63-5.

[49] Bremmer, "Orpheus: from Guru to Gay" and M. Schmidt, "Bemerkungen zu Orpheus in Unterwelts- und Thrakerdarstellungen", in Ph. Borgeaud (ed.), *Orphisme et Orphee en l'honneur de Jean Rudhardt* (Geneva: Droz, 1991) 13-30 at 14 and 31-50 at 33 note 5, respectively.

[50] For the close association between Macedonia and the name Eurydice see Bremmer, "Orpheus", 13-7.

[51] O. Skutsch on Ennius, *Ann.* 53.

[52] See the survey by M. Huys, "125 Years of Scholarship on Apollodorus the Mythographer: A Bibliographical Survey", *AC* 66 (1997) 319-51; add M. van Rossum-Steenbeek, *Greek Readers' Digests?Studies on a Selection of Subliterary Papyri* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) 25-8, 108-11, 164-9.

Archelaus Philopator (36 BCE–17 CE) and "differs from Virgil in his account both of the command given to Orpheus and of his death and may be presumed to derive his information direct from a Greek source".[53] Does Bowra's argument still stand? To start with, we now have a firmer basis of appreciating Conon's original work, which until recently was known only through an abbreviation by Photius, as an original portion has appeared in the meantime. This papyrus, (*POxy.* 52.3648),[54] which overlaps with Conon's stories 46 (about Aeneas) and 47 (about Althaemenes), shows that in his version of 46 Photius probably largely kept Conon's text, if deleting Aeneas career in Italy, and in 47 abbreviated only a few minor details.[55] In other words, our evidence suggests that our surviving text of Conon is substantially as he wrote it.

As his many Thracian myths show, Conon was particularly interested in Thrace.[56] His sources are most likely local historians, such as the fourth-century Hegesippus of Mecyberna,[57] but his familiarity with Hellenistic poetry "has yet to be established".[58] In other words, it is not immediately likely that Conon found the motif in a Greek poem. However, we know from Servius (on *Aeneid* 7.738) that Conon also wrote an *Italica* (*FGrH* 26 F 3), and it is thus conceivable that he was familiar with Latin poetry and took some material straight from Virgil. And indeed, a careful comparison between Conon's version of the Aeneas myth and Virgil's *Aeneid* strongly suggests that Conon adapted his version to Virgil's poem.[59] It is certainly possible, then, that he also adapted his version of Orpheus' myth to Virgil's version.

The problem of Ovid's sources is a thorny one, but in this case he certainly used Virgil, as his Orpheus turns around in love (*Metam.* 10.57: *flexit amans oculos*); moreover, Ovid will also have made use of a mytho-

[53] The discussion of Conon's date by M.K. Brown, *The Narratives of Konon. Text, Translation and Commentary on the Diegeseis* (BzA 163; Munich: Saur, 2002) 1-6 is not really helpful.

[54] See the editio princeps by Annette Harder in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri LII* (ed. H. Cockle; Oxford, 1984) 5-12. For Conon's work see also A. Henrichs, "Three Approaches to Greek Mythography", in Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology*, 242-77 at 244-7.

[55] See the analyses by J.L. Lightfoot, *Parthenius of Nicaea. The Poetical Fragmentsand the Erotika Pathemata* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 228 and Brown, *The Narratives of Konon*, 38-9.

[56] Conon *FGrH* 26 F 1, 4 (Olynthus), 10 (Pallene), 13 (Aethilla), 20 (Theoclus), 32 (Europa), 45 (Orpheus); note also a Macedonian myth: 25 (Iapyges).

[57] Lightfoot, *Parthenius*, 227-9.

[58] Lightfoot, *Parthenius*, 246.

[59] R.B. Egan, "Aeneas at Aineia and Vergil's Aeneid", *PCP* 9 (1974) 37-47, whose argument is strengthened by the similarity of *POxy.* 52.3648, fr. 2.3-4 with *Aeneid* 3.255ff. and 7.109ff. in the description of the fulfillment of the oracle about the eating of the tables.

logical compendium (the same as Virgil?), as Norden noted.[60] In turn, Ovid was much used by the *Culex*, which trivialized the motif by letting Orpheus want to kiss Eurydice (289-93).[61] There can be little doubt, then, that Virgil's introduction of the motif soon became successful.

Despite the number of sources for the motif, none provides even the beginning of an explanation. Yet it seems clear that the idea of a prohibition on looking back as a condition to leave the underworld is a literary invention: we do not find it or something comparable in ritual. Moreover, we can not explain it from fear of the gods of the underworld, as Orpheus had clearly played music before them and had entreated them. On the other hand, there is in both Greek and Roman sources a clear connection between the motif of not looking back at the underworld or chthonic powers (§1). Apparently, then, a Greek source applied this ritual prohibition in an innovatory manner and used it for his literary aims.

In any case, it should be clear that the situation is rather different from that of Lot's wife. It is true that behind her too something dreadful is happening, but in her case the prohibition seems clearly connected to a hastily leaving of the place of sin. God explicitly said to Lot: "Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, or else you will be consumed" (Gen 19:17). And he adds a bit later: "Hurry, escape there, for I can do nothing until you arrive there" (22). It is after these explicit injunctions that the author of *Genesis* mentions the already noted metamorphosis of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt (26). In other words, it is clear that the text itself points to a close connection between haste and not looking back, a connection that we also encountered in our own material (§6). This was clearly also the interpretation in the time of Jesus, since he says about the Day of Judgment: "On that day, anyone on the housetop who has belongings in the house must not come down to take them away; and likewise anyone in the field must not turn back. Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:31-32). Admittedly, the motif in Genesis may well have found its background in an attempt in explaining a curious salt formation and naturally some American scholars have tried to identify this formation.[62] Yet its

[60] E. Norden, *Kleine Schriften zum klassischen Altertum* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1966) 516. Ovid's use of such compendia is now stressed by A. Cameron, "A Greek Source of Ovid's Metamorphoses?", in D. Accorinti and P. Chuvin (eds.), *Des Géants à Dionysos. Mélanges de mythologie et de poésie grecques offerts à Francis Vian* (Hellenica 10; Alessandria: dell'Orso, 2003) 41-59.

[61] For the date of the Culex (the time of Tiberius), see D. Güntzschel, *Beiträge zur Datierung des Culex* (OA 27; Münster: Aschendorff, 1972); J.A. Richmond, "Recent Work on the "Appendix Vergiliana" (1950-1975)", *ANRW* 2.31.2 (1981) 1112-54 at 1126-7.

[62] J.P. Harland, "Sodom and Gomorrah", *BA* 5/2 (1942) 17-32, 6/3 (1943) 41-54; G.M. Harris and A.P. Beardow, "The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: A geotechnical perspective", *QJEG* 28 (1995) 349-62.

dramatic power still speaks to us, as the many works of literature on Lot's wife and Eurydice so vividly attest.

It is not the place here to follow the fortunes of Lot's wife in modern times, but it is clear that there would be room for another article in order to analyse her presence on the World Wide Web. Let me just offer a few items from the thousands of references found by a Googelian search. There are rousing sermons by fundamentalists, Christian and Islamic,[63] but also Lot's wife as a metaphor for eternally looking back in an article by an Israeli mother whose son was killed by Arab terrorists:

> As a result, they can turn to stone. They turn to a salt pillar, like Lot's wife who is always looking back. They are frozen where they are, looking at their dead children, frozen with hate for what they perceive to be their enemy, the Israelis.[64]

We find Lot's wife as the name of the student newspaper of Monash university,[65] or as the subject of contemporary paintings and photographs.[66] Perhaps, the most poignant mentions of Lot's wife can be found in poetry. An interesting start is Freada Dillon's "Remember Lot's Wife",[67] but surely the most impressive poem is the already mentioned "Lot's wife" by Anna Akhmatova, written on 24 February 1924. It seems a fitting tribute to the enigmatic subject of our paper to end with this moving tribute:

[63] www.voiceofgospel.org/message_remember.html; www.hometown.aol.com/scheairs/UnicornSite/Mature_Bible_Studies/Lots_Wife.html; www.muhammadspeaks.com/Lot'swife.html; many, many more.

[64] S. Ledermann Mandell, "Lot's Wife", www.aish.com/jewishissues/israeldiary/Lots_Wife.asp.

[65] msa.monash.edu.au/sociallife/lotswife/lots.htm.

[66] www.clevelandart.org/exhibcef/consexhib/html/lots.html (Anselm Kiefer, 1989); www.nyu.edu/greyart/exhibits/kos/image5.htm (Before Kos, 1969), etc.

[67] www.burningword.com/node/view/496. Note also the poems "Lot's wife" by Anthony Hecht (plagiarist.com/poetry/?wid=2402) and Wislawa Szymborska (www.ralphmag.org/lots-wifeL.html).

Lot's Wife

And the just man trailed God's shining agent,
over a black mountain, in his giant track,
while a restless voice kept harrying his woman:
"It's not too late, you can still look back

at the red towers of your native Sodom,
the square where once you sang, the spinning-shed,
at the empty windows set in the tall house
where sons and daughters blessed your marriage-bed."

A single glance: a sudden dart of pain
stitching her eyes before she made a sound ...
Her body flaked into transparent salt,
and her swift legs rooted to the ground.

Who will grieve for this woman? Does she not seem
too insignificant for our concern?
Yet in my heart I never will deny her,
who suffered death because she chose to turn.

Translated by Stanley Kunitz (with Max Hayward) (1973)

PART FOUR

SEXUALITIES

SODOMITES, GAYS AND BIBLICAL SCHOLARS
A GATHERING ORGANIZED BY PETER DAMIAN?

PATRICK VANDERMEERSCH

1. Introduction

People are never interested in the past for its own sake. The interest is always based on a subjective motivation, and the notion that this can be eliminated derives from a superb naiveté. All that has – and must – be done is to clarify the motives and preconceptions that determine how we deal with the past. The only way for a subject to remain "objective" is to keep progressing within the hermeneutical circle.

On a less philosophical note, we can restate the above as follows. When one is attracted to the study of a particular topic, there are always motives and preconceptions suggesting this object could be "interesting" to us. This enticement provides the impulse to investigate the topic more closely and to pay real attention to the facts. However, one should not become captivated by the object. In order to remain "objective", one must look inward and perform some self-investigation and self-criticism. Is the newly acquired knowledge in line with the first spontaneous reaction of "how interesting!"? Has the first phase of investigation brought a degree of satisfaction? Has "knowledge" really been gained or just some comfort provided by a confirmation of previous preconceptions? Unexpected data can be particularly enlightening in this regard, especially when they challenge an existing intellectual framework. Then it is definitely time to make the preconceptions more explicit and examine them critically. Only this will entitle the searching mind to go back to the facts and to perform another hermeneutical turn.

Psychoanalysis shares this view of the circling mind with hermeneutics in general. Ergo, contrary to what is widely believed, psychoanalysis is not an instrument for quicker access to the object. It is not a magical tool for a quicker unveiling of the real, hidden core of an object which could, thereafter, be contemplated in its untouched, naked truth. If psychoanalysis can be useful in hermeneutic circling, it is more as a technique of self-criticism for the subject than as an instrument for closer scrutiny of the object.[1]

[1] An essential book on psychoanalytic reading is H. Raguse, *Der Raum des Textes, Elemente einer transdisziplinären theologischen Hermeneutik* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994). I

The usefulness of psychoanalytical insight for the self-reflection of the searching subject is not limited to some special dark sides of our minds, sexuality especially. However, this is what many people believe. In the case of the story of Sodom, they expect psychoanalysts to insist on the importance of daring to conceptualise – and visualise – what exactly could have happened when all these males, without exception, came together in order to "know" the foreigners. Lots of heads, but also lots of genitals, desires and anal eroticisms, and perhaps other things too... Helping patients to talk about such things is indeed part of a psychoanalyst's work. But there is another topic which is at least as important as sexual fantasies in the human mind, and which is equally important to psychoanalysis: how we relate to the past and how we accept the chain of parents, grandparents, etc. who have brought us into historical being. Where does our personal history fit in the history of the culture to which we belong? This is the central issue where biblical scholarship and psychoanalysis meet intimately.

I realise this statement is somewhat surprising. Many biblical scholars perceive psychoanalysis as a synchronic method for interpreting given texts and facts. This is particularly the case in Germany, where the psychology of religion in general has hardly developed, and where E. Drewermann put his syncretistic Jungian/Freudian stamp on the field of psychoanalytic reading of the Bible.[2] However, we must not forget that Freudian analysis begins with an active remembering of one's personal past. What happens on the couch is so deeply rooted in that tenet, that Freud was haunted throughout his life by the embarrassing question of whether the "real" past can ever be recovered.[3] A crucial question has remained unanswered and its importance has been reinforced by the debate on false memories in multiple-personality disorders: does analysis cure because it uncovers the repressed memories and wishes by simply bringing them to light without changing their essence? Or does analysis cure because it allows the patient to gain mastery of/over his or her past and makes it possible to reinterpret the memories to make the past coherent? In the latter case – in my opinion, the true case – analytical practice is not so different from exegesis.

To make the matter even more complicated, in the case we are discussing here, i.e. Sodom and sodomy, contemporaneous studies on sex and gender insist on the necessity of historical awareness in order to understand

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have summarised my key views in R. Kessler & P. Vandermeersch (eds.), *God, Biblical Stories and Psychoanalytical Understanding* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001).

[2] Fortunately, H. Raguse introduced a different approach. See his *Psychoanalyse und biblische Interpretation. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Eugen Drewermanns Auslegung der Johannes-Apokalypse* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1993) and *Der Raum des Textes.*

[3] See my book *Unresolved Questions in the Freud/Jung Debate. On Psychosis, Sexual Identity and Religion* (Louvain Philosophical Studies 4; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1991).

and, eventually, to accept the associated sexual identities. It has become generally accepted that homosexuality, for example, is not just a human drive that various people and cultures tend to repress, but a specific cultural construct that exists neither everywhere nor in all times. According to this view, the gay man and woman (i.e. specific human beings with their own psychology), originated in the nineteenth century and their representation functioned as a model for people who styled their identity accordingly. Although we will question this periodisation, the basic assumption that human sexuality is not simply a set of fixed instincts but rather a complex, historically and culturally organized framework for desires, seems to be correct. Understanding homosexuality implies understanding it in a historical sense. The problem is that the underlying conception of "understanding historically" is very different from the same words in biblical scholarship. Here we should add that the major part of the problem is that biblical scholars do not usually like to talk about their (often implicit) philosophy of history.

After discussing this issue in more detail, we will examine the books of two biblical scholars who have dealt explicitly with the nature of Sodom's sin: Derrick Sherwin Bailey's pioneering *Homosexuality and the Western Tradition* (1955) and Gijs Bouwman's *De zonde van Sodom* [Sodom's Sin] (1990).[4] We will try to explain the way in which the category of "history" plays a part in their reasoning. As both writers assign an essential role to Peter Damian in establishing the homosexual nature of Sodom's sin, we will look more closely at his text, something which neither author did because their discipline requires that they focus on the biblical writers. It is surprising to discover that Damian's text contains much more contemporaneous psychology. This leads us to question current theories on the recent origin of a gay person with his or her own identity. Without attempting to rewrite gay history, we will end with a call for further research in that field.

2. Biblical Scholars, Scriptural Authority and Sexuality

While reading the exegetic literature on Sodom, I became increasingly puzzled by the way in which history seems to be an ambivalent authority in the minds of many biblical scholars. Of course, this topic is not new. It is generally known that Protestantism used the authority of the Bible to rebuff papal claims to define religious truth. For these reasons, nineteenth-century biblical studies constituted a far greater fundamental threat to Protestantism

[4] D.S. Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1955); G. Bouwman, *De zonde van Sodom. Ontstaan en verstaan van een bijbelverhaal* (Hilversum: Gooi en Sticht, 1990).

than to Catholicism because they demonstrated that many biblical texts were not reliable historical accounts. One cannot help but smile when recalling the schisms that have occurred in fundamentalist groups following controversies such as "the snake in Paradise": did the animal really speak in Hebrew to Adam and Eve? It is equally astonishing that, even today, some people believe that the walls of Jericho collapsed when the trumpets sounded, while others are still hopeful that they will find the remnants of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat. Luckily, these beliefs are marginal. Mainstream theology, whether Protestant or Catholic, has learned to deal with the fact that the Bible is not a historical account. Scriptural authority must be understood in a different way.

But *how* should it be understood? This question is the next logical step, but a closer examination is frequently hampered by the fact that biblical scholarship has become a separate profession and has severed most of its ties with dogmatics. In the past, biblical scholars worked within a broad ecumenical context and sometimes in a non-denominational context. This does not mean that there is no theological discourse on the subject of biblical authority. The subject is, however, seldom discussed among biblical scholars. They avoid theological, ecclesiastical and denominational motives that could divide the profession, and largely confine themselves to what will establish their reputations, even in the eyes of outsiders: science and hard facts. With the exception of those devoted to narratology and structural reading, biblical scholars deal mainly with the facts underlying the text or with historical facts excavated from a desert.

The philosophy of history in particular seems to be taboo among professional exegetes. This does not mean that scholars are unaware of the importance of establishing the precise historical context of the texts they study. On the contrary, most of their work involves disentangling, layer by layer, the constitution of a transmitted text and assigning a precise historical context to each redaction. However, when we come to deal with our relationship to this historical past, which has been so carefully reconstructed, tensions that are clearly related to the authority of the text as a text from the past become apparent. In the two examples we will discuss, the scholars dealing with Sodom's sin attempt to demonstrate that, because the modern concept of homosexuality was unknown to the writers of the Bible, the holy text cannot be used as an argument to condemn gays in modern-day society. Is the underlying message that *if* homosexuality had been known to them, then obviously scriptural authority should be taken into account? This is seldom explicitly stated. Obviously, one wants to avoid re-enacting the Catholic-Protestant controversy on evolving revelation. The famous nineteenth-century polemic between Von Harnack and Loisy should be forgotten. Meanwhile, the basic question in contemporaneous studies on

sex and gender is ignored: do we need to understand the continuities and discontinuities in our cultural history in order to understand and deal with our desires in a more liberal and reasonable way? The answer is obviously yes. Scholars of sex and gender might find biblical scholarship very relevant. Unfortunately, because they are afraid of a discussion on revelation, biblical scholars do not dare to enter into what might be a fruitful interdisciplinary collaboration.

Epur si muove... Before reaching the point at which I could question this exegetic taboo on the philosophy of history on a more abstract and theoretical level, I was confronted with a much simpler problem that posed the same question in a very concrete way. What exactly is sodomy? Of course, most people link Sodom's sin with something sexual. But which variety of sex? Having a Catholic background myself, and having been closely involved in moral theology, it seemed obvious to me that sexual intercourse between men was the issue, more precisely: anal penetration. The traditional Catholic doctrine is to be found in the almost identical classical manuals that appeared between the eighteenth century and the early 1950s. One example is the very popular work by Jone. We can smile at the fact that, although both the book and its translations are written in modern language, the text shifts to Latin when sex is discussed explicitly. But there is no doubt: sodomy is anal intercourse, whether with a man (perfect sodomy) or with a woman (imperfect sodomy):[5]

> Sodomia est concubitus cum persona ejusdem sexus (sodomia perfecta) vel diversi sexus sed in vase praepostero (sodomia imperfecta).

Surprisingly, this is not generally understood, particularly in Protestantism. Although the official Dutch translation of the Bible, the *Statenvertaling*, clearly depicts Sodom's sin as intercourse between men, the meaning has clearly shifted. In many dictionaries, especially those of the Germanic languages, "sodomy" is defined as bestiality. This is also what many of my students thought when I discussed sodomy. Is this not curious? The denominations that are supposed to be the better readers of the Bible link Sodom with bestiality, whereas a careful reader of the text can discover no chicken, goat or cow in the text. This reinforced my view of the importance of questioning history: how can one understand the fact that a biblical story, in which there are perhaps not "gays" but in any case sexual intercourse between males, could evolve into a story portraying intercourse with an animal?

[5] H. Jone, *Katholische Moraltheologie* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1953[15]) 190-1 note 230. Among the many, see for a similar definition A. Lehmkuhl, *Theologia moralis* (Freiburg: Herder, 1940[11]) 588 note 1045.

Biblical scholars might well reply: "This is an interesting problem, but it is not our task to deal with it. We just do what other historians do. We collect facts on a limited historical period and present the past as objectively as possible!" Although this is conceivable to a certain extent, it implies that biblical scholarship becomes pure History (where many of the same problems remain unresolved) and would cease to be part of theology as the overarching endeavour to understand Western religious tradition. I, in any case, do not regard this as progress.

But even if one claims to limit oneself to being a historian, ideology may still be involved. When biblical scholars state that later authors have changed the meaning of the biblical message, they risk suggesting that this later shift is unimportant and draw the focus away from this later phase of development. This has happened with the author who is a landmark in the history of homosexuality: Peter Damian. Accused of misunderstanding the Bible, Peter Damian's work was not read and his influence has been underestimated. The unspoken ideology has worked: the Bible remains the focus of research, not cultural history with its shifting interpretations.

3. Bailey's Desexualization of Sodom

In order to discuss the matter in a more concrete way, we will look more closely at two scholars who do not hesitate to admit that they study the Bible in the explicit context of a moral evaluation of homosexuality: Bailey and Bouwman. We should not forget, however, that their works derive from quite different socio-cultural backgrounds. Bailey's book reflects the first attempts of the Church of England to lift the taboo on homosexuality. For today's readers, his text may sound rather cautious – almost too cautious. We should remember, however, that the 1885 law condemning homosexual acts, even those performed in private by consenting adults, was still in force in Great Britain in 1955. Anal penetration in particular, either with a man or a woman, was considered a crime under various Anglo-Saxon laws. Bouwman's book was written 35 years later in the Catholic part of the Netherlands, at a time when discrimination against homosexuals seemed to be coming to an end. Statements from the Vatican on sexuality in general, and homosexuality in particular, greatly upset Dutch Catholics.

However different their backgrounds may be, the books remain interesting. They are among the few works written by biblical scholars that deal at length with the sexual meaning of Sodom's story. The authors do not attempt to conceal the fact that biblical scholarship is practised in order to reach practical conclusions on religion and morals.

Bailey's book begins with the statement that homosexual inclination should be distinguished from homosexual acts. He specifies that the term

"perverse" should not be applied to a homosexual inclination, but only to sexual acts performed by someone without a homosexual inclination (p. XI):

> The *pervert*, as the term implies, is not a true homosexual, but a heterosexual who engages in homosexual practices. He may do this casually, from motives of curiosity or in exceptional circumstances; or habitually, as a prostitute or in pursuit of novel sexual experiences; he may alternate between homosexual and heterosexual activities, or he may confine himself to one of the other for long periods.

Bailey does not explain why this distinction is important to him. One can suppose that this is a matter of Church politics. The cautious acceptance of the homosexual as a person should not result in approval of homosexual acts – a view still held by the Vatican today. After his initial statement, Bailey proceeds to his interpretation of the Sodom story, in which his reasoning seems to agree with what many scholars would say today, even if their exegesis is less explicitly directed towards practical consequences.

Let us examine Bailey's explanation. According to the Hebrew text of the Sodom story, the inhabitants came to the house of Lot, who had given hospitality to the two visitors, and urged him to bring them outside so that they could "know" them. The verb used is *yāda'*, a verb that can, but does not always, have a sexual meaning. Bailey asserts that the verb does not have a sexual meaning here. The story can be understood as follows. Lot was a foreigner in Sodom and probably lost the sympathy of the inhabitants through his arrogant behaviour. People became suspicious when they heard that he had brought strangers to the place. The strangers might have had hostile intentions, so the people wanted to know who they were. Of course, Bailey's explanation has to deal with the fact that Lot offers his daughters (who had not yet "known" a man) to the menacing multitude instead of the men. According to Bailey, however, this has nothing to do with proposing a heterosexual object instead of a homosexual one. It could simply be an act of despair (p. 6):

> No doubt surrender of his daughters was simply the most tempting bribe that Lot could offer on the spur of the moment to appease the hostile crowd; and the fact that he could contemplate such a desperate course may well indicate his anxiety at all costs to extricate himself from a situation which he had precipitated (as already suggested) by action incompatible with his status in Sodom as a *ger*.

Bailey continues by reviewing the Bible and Apocrypha in order to see whether any homosexual meaning has been attached to the Sodom story. He concludes that the canonical Old Testament contains no evidence. Sodom is regarded as a sinful city, but homosexuality is not mentioned. Conversely, no reference is made to Sodom in the biblical texts dealing with homosexu-

ality (i.e. intercourse between men). The sexualization of the Sodom story does not begin until the book of *Jubilees*. *Jub.* 16:5-6 says "they commit fornication in their flesh" and *Jub.* 20:5-6 assimilates the sins of Sodom with those of the giants, whose sins introduce the story of the Flood in Gen 6:1-4.[6] However, this does not imply that the Sodomites were guilty of *homo*sexual intercourse, but this next step in the interpretation can be found in *T. Naph.* 3:4 one of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. There it is said that the people of Sodom "changed the natural order of things". If this still sounds ambiguous, Philo leaves no doubt in the reader's mind. He clearly interprets the term "knowing" (*yāda*ʿ) as "servile, lawless and unseemly pederasty" (p. 21) and, according to Bailey, he is the first to do so. In Bailey's view, Philo's description of Sodom appears to owe more to his knowledge of Alexandria's debauchery than to the Bible, especially when he writes in *De Abrahamo* (26, 134-136, quoted p. 22):

> ... they threw off from their necks the law of nature, and applied themselves to deep drinking of strong liquor and dainty feeding and forbidden forms of intercourse. Not only in their mad lust for women did they violate the marriages of their neighbours, but also men mounted males without respect for the sex nature which the active partner shares with the passive; and so when they tried to beget children they were discovered incapable of any but sterile seed.

According to Bailey, the Sodom story was not associated with homosexuality until the first century BCE, obviously under the influence of Greek pederasty. In the subsequent chapters of his book, he continues his historical investigations, listing the Fathers, demonstrating the influence of Roman and German law, and placing the crystallisation of consensus concerning the sinfulness of homosexual practices in the Middle Ages. According to him, Peter Damian is the most extreme spokesman, but perhaps not representative. It is due to the impact of this historical development that the theme of homosexuality was projected onto the Sodom story, which, according to Bailey, initially had nothing to do with it.

It is not our purpose to discuss all the historical evidence presented by Bailey in these chapters. Let us just comment on an essential point. According to Bailey, Peter Damian is a final landmark. In his work we find the final version of Western views on sodomy, to which subsequent centuries make no essential contribution. We will return to this point later.

Meanwhile, Bailey's conclusions are clear. The Sodom story cannot be used to condemn homosexuality because it does not refer to gay people in the modern sense of the word. Neither do other texts (e.g. Paul in Rom 1:27, 1 Cor 6:9-10, 1 Tim 1:9-10) show an awareness of the existence

[6] See J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, "Lot versus Abraham. The Interpretation of Genesis 18:1–19:38 in *Jubilees* 16:1-9", above, 29-46.

of a real, possibly innate, homosexual disposition. They could, therefore, only address homosexual perversion, i.e. homosexual acts committed by non-homosexuals. Bailey's conclusion is obvious: in order to evaluate modern homosexuality in a humane and dispassionate way, we should not use the Bible as an argument. Further research and greater insight are required.

Looking back at Bailey's arguments, the tension in the text continues to puzzle. If it were true that the biblical authors could not possibly discern "our" homosexuality, why did Bailey need to argue at such length that Sodom's sin was *not* sexual, and why did he so curiously insist on the fact that *yāda'* means simply "to know" in the Sodom story? Even if the Sodomites engaged in homosexual intercourse, that would not affect the moral evaluation of gay people in our own time because the biblical writers were not acquainted with the phenomenon. Why then, in spite of this, was there such a fervent attempt to prove that Sodom's sin was *not* related to sex? Bailey uses two distinct arguments that weaken rather than strengthen each other. His noble intention to rescue "people who are different" seems to conflict with an ambivalent adherence to scriptural authority.

Another difficult point is his statement that, with Peter Damian, the final stage of the distortion of the tradition in order to condemn homosexuality has been reached. This laconic statement contrasts greatly with the care put into the study of biblical texts – even if we have to disagree with the results. But this seems also to be a message to the reader: the turning points in cultural history are less important then the original biblical statements. From a historical point of view, this implicit message is perhaps the opposite of the truth: whether one likes it or not, Peter Damian probably indicates a more important turning point in the cultural history of sex than many people would like. But before discussing his work we will discuss another biblical scholar.

4. Bouwman's Heterosexualization of the Sodom Story

Bouwman's book was written in 1990 and stems from a Catholic background. It reflects not only the adoption of new directions in biblical studies – the German trend of *Quellenforschung*, *Traditionsgeschichte*, *Redaktionsgeschichte* and *Wirkungsgeschichte* had become generally accepted – but also the newer, tolerant, and even sympathetic views on homosexuality that were disseminated under the pioneering influence of the Netherlands.

Since memories are short and subsequent generations will find them hard to believe, let us recall some basic facts. For centuries, in fact since the Council of Trent, Catholic moral teaching was curiously based on a vague theory of natural law. The Bible appeared only in quotations in order to

embellish the text, but the theoretical basis for moral judgment was: respect the order established by the Creation, an order that the human intellect can decipher. The teachings of Thomas Aquinas, which were initially treated with suspicion, had become more or less standard since the sixteenth century, despite the fact that there had been many shifts in the interpretation of his views. The great French *Nouvelle théologie* debate in the mid-twentieth century was based on attempts to understand his thinking correctly.

This had direct implications for sexual morals. Every sexual act not fit for procreation was considered as "being against nature" and therefore prohibited. Some moral textbooks found such acts, ranging from masturbation to bestiality,[7] worse than rape, for in the latter case the "normal" sexual form of behaviour was respected. Needless to say, contraception was forbidden according to that view.

As the theory was consistently to be found in every textbook, no special Vatican declarations on sexual matters appeared to be necessary. This situation changed in 1930, when the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church declared on 14 August that contraception was *not* to be considered sinful. Immediately, with unusual haste, the Vatican replied with the Encyclical *Casti Connubii* (31 December 1930) and took the opposite view. Even the new "rhythm method" of Ogino-Knauss, which involved calculating the woman's fertile period and planning sexual intercourse accordingly, was banned. Rather curious rules were proclaimed and Catholic hospitals were urged to adhere to them. When masculine sperm had to be examined, it had to be obtained by using a condom during normal sexual intercourse. In order to respect natural law, the condom had to have a small hole ...[8]

Confronted with this obsolete way of thinking, and in an attempt to put an end to practices that began to look rather ridiculous, many moral theologians began to attack the uncritical and simplistic use of the category "moral law". The issue of contraception was the spearhead in their struggle for a new and more relevant Catholic moral theology. The first battle appeared to have been won in 1951, when Pope Pius XII accepted the rhythm method as a licit way of determining the number of children Catholics should bring into the world.[9] Nearly everyone expected the issue of contraception to be resolved, along with the issue of priesthood celibacy, at the

[7] It is interesting to know that sexual intercourse with the devil was considered to be a form of bestiality, i.e. sexual intercourse with a different species in the order of creation. Surprisingly, to my knowledge, sexual intercourse with angels was not discussed.

[8] On the issue of contraception, see John Th. Noonan, *Contraception. A history of its treatment by the Catholic theologians and canonists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965). For a more general overview, see S.H. Pfurtner, *Kirche und Sexualität* (Rororo Taschenbücher 8039; Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1972).

[9] Address of 29 August 1951 to the Italian Catholic Society of Midwives. See Noonan, *Contraception*, 446.

second Vatican Council. Unfortunately, the two themes were withdrawn from the Council's agenda and a subsequent papal decision took the opposite view to what was broadly expected. Celibacy was confirmed with the papal Encyclical *Sacerdotalis Coelibatus* (1967), while *Humanae vitae* (1968) maintained the prohibition on contraception, with the exception of the rhythm method.

Meanwhile, Dutch gays were becoming emancipated, and many theologians were sympathetic to their cause. Protestants were the first to express that sympathy with the small book *De homosexuele naaste* [The Homosexual Neighbour][10], and the Catholics were quick to follow suit. The three articles on "The Problem of the Homophile Neighbour", published in the important Dutch-Flemish journal *Tijdschrift voor Theologie*, stated in turn that no moral objection could be raised against homosexuality as such.[11] This was followed by many publications in the Netherlands as well as abroad. The most famous of these were Oraison's *La question homosexuelle* (1975)[12], John Mc Neill's *The Church and the Homosexual* (1976)[13], and Ménard's *De Sodome à l'Exode* (1980).[14]

Meanwhile, the Vatican had reacted, although this had taken a long time. Naturally, according to the old textbooks, homosexuality was a *vitium contra naturam*, but once it was admitted that sex could be for pleasure only – even in the very restricted case of the rhythm method – a new perspective could have been expected. But in 1975, *Persona humana*, a Vatican document deriving from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, condemned homosexual acts, masturbation and premarital sex. This statement was reinforced by the Vatican guidelines for pastorals with homosexuals in their congregations (1986), promulgated by the same Congregation. Both were signed by Cardinal Ratzinger.[15]

In line with Catholic tradition, the Bible was not the foundation for moral reasoning. The Sodom story was referred to nevertheless. Being a biblical scholar and a caring theologian, Bouwman was clearly upset by the arbitrary reference to the biblical source and by the unequivocal discrimination against homosexuals. He claimed that they are still treated in the same way as the foreigners in Sodom who did not receive hospitality. With humour and irony, he dispassionately explained in his book what biblical

[10] A.L. Janse de Jonge *et al.*, *De homosexuele naaste* (Baarn: Bosch & Keuning, 1961).

[11] W. Sengers, J. Gottschalk & Th. Beemer, "De vraag van de homofiele medemens", *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 7 (1967) 141-75.

[12] M. Oraison, *La question homosexuelle* (Paris: Seuil, 1975).

[13] John Mc Neill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Kansas City: Sheed Andrews & McMeel, 1976).

[14] G. Ménard, *De Sodome à l'Exode. Jalons pour une théologie gaie* (Montréal: L'Aurore Univers, 1980).

[15] For further details, see J. Gramick & P. Furey, *The Vatican and Homosexuality* (New York: Crossroads, 1988).

scholarship could say on the subject. He did not write only for the "in-crowd". His writing is clear enough for a layperson to comprehend the pertinence of biblical scholarship.

Essentially, Bouwman challenged Bailey's statement that the wish of Sodom's inhabitants to "know" (*yāda'*) the foreigners had no sexual meaning. The same verb occurs a few lines further on, referring to Lot's daughters, and in this case the meaning is undoubtedly sexual. However sympathetic Bailey may be to the homosexuals' cause, one should recognize that apologetics took him too far. But if, according to Bouwman, Sodom's sin is a sexual one, this does not imply that it is *homo*sexual.

By deconstructing the text layer by layer, Bouwman finally arrives at the following hypothesis. Originally, the purpose of the Sodom story was to condemn human *hubris*. The inhabitants wanted to engage in sexual intercourse with heavenly beings in order to become gods themselves. In this sense, one can understand why many biblical and post-biblical texts have linked the Sodom story to that of the Sons of God and the Daughters of Man with which the Flood is introduced. In both cases there is an attempt to transcend the human condition through a *hieros gamos*. Seeking to be equal to God is also the theme of another Jahwist story, that of Babel. Bouwman found some truth in the hypothesis that the oldest version of the Sodom story deals with human *hubris*. And, of course, in all these cases, hubris must be punished.

The first redactor of what would become our Bible, the "Jahwist", included the Sodom story in the Abraham cycle. Consequently, the theme of the *hieros gamos* disappeared and was replaced by the theme of hospitality, an essential value in nomad culture: refusing hospitality to a foreigner means letting him die. One could even suspect that the emphasis on hospitality reinforced in turn the same theme in the story in the previous chapter about Abraham receiving guests, which slightly overshadows the essence of that story, namely the birth of Isaac.[16] The subsequent reception of the Sodom story in Rabbinic and Christian circles continued to emphasise the theme of hospitality. Here, Bouwman refutes Bailey's opinion that the influence of some of the apocrypha and Philo might have been decisive in the early Christian reinterpretation of the story in the direction of homosexuality. While not denying the existence of the texts quoted by Bailey, Bouwman is convinced that their influence was only marginal, and he supports this claim by reviewing some of the most important Fathers. Origen does not link Sodom with homosexuality, while Augustine and John Chrysostom do so only once, which is insignificant in terms of the im-

[16] Bouwman, *De zonde van Sodom*, 52, summarises his views.

mense volume of work they produced. Even in these individual cases, the emphasis is on the lack of hospitality.

There is, of course, one difficult point in Bailey's hypothesis and Bouwman is aware of it. Claiming that a *hieros gamos* is at issue in the case of the Flood and Sodom is not unproblematic. In the former case, this would involve ordinary heterosexual intercourse, and homosexual intercourse in the latter case. However, the explanation could be that the oldest layers of the Bible reflect a matriarchal structure. Looking more closely at the story of the Flood, one sees that it is not the Sons of God, but the Daughters of Men who are punished as if they had taken the initiative to seduce the gods in order to appropriate their divine powers. Could it not be that the most ancient strata of the Sodom story reflect the same situation, i.e. that the *women* of Sodom wanted to have intercourse with the divine strangers? When the first, more patriarchal, redaction was made to what would later become the Bible, the women were of course replaced by men.

Reflecting on Bouwman's reasoning, one wonders if the redactor could have changed heterosexual intercourse into homosexual intercourse without any problem, or even without noticing. If this were true, it would not only mean that the writer was so indifferent to intercourse between males that he could use it to harmonize his text when transposing it from a matriarchal to a patriarchal framework, it would also mean that, with this shift, the psychological meaning of attaining godliness is preserved. From a psychological point of view, this is hardly believable. If it were true, this tacit shift would say much more about the Bible's basic conceptions on sexuality than many lengthy exegetic discourses on other explicit biblical texts relating to sex.

Another point that requires further investigation is Bouwman's statement that the Early Church did not link homosexuality to the Sodom story. According to Bouwman, this link did not appear until later, probably in monastic circles, where the peculiarity of men living together made the repression of sexual tendencies compulsory. But there is little historical material to support this line of reasoning. As in Bailey's case, Peter Damian is presented as the key figure and final milestone in the homosexualization of the Sodom story. Just as in Bailey's book, Damian's views are not discussed in detail, as if they were a "deviation" and not an interesting turning point in our understanding of modern sexuality. For us today, interested as we are in how the present derives from the past by changing it, and wanting to understand the historical evolution of our sexuality, Peter Damian's work could be very interesting. Let us explore his texts a little.

5. Peter, beloved brother of Damian

Peter Damian's Latin name is Petrus Damiani, the last word being a genitive: Peter of Damian. Damian was Peter's brother. It is curious that so little attention has been paid to that detail, but a name is never a minor detail in a man's life.[17]

The story of the youth of Peter Damian (1007-1072) appeals to the psychoanalytical mind. Having many children already, Peter's mother was not pleased when she conceived Peter. She did not take care of the baby, and he was almost abandoned until a priest's wife took charge of him. Later, his brother Damian looked after him and managed to provide him with an excellent education. Curiously, the man who was rescued by a priest's wife and added his brother's name to his own was a fierce persecutor of priests who lived with women – even if they were legally married – and of clergy addicted to "sodomy". We should immediately add that those facts do not allow us to make a psychoanalytical diagnosis of the historical Peter Damian; we cannot ask him to explain his personal history from the analyst's couch. Nevertheless, the story of Peter Damian as it has been told contains a complexity of specific data that appeal to the mind. This could provide insight into how tradition has conveyed specific fantasies relating to homosexuality.

In 1035, having completed his studies, Peter Damian joined the monastic order of Fonte-Avellana and was rapidly chosen to become the prior. Persuaded that the dissolute lifestyle of the clergy needed reform, he took part in many synods and advocated drastic reforms. In 1058, despite his initial refusal, Pope Stephen IX compelled him to become Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia. Many times he was appointed papal legate in many local councils. His embassy to Milan (1059) was especially important. The local bishop, William de Velate, was not reluctant to accept priests living with a wife. One should not forget that celibacy was not yet firmly established. Although religious custom was in favour of celibacy, many clerics were officially married. If their marriage was regarded by many as unauthorized, it was nevertheless valid once it had been consummated. Once married, a priest had no right to send his wife away. So there was a significant move-

[17] The main facts about Peter Damian's life can be found in the introduction to the critical edition of his work by K. Reindel (ed.), *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani* (4 vols.; München: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1983, 1988, 1989, 1993). An English translation is in the making: *The Letters of Peter Peter Damian* translated by Owen J. Blum (The Fathers of the Church — Mediaeval Continuation; Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989, 1990, 1992 and 1998). The four published volumes cover letters 1-120. See also the study by Fr. Dressler, *Petrus Damiani. Leben und Werk* (Studia Anselmiana 34; Rome: Herder, 1954), and a shorter book by J. Leclercq, *Saint Pierre Damien, ermite et homme d'Église* (Rome: Ed. di Storia e Letteratura, 1960).

ment to bring canon law, which was not completely clear on the matter, in line with practice. The conduct of William de Velate was therefore not surprising. It was not until 1139, with Lateran II, that a cleric's marriage, from subdiaconate onwards, came to be regarded as invalid.[18] Peter Damian, however, did not witness the eventual success of his campaign.

The text that interests us here has nothing to do with celibacy but with sodomy. The text is known as the *Liber Gommorhianus* (1049). It is in fact a letter sent to Pope Leo IX, the reply to which precedes Damian's text in many manuscripts.[19] At this time, Peter was still a monk at Fonte-Avellana and one wonders why he was so preoccupied with the lifestyle of secular clerics. In any case, what upset Peter was his impression that the new vice of "sodomy" was spreading among the clergy at the time, and there was a general tendency to be rather lenient towards it. The question seemed to be: "Holy Father, if we do not accept gay people, who will be here to perform the sacred liturgy?". We are neither in 2004 nor in the United States, but in eleventh-century Italy. The problem, of course, is whether "sodomy" equals "homosexuality" when Peter Damian states (no. 13):

> But perhaps someone will say that necessity demands and that no one is present who can celebrate divine services in the Church; consequently, the decision, which, as justice required, was at first appropriate severe, is now softened in the face of practical necessity.

Luckily for the scholar, Peter Damian's definition of sodomy is very clear. Time and again he repeats that the term covers four different types of sin: "There are some who pollute themselves, there are others who befoul one another by mutual handling of their genitals; others still fornicate between the thighs; and others who do this from the rear" (no. 8). He criticizes the fact that attention is focussed on the latter, while people addicted to the other three retain their positions as clerics.

Thus, having fulminated against the excessively lenient treatment of vice, and having stated that the difficulty in recruiting clergy cannot excuse this tolerance, Peter quotes Paul in Rom 1:24 and elaborates on the blindness contracted by the inhabitants of Sodom (nr. 15-18). As a consequence of committing the sin, one loses both moral judgement and the spirit required to understand the scriptures. Just as the inhabitants of Sodom were blinded by the angels and were unable to find the door, so clerics who engage in the practices are also unable to find the door that is Christ: "...they wander about in circles, dizzied by the maddening rotation" (no. 17).

[18] J. de Chasteigner, "Le célibat sacerdotal dans les écrits de saint Pierre Damien", *Doctor Communis* XXIV (1971) 169-83 & 261-78.

[19] Letter 31 in the Reindel edition and Blum translation.

After this general statement on sodomy, Peter Damian deals with individual cases. The first is that of bishops committing the sin with their spiritual sons, i.e. with someone they have ordained. The argument is that performing sodomy with someone hampers their development. Ordination is after all a spiritual way of begetting. A bishop should therefore raise the boys he ordains into manhood. Committing sodomy with them reduces them to the status of women (no. 19):

> Who will make a mistress of a cleric, or a woman of a man? Who, by his lust, will consign a son whom he has spiritually begotten for God to slavery under the iron law of satanic tyranny?

Continuing the paternal metaphor, Peter Damian refers to godfathers, who are not allowed to marry the girls they have brought to baptism. He also refers to incest. He continues the line of reasoning: committing sodomy with someone one has ordained is like incest, but is even worse because the natural order is also violated in the former case (no. 20). This form of sodomy, associated with incest in a father-son relationship, is obviously disturbing to Peter Damian's mind. After denouncing sodomite clerics who confess their sins to each other (nos. 21-23), and after stating that, if a monk can be sent away for having sex with a nun, this should equally apply to a cleric who commits sodomy (a strange deviation in his reasoning) (no. 24), he returns to the topic of spiritual incest. He reiterates that, as is the case with baptism, confession establishes a father-son relationship.

This ends the basic arguments. In the section that follows, Peter Damian discusses many penitentials defining penance for various sexual sins, and he warns sodomites against referring to less reliable sources when searching for more lenient verdicts. How can one trust the authenticity of canons prescribing ten years of penance to those who fornicate with cattle or draught animals, but only five years to a priest, three to a deacon and two to a cleric, etc.? (no. 31) We know that other canons impose five years' penance on a priest who sins with a nun, and those canons are without doubt authentic. The canons of the Council of Ancyra were even more severe. Elaborating on those "who have committed acts of bestiality or have polluted others with the leprosy of unnatural vice, must pray among those possessed by an unclean spirit", he repeats that sodomites are neither aware of their own sinful condition nor of the fact that they are actually possessed by the devil. Peter Damian quotes even harsher texts. Addressing monks living in the desert, Basil says (no. 38):[20]

> Any cleric or monk who seduces young men or boys, or who is apprehended in kissing or in any shameful situation, shall be publicly flogged and shall lose his clerical tonsure. Thus shorn, he shall be disgraced by

[20] According to Blum, the source is Burchard, *Decretum* 17,35.

> spitting into his face, bound in iron chains, wasted by six months of close confinement, and for three days each week put on barley bread given him toward evening. Following this period, he shall spend a further six months living in a small segregated courtyard in the custody of a spiritual elder, subjected to vigils and prayers, forced to walk at all times in the company of two spiritual brothers, never again allowed to associate with young men for purposes of improper conversation or advice.

If this was originally the tradition, the most lenient canons must be really unreliable!

Peter Damian thus implores the sodomites to become aware of the urgency of their situation (nos. 41-49), for "Unquestionably, this vice, since it surpasses the enormity of all others, is impossible to compare with any other vice" (no. 41). Essentially, it impedes any other virtue and blinds the sodomite: "Once this serpent has sunk its fangs into this unfortunate man, he is deprived of all moral sense, his memory fails, and the mind's vision is darkened" (no. 42). But, suddenly, in the midst of an extensive list of decay resulting from sodomy, the curious image of a woman attracts our attention: all this is the result of the influence of the queen of Sodom (no. 42):

> This utterly diseased queen of Sodom renders him who obeys the laws of her tyranny infamous to men and odious to God. She mobilizes him in the militia of the evil spirit and forces him to fight unspeakable wars against God. ...

The text continues in this way, attributing all the previously mentioned evils to this strange, seductive queen.

A rhetorical lamentation follows, in which Peter Damian weeps for the unhappy soul. However, underlying his Christian compassion there is aggression. Peter Damian cannot accept that the sodomite is not ashamed of his crime and does not withdraw from the cleric's status. As if he were familiar with modern-day language, he sneers at the sodomite who seems to apply the following biblical text to his own condition: "I am a queen on my throne and I am no widow" (no. 45; the text is Apoc 18:7 referring to Babylon). Here we have another queen. Then, suddenly, putting aside the religious arguments, Peter Damian exclaims (no. 46):

> Tell us, you unmanly and effeminate man, what do you seek in another male that you do not find in yourself? What difference in sex, what varied features of the body? What tenderness, what softness of sensual charm? What smooth and delightful face? Male virility, I say, should terrify you, and you should shudder at the sight of manly limbs. For it is the function of the natural appetite that each should seek outside himself what he cannot find within his own capacity. Therefore, if the touch of masculine flesh delights you, lay your hands upon yourself and be assured that whatever you do not find in yourself, you seek in vain in the body of an-

> other. Woe to you, unhappy soul, at whose death angels weep and the enemy scoffingly applauds.'

The "humble monk"[21] continues to sneer at the pride of the sodomite, who does not admit that he is like someone suffering from the plague and gonorrhoea. He suggests an etymological link between "gonorrhoea" and "Gomorrah" and he steadily reiterates: "Shame on your pretentious pride" (no. 49). He almost boasts that the services of an unworthy priest will spell ruin for the people.

But did Peter Damian go too far? We can imagine readers finding his fulminations exaggerated, particularly bearing in mind his definition of sodomy as a sin ranging from solitary masturbation to anal intercourse. But Peter Damian is not impressed, and he insists that all four practices are sodomy to the same extent: "The serpent we have sought to crush is four-headed, and whichever head it bites, it at once spews forth all its vicious poison" (no. 59). He recalls the story of a hermit living a seemingly perfect, saintly life except for one thing: he thought he was allowed to calm his sexual desires by simple masturbation, in order to free his mind for further prayer. On his death, he was carried away by the devil. Peter jumps to this conclusion (no. 60):

> Therefore, if one defiles himself, or is convicted of sinning with another by touch, by femoral coitus, or by violating him from the rear, even if he does not indulge in these practices indiscriminately, he is, without doubt, still guilty of the crime of sodomy. We do not read that the natives of Sodom practised posterior intercourse only with strangers; more likely we can be sure that, given the urge of their unbridled lust, they indulged in various shameless methods on themselves as well on others.

Referring to the Sodom story, Peter Damian once more exhorts sodomites to change their lives and, especially, to renounce sacred orders. God's fire and sword should warn them, but also their narcissism, as we would say today. Is Peter Damian aware of some of the striking narcissistic characteristics of gays? In any case, having pointed to the punishment in Hell, as if this were not enough, he depicts the decomposition of a handsome body (nr. 67):

> Consider, moreover, that the poison now causing such a intolerable stench, that the corrupting matter that breeds and nourishes worms, that everything laying there in arid dust or ashes was once thriving flesh that in its prime sustained passion like this. Notice finally the rigid sinews, the naked teeth, the disassembled array of joints and bones, the arrangement of all the members in horrible disarray. Thus, indeed, does the horror of this formless and confused vision dispel illusions from the heart of

[21] In reference to the title of this work: "The book of Gomorrah by the humble monk, Peter Damian" (nos. 5-6).

> man. Think again of the peril of exchange, that for a momentary pleasure experienced at the moment of ejaculation, a punishment will follow that will not end for a thousand years.'

The book ends by asserting the rewards of chastity and by apologizing in case parts of the writer's text were too offensive *ad pias aures*. Peter Damian is nonetheless convinced that it would be an even more serious crime not to warn his brothers of the danger lurking. The book ends with a solemn appeal to the Pope to officially declare which types of sodomites should be excluded from the clergy; the answer Peter Damian is clearly hoping for is: all of them.

But popes can be surprisingly indulgent. In his answer, usually referred to as *Sed nos humanius agentes,* although these are not the first words of the text, Leo IX began with some kind words to Peter Damian. Of course he appreciated that Peter was "motivated by sacred fury to write what seemed appropriate" (no. 3). However, he adhered to the most lenient view that only those who were completely addicted to the practice of masturbation or of intercourse between the thighs or, even worse, those who "have sunk to the level of anal intercourse", should lose their clerical status (no. 4). We do not know whether this answer to the *Liber Gomorrhianus* introduced a new code of discipline. Nor do we know whether a clergy besmirched with sodomy was a reality or just a nightmare originating in the psyche of Damian's beloved brother.

6. Conclusions and further questions

Both biblical scholars dealing with the Sodom story affirm that it originally had no homosexual meaning. We have seen that, in both cases, difficulties remain. Bailey has yet to explain why he believes that *yāda*ᶜ simply means coming to know who the foreigners are, while, a few lines further on, the *knowing* of Lot's daughters is undeniably sexual. And if Bouwman's hypothesis of a primal matriarchal layer in the text is correct, i.e. that the women of Sodom wanted to acquire divine power through intercourse with divine beings, it is difficult to believe that the replacement of women by men in the patriarchal redaction of the text has not raised problems in a biblical corpus where intercourse between men is otherwise condemned. But I admit that this could be our preconception.

Both Bailey and Bouwman conclude from their survey of the post-biblical literature that the homosexualization of sodomy occurred fairly late. It took place under the influence of Greek pederasty (although Dover's classic work assigns a limited space of time, from the sixth to the fourth cen-

tury BCE, to the acceptance of that practice[22]) or under the influence of monastic life. Both writers claim that the *Liber gommorhianus* testifies that, at the beginning of the second millennium, sodomy was already associated with homosexuality. This tradition influenced later readers of the Bible, and even biblical scholars projected this onto their treatment of the original tradition.

A related step in the reasoning is the claim that the writers of the Bible were not acquainted with the homosexual inclinations and feelings we recognize today. Thus the Bible cannot condemn "our" homosexuality. This insight may be of comfort to people who still take the biblical text to be a direct authority that need not be mediated. For these people, Peter Damian is just a warning voice against incorrect interpretations of the Bible.

For others who are less concerned with the original meaning of the Bible, and more interested in how cultural history has shaped our behaviour and desires, Peter Damian is a very interesting milestone. We would like to know more about him or, better still, about the era and mentality he represents. This would allow us a better understanding of our cultural history and of ourselves, just as lying on the analyst's couch can relieve an individual of his personal past, so historical research can cure our collective cultural determinations.[23]

Since Foucault's first book on sexuality,[24] we have become used to thinking that the invention of a specific sexual inclination linked with a peculiar psychology was something that originated in the nineteenth century. Today, several decades later, we can see the different lifestyles adopted in the gay milieu, where there are not only homosexuals, but aesthetes, drag queens, leather boys and bears. They are often so different from each other that you could ask whether "homosexuality" is really a general concept, or simply a signifier bringing together a polymorphous crowd.

In line with Foucault's reasoning, I have often maintained the view that the linking of sexual preferences with a specific type of sexuality is a modern phenomenon. A seminar on Alphonsus Liguori supported me. Before him, as I mentioned above, moral theology distinguished between *sodomia imperfecta* (i.e. anal intercourse between a man with a woman) and *sodomia perfecta* (i.e. anal intercourse between men). Thus the anatomy of the act

22 K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London: Duckworth, 1978).

23 "The ultimate aim of all this, according to Foucault, is to diagnose the present, for history is a 'curative science'. And 'the purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit ourselves to its dissipation', to refute those categorisations that are imposed upon us as truth. Clearly an approach such as this radically challenges any general theory of history and of society." Jeffrey Weeks, *Against Nature. Essays on History, Sexuality and Identity* (London: Rivers Oram, 1991) 161.

24 M. Foucault, *La volonté de savoir* (Histoire de la sexualité 1; Paris: Gallimard, 1976). English translation: *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1: An Introduction* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978).

was the primary criterion, while the person with whom it was carried out was only secondary. Liguori changed this view. For him, the basic question was "with whom?," and only subsequently did the question "how?" follow. This seems to be in line with Foucault.[25]

Having read Peter Damian, a figure I first encountered in my book on religious flagellation,[26] I have become more cautious. On the one hand, I found much more modern psychology in his writings than was to be expected. For Peter Damian, as we have seen, sodomy is not simply anal intercourse, the latter being conceived as a simple physical act, without relational aspects.[27] On the contrary, the overall evaluation of sexuality is of course negative, but the fact that sodomy is interpreted in the framework of a father-son relationship is remarkable. One has the impression that psychological insights are emerging. And we can perhaps understand the very peculiar introduction of a female figure, the strange queen of Sodom – in line with Freud's negative Oedipus complex – as an identification with the mother figure.

References to the Oedipus complex are hazardous in a contemporary climate where the knowledge of Freudian thought has become scarce and has often been reduced to clichés. However, I would insist that the Oedipus complex is not essentially the rivalry with the father in the quarrel for the possession of the mother. Equally if not more important is the gaining of identity reached by identification with a father figure through the Oedipus

[25] The same thing was noticed by Bouwman, *De zonde van Sodom*, 18.

[26] P. Vandermeersch, *La chair de la passion. Une histoire de foi: la flagellation* (Paris: Cerf, 2002).

[27] In this sense, I am no longer certain that at least the first of the English translations is wrong in the two cases where the word "homosexuality" is used by Blum:

> ... quia, qui feda cum masculo libidinose immunditiae sorde polluitur, ecclesiasticis fungi officiis non meretur, nec idonei sunt, divinum tractare mysterium, qui, ut dicitur, dudum fuerint vasa vitiorum. (309)
> It evidently follows that whoever is sullied with the ugly filth of homosexual vice is unworthy of service in ecclesiastical offices. They, moreover, who were once vessels of vice, as was said, are unfit to celebrate the divine mysteries. (30)

> Si ergo te impudica caro tua mollities suadendo decepit, si septem dona Spiritus sancti abstulit, si lumen non frontis sed cordis extinxit, non concidas animo, noli funditus desperare, adhuc te in vires collige, viriliter excute, fortia temptare praesume et sic per Dei misericordiam de inimicis tuis poteris triumphare. (322)
> Then, if your impure flesh has deceived you with homosexual persuasions, if it has stolen the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, if it has extinguished not merely the light of your countenance but that of your spirit, do not be depressed and utterly despair. Once again collect your forces, bestir yourself like a man, dare to perform great deeds, and by so acting you will have the strength, through the mercy of God, to triumph over your enemies. (45)

Latin text in Reindel (ed.), *Die Briefe des Petrus Damiani. Teil I.* English translation in Blum (transl.), *The Letters of Peter Damian.*

complex.[28] Freud became increasingly aware that this identification implied fantasies of adopting a feminine position in relation to him, and thus a secondary identification with the mother in order to strengthen the relationship with the father.[29] This is the core of the "negative" Oedipus complex, which normally complemented the primary form. There is an element of "homosexuality" (in line with identification) in the constitution of every male identity, and also an element of male femininity (which is in fact not *homo*sexual, but *trans*sexual). Both aspects of the Oedipus complex constitute the male subject.[30]

Let me add that, although a human being's need for identification seems to be universal, the Oedipus complex can vary.[31] My hypothesis is that Western subjectivity, as it has been peculiarly shaped by Modernity, requires certain particular features of it, whereby an idealisation of the woman and a special emphasis on individual suffering (masochism) play a special role. From this point of view, courtly love (*amour courtois)* and the new spirituality introduced at the end of the Middle Ages could be indicators of the new, individualistic subject yet to come.

Without delving too deeply into this specific psychoanalytic theory, we will simply make the following hypothesis from the perspective of the history of spirituality. Peter Damian's *Liber Gommorhianus* could be a sign of a new type of spirituality, linked to a new psychological organization of the subject. Whereas, until that time, the emphasis was placed on Trinity, Incarnation and Resurrection, now Christ's earthly body, especially his suffering body, became important in Christian belief. In self-flagellation, the new practice established by Peter Damian – and unknown before him – the pious man attempted to join Christ and, as it is literally stated, to merge with his body. In my book I mentioned the strange insistence of the author of the *Liber gomorrhianus* that flagellation should be performed naked, and that the monk who is ashamed of doing this in front

[28] The importance appears even in the title given by Freud to his first extensive text on the Oedipus complex: "The identification". See S. Freud, *Mass Psychology and Analysis of the Ego* (1921).

[29] S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (1923).

[30] I would like to add something that I am asked time and again: there is no coherent, elaborated theory on feminine subjectivity in Freud. Unwilling to arbitrate between Lou Andreas-Salome, Helene Deutsch and his daughter Anna Freud, he transmitted the solving of the mystery of this "dark continent" (Freud) to his female followers – surely a wise decision. Concerning the author of this article and the problem it deals with, I must add that I would have liked to elaborate on the images of woman involved both in the reception of the Sodom story (in particular the queen) and the negative Oedipus complex. I also regret that I could not discuss the Devil in more detail. But, applying it to myself, I should confess that "que la plus belle fille du monde ne peut donner que ce qu'elle a".

[31] For a discussion of the "myth" amongst anthropologists that psychoanalysis depends on the universality of the Western Oedipus complex, see B. Pulman, *Anthropologie et psychanalyse. Malinowski contre Freud* (Paris: PUF, 2002).

of his brothers is in fact deceived by the devil.[32] The study by De Chasteigner on the importance attributed by Peter Damian to priestly celibacy provides us with another hint.[33] At a time when the doctrine of the *realis presentia* caused much controversy, Peter Damian's basic argument for celibacy was that purity was required for contact with the body of Christ. Would it be so absurd to suppose that the strong aversion to sodomy is an unconscious defence against homosexual feelings for Christ – the perfect brother – experienced by the beloved brother of Damian?[34]

Of course, only Peter himself could confirm or reject this hypothesis with regard to his own psyche. But that should not prevent us from considering a range of representations pervading mediaeval spirituality and inviting believers to model their desire accordingly. The psychological impact of the new fascination for the body of Christ could be a more important turning point in the religious and cultural history of the West than one would suspect. The subsequent distress with sexuality in the Christian tradition, especially in Catholic circles, could have originated from this, rather than in nineteenth-century Victorian thinking. It would have less to do with simple repression and more with a secret use of unnamed sexual wishes. Is Freud not right to state that subconscious homosexuality as a cement for social cohesion operates the better when it operates unconsciously?

In assigning to Peter Damian the place he deserves in the history of sodomy, it is important to make an *anamnèsis* of our sexuality. I am grateful to those biblical scholars who referred to him as a milestone, even if they tried to seduce me to look less at Peter Damian than at the real meaning of the Bible. But, since Paradise, we know how fruitful seductions can be, even if it is dangerous to look back at Sodom.

32 P. Vandermeersch, *La chair de la passion*, 51.

33 See note 18.

34 An alternative – possibly complementary – interpretation is to be found in the brilliant book of Mark J. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). According to him, Peter Damian knew the frequent occurrence of homosexuality among monks. As he experienced the same tendencies in his own self, he violently tried to repress them. It is commonly known that the most fierce prosecutors of homosexuals are to be found among them who do not acknowledge the existence of this desire as belonging to their owns.

HOMOSEXUALITY IN PROUST'S *SODOME ET GOMORRHE I*

ELS JONGENEEL

1. La race des tantes

Proust's novel *A la recherche du temps perdu* was published originally in seven volumes between 1913 and 1927. The *Recherche*, as it is frequently called by French literary critics, can be considered a combination of a Bildungsroman and a Künstlerroman. The novel deals with the stages of development from childhood to adulthood as experienced by its narrator Marcel, although those stages are not expounded in a strictly chronological order in the text. In this educational process the arts are playing a decisive role. The protagonist is especially fascinated by literature and is dreaming of becoming an author. As a kind of apotheosis, the novel concludes with the self-confident choice of the pen by the narrator, a choice which however has ripened in the course of the story. *Sodome et Gomorrhe* is the fourth volume of the *Recherche*, at the same time the last one that was published during the author's lifetime, in May 1922. Proust died of pneumonia in November of the same year, at the age of 51. The last three volumes were almost finished, he had been doctoring them until shortly before his death. Proust worked at his palimpsest-novel like one of his favorite authors, Montaigne, glossed his essays: he filled in the gaps in the course of time by constantly revising and rewriting the episodes of the story that he initially had undercoated. Some passages in *Sodome et Gomorrhe* belong to the oldest ones of the *Recherche*. And so does the central subject matter of this volume, homosexuality.

Sodome et Gomorrhe consists of two uneven parts. The first one, *Sodome et Gomorrhe I*, is a kind of "exposé" of about thirty pages, comparable as such to other doctrinal dissertations in the *Recherche*, such as the chapter on the temporally stratified personality, "Les intermittences du coeur", in *Sodome et Gomorrhe II*, and the section on aesthetics entitled "L'adoration perpétuelle" in the final volume, *Le temps retrouvé*. The exposé *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* directly links up with the preceding volume, *Le côté de Guermantes II*, and serves as an introduction to its voluminous novelistic prolungation (nearly five hundred pages), *Sodome et Gomorrhe II*.

In *Sodome et Gomorrhe I*,[1] the exposé on which I will focus, we encounter the first-person narrator Marcel[2] who tells us a scene that he chanced to witness recently. He comments upon what was going on, adopts a critical and sometimes ironical attitude toward what is happening, draws conclusions, offers an outlook on ultimate events and furnishes examples illustrating his point of view, in order to win the reader over to his side. In this ideologically straight-forward exposé the narrator figures as the author's mouthpiece, although obviously some distance persists between both. Consequently the reader only gets an ironic and ambivalent impression of Proust's ideas about homosexuality.

In the following section, *Sodome et Gomorrhe II*, the reader becomes familiarized with the customs and traditions of the inverts. Several types of homosexuals are put on the scene, especially in the context of the detailed accounts of the high-society-parties given by the Guermantes-family in Paris and in Balbec, the Norman seaside resort where many Parisian aristocratic snobs meet. In this section too the narrator enters at length into the relations existing between Sodom and Gomorrah. The Gomorrean world in particular is analyzed by means of the story of the complicated hate-love relationship between the narrator and his Lesbian beloved Albertine. In spite of its tragic outcome, the story of this calvary, the "roman d'Albertine", which will be continued in the two succeeding volumes of the *Recherche*, furnishes one of the most beautiful analyses in 20th-century French literature of love as a source of jealousy, aversion and sadism.

Because of the ambiguous attitude of the narrator and consequently of the author toward sexual inversion in *Sodome et Gomorrhe*,[3] the reactions of the contemporary readers were diverse: some were disillusioned, while the contents of the novel in their opinion did not correspond to its promising title, others were shocked about what they called a scandalous text.

Sodome et Gomorrhe I bears the following provocative heading: "Première apparition des hommes-femmes, descendants de ceux des habitants de Sodome qui furent épargnés par le feu du ciel". The author thus presents the

[1] M. Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 102; Paris: Gallimard, 1988) 3-33. All page references are to this edition. English translation: *Cities of the plain* (First Vintage Books Edition; New York [etc.]: Vintage, 1982).

[2] His name is not mentioned in the *Sodome et Gomorrhe* volumes. Actually in the whole novel it is only quoted two times (in *La prisonnière*).

[3] In his correspondence on the topic Proust conceals his feelings towards sexual inversion behind novelistic exigencies: "Je suis écoeuré d'avoir eu à pousser si avant des analyses de passions maladives. Dieu merci c'est à peu près fini", lettre à André Chaumeix, dans *Correspondance*, t. XXI, 339, quoted by L. Fraisse, *"Sodome et Gomorrhe" de Marcel Proust* (Agrégation de lettres; Paris: Sedes, 2000) 111. Proust uses preferably the medical term "inversion" and its derivatives "inverted" and "invert". The term ("inversion du sens génital", "inversion sexuelle") was coined in the late 19th century by the French physician Charcot, a specialist in nervous diseases. The term "homosexuality" was introduced somewhat later (1906) into the French language.

story as a continuation of Genesis 19. Nevertheless he has adapted for his purposes the biblical episode of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the ensuing rescue of Lot and his daughters thanks to divine intervention and protection. By relating this important episode of the novel to a biblical framework, the author ironically assumes the part of a moralist. I will come back to this later.

The heading is followed by an epigraph with likewise biblical undertones: "La femme aura Gomorrhe et l'homme aura Sodome". The quotation stems from "La colère de Samson", a poem by Alfred de Vigny from 1839.[4] The poem consists of a long monologue by the biblical judge Samson who just has divulged to Delilah the secret of his Nazarite condition.[5] Extremely sorrow because of this act of profanation by which he has signed his own death-warrant, Samson accuses Delilah of betrayal and then starts to charge woman in general ("Et plus ou moins, la Femme est toujours Dalila"; v. 60). He blames her for debauching man through cunning and guile and for hard-heartedly responding to his love by cold arrogance. This off-putting behaviour, according to Samson, will alienate the sexes and finally wreck them both. This soliloquy is followed by a short evocation of Samson's vengeance and death in the Philistine sanctuary of Dagon and by a concluding anathema in which the poet invokes earth and heaven to judge likewise all betraying women ("Terre et Ciel! punissez par de telles justices La trahison ourdie en des amours factices, Et la délation du secret de nos coeurs Arraché dans nos bras par des baisers menteurs!"; vv. 133-136). By quoting Vigny's misogynic poem about woman's infidelity and debauchery and its fatal consequences, Proust ironically refers to the unfortunate love story between Marcel and Albertine. The last sentence of *Sodome et Gomorrhe II*, "il faut absolument que j'épouse [je= Marcel] Albertine", sounds like a triumphant refutation of the Vigny-epigraph. But in fact this impossible romance between a heterosexual and a Lesbian, inspired by envy, will end in failure.

Thereupon the exposé opens with a flashback. The narrator invites us at the hôtel de Guermantes in Paris. He has taken up a concealed position on the staircase of the hôtel, in order to wait for the arrival of the Duke and Duchess de Guermantes, because he wants them to give him an invitation for an important reception that will take place the same evening. Through the shutters of the staircase he is peering at a blooming orchid in the courtyard. Fascinated by this splendid flower, the narrator who appears to be a fairly good botanist, starts to philosophize on the miraculous fertilisation it needs by the bee. This takes him to discuss other possibilities of procrea-

[4] A. de Vigny, "La colère de Samson", in *Les Destinées* (Textes littéraires français 18; Genève, Paris: Droz, 1963).

[5] Cf. Judg 16:4-17.

tion in the plant world, such as self-fertilisation which acts as a brake on the excessive invigoration of the species.

Then suddenly the baron de Charlus, a parent of the Guermantes, enters the courtyard. The narrator prefers not to be seen by him because he does not like his eccentric behaviour and because he absolutely wants to obtain an invitation from the duke. Therefore he conceals himself. We encounter more often this characteristic position of the narrator-voyeur in the *Recherche*. One of Proust's critics has compared it with the pose of the omniscient narrator.[6] In fact voyeurism suggests observational authenticity, a truthful account of events. It presupposes a probe moral attitude characteristic of the engaged though critical moralist.[7] Charlus, in his fifties, clearly on the decline (developing a paunch, turning grey, with puffy cheeks, short-sighted – Proust knows how to depict his characters with a few strokes of the pen), occasionally runs into the somewhat younger Jupien, an ex-tailor whose shop looks out on the courtyard. Each of them seems to be fascinated at first sight by the other and they start a flirtation. The narrator then compares the coquetry scene which is enacted before his eyes to the "flirtation pose" of the orchid at the moment in which it prepares for being fertilized by the bumble-bee, a specimen of which just at that moment flies into the courtyard. Suddenly Charlus and Jupien re-enter into the hotel. The narrator takes shelter in the adjacent room in order to overhear the amorous flirtation. Because of its noisiness, there is no doubt left about its scabrous outcome.

Hence the narrator comes to the conclusion that Charles belongs to the race of the men-women. This intriguing trouvaille brings about a long character sketch of the "race des tantes",[8]

> sur qui pèse une malédiction et qui doit vivre dans le mensonge et le parjure, puisqu'elle sait tenu pour punissable et honteux, pour inavouable, son désir, ce qui fait pour toute créature la plus grande douceur de vivre; qui doit renier son Dieu, puisque, même chrétiens, quand à la barre du tribunal ils comparaissent comme accusés, il leur faut, devant le Christ et en son nom, se défendre comme d'une calomnie de ce qui est leur vie même; fils sans mère, à laquelle ils sont obligés de mentir toute la vie et même à l'heure de lui fermer les yeux; amis sans amitiés, malgré toutes celles que leur charme fréquemment reconnu inspire ... (16-17).

[6] M. Raimond, *La crise du roman, des lendemains du naturalisme aux années vingt* (Paris: Corti, 1966) 342. The reference to Raimond is to be found in Fraisse, *"Sodome et Gomorrhe" de Marcel Proust*, 112.

[7] This narrative point of view is called "reflectorization" in recent narrative theory. See M. Fludernik, *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (London: Routledge, 1996) 178-221.

In his film "Le temps retrouvé" (1999) based on the *Recherche*, the cinematographer Ramon Ruíz has taken up from Proust this voyeuristic attitude of the main character (see for example the episode of Charlus in a brothel watched by Marcel).

[8] This was the title of one of the first drafts of *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* – see *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, Pléiade edition vol. III, 919-33.

Then follows a masterly character drawing of the doomed race, bundled in a lengthy sentence covering three pages, the longest one of the *Recherche*, and ending in the striking metaphor of the lion-tamers ("dompteurs") finally devoured when the scandal bursts out:

> jusque-là obligés de cacher leur vie, de détourner leurs regards d'où ils voudraient se fixer, de les fixer sur ce dont ils voudraient se détourner, de changer le genre de bien des adjectifs dans leur vocabulaire ... (19).

Up to five times in his exposé, the narrator compares the homosexuals with another group that is socially victimized, the Jews, a comparison that we will encounter frequently in the rest of the novel. He mentions in particular Dreyfus, a prominent Jewish captain in the French army, who fell prey to right-wing, anti-Semite politicians, was suspected of spying, sentenced and deported to Devil's Island in 1894. The Dreyfus-affair divided French politics into two camps, which put up a vigorous fight against each other. Soon afterwards the socialists launched a violent campaign in order to get the Dreyfus-dossier reopened. Finally Dreyfus was acquitted in 1899 and rehabilitated in 1906. At the time (*Sodome et Gomorrhe* is set in 1902), the Dreyfus-affair was one of the main issues in the Parisian salons.

At the beginning of the mega-sentence on homosexuality we find another citation from Vigny's "La colère de Samson": "Les deux sexes mourront chacun de son côté".[9] In Proust's exposé however this prophecy, actually the conclusion of the epigraph quoted above, is not attributed to Samson but to "le poète la veille fêté dans tous les salons, applaudi dans tous les théâtres de Londres, chassé le lendemain de tous les garnis sans pouvoir trouver un oreiller où reposer sa tête ..." (17), that is to say Oscar Wilde who was sentenced to two years of forced labor in 1895 because of his homosexual life-style. Hence Wilde would have totally agreed with Samson and would have endorsed his profound bitterness regarding the female sex. I interpret the biblical pillow[10] that Wilde is lacking as a token of Proust's sympathy for this kindred colleague.

In his "social treatise" on homosexuality, the narrator distinguishes several types of inverts: the poor, the rich, the lonesome who prefer isolation over scandal, the aesthetes who openly admit and display their homosexual proclivity, because they consider it a sign of artistic genius. Thereafter he briefly illustrates these types of inverts by concrete examples of social conduct: some assume a haughty attitude by isolating themselves, others

[9] The entire passage in Vigny is as follows:
Bientôt, se retirant dans un hideux royaume,
La Femme aura Gomorrhe et l'Homme aura Sodome:
Et, se jetant, de loin, un regard irrité,
Les deux sexes mourront chacun de son côté (vv. 77-80).

[10] Matth 8:20; Luke 9:58.

compromise by contracting a hetero relationship, others prefer a Lesbian woman. The invert, says the narrator, is characterized by his contradictory behaviour. He defies society or hides ashamed behind her wheels. He is both marginal and celebrated, a mixture of vulgarity and refinement, goodness and sadism. This moral portrait of sexual inverts reminds us of one of Proust's privileged authors, Balzac, who in his novels has given amply voice to both male and female homosexuality.

Finally the narrator gets onto the provenance of the inverts: they are from Sodom. The two angels armed with a flaming sword who had to guard the entrance of the city before its final destruction,[11] let escape nonetheless some of their ancestors, while these succeeded in making them believe they did not belong to the damned race of the inverts (instantaneously Proust fakes a moving sight of the fabulist Sodomites: "Père de six enfants, j'ai deux maîtresses"; 32). The narrator notes ironically that God would have done better to confer the task of civic guard to a Sodomite, because the latter would have immediately seen through his treacherous fellow citizens and sent them back to Sodom. Because of the benevolence of the guards, thus the narrator, many Sodomites have escaped the verdict. Their posterity is "si nombreux qu'on peut leur appliquer l'autre verset de la Genèse: <Si quelqu'un peut compter la poussière de la terre, il pourra aussi compter cette postérité>" (33). Again Proust is merchandizing the biblical text for his own benefits. God had surely not promised a numerous posterity to the inhabitants of Sodom, but to Abram (Gen 13:16), after the latter had let Lot take his choice first for a place of settlement for his family. Lot chose Sodom, while Abram opted for Chanaan. The promise of posterity confirmed divine approval of Abram's humility and righteousness.

The descendants of the escaped Sodomites have spread worldwide. They are people from all walks of life and are practising all kinds of professions. Their most important feature is the mendacity that they have inherited from their ancestors who needed it in order to escape from the accursed city. Therefore it would be futile to rebuild Sodom, because

> ... à peine arrivés, les Sodomistes quitteraient la ville pour ne pas avoir l'air d'en être, prendraient femme, entretiendraient des maîtresses dans d'autres cités où ils trouveraient d'ailleurs toutes les distractions convenables. Ils n'iraient à Sodome que les jours de suprême nécessité, quand leur ville serait vide, par ces temps où la faim fait sortir le loup du bois.

[11] Nowhere in Genesis 18 and 19 there is a reference nor to a guarding of the city gates neither to the "épée flamboyante" of the celestial messengers. Two angels had indeed been sent to Sodom to investigate its state of corruption (Gen 18:21-22) and to conduct Lot and his family out of the city. By using for the Sodom and Gomorrah episode the framework of the story of the first human couple (Genesis 3 – the cherubs guarding the gates of Eden during the expulsion of Adam and Eve), Proust ironically confers a paradisical aura to the homosexual exiles.

> C'est dire que tout se passerait en somme comme à Londres, à Berlin, à Rome, à Pétrograd ou à Paris (33).

With this laconic remark the narrator concludes his exposé and turns to relate the course of events in which he is involved.

The humor and irony of this prologue barely conceal its moralistic firmness. The narrator assumes the role of an engaged commentator, the speaking counterpart of the intrigued voyeur. In a Voltairean vein Proust is trying to moderate the indoctrinating tone of his portrayal of the inverts. Up to two times here the narrator distances himself from the communis opinio about the homosexual "vice" and occasionally he even openly speaks in defense of the doomed race:

> Le vice (on parle ainsi pour la commodité du langage), le vice de chacun l'accompagne à la façon de ce génie qui était invisible pour les hommes tant qu'ils ignoraient sa présence (15);

> contrainte sociale légère [= the obligation imposed by society upon the inverts to change the gender of the adjectives in their vocabulary] auprès de la contrainte intérieure que leur [= of the Sodomites] vice, ou ce qu'on nomme improprement ainsi, leur impose, non plus à l'égard des autres mais d'eux-mêmes, et de façon qu'à eux-mêmes il ne leur paraisse pas un vice (19);

> Sans doute la vie de certains invertis paraît quelquefois changer, leur vice (comme on dit) n'apparaît plus dans leurs habitudes (26-27).

Extremely subtle also the frequent juxtapositions by means of which the narrator equates homosexuality with a characteristic trait or genius:

> Tenant leur vice pour plus exceptionnel qu'il n'est, ils sont allés vivre seuls du jour qu'ils l'ont découvert, après l'avoir porté longtemps sans le connaître, plus longtemps seulement que d'autres. Car personne ne sait tout d'abord qu'il est inverti, ou poète, ou snob, ou méchant (25).

Ironical too are the similes which depict the homosexual community from a moral perspective, as a hobbyhorsical way of life:

> Dans leur quartier [...] ils ont vite découvert d'autres jeunes gens que le même goût particulier rapproche d'eux, comme dans une petite ville se lient le professeur de seconde et le notaire qui aiment tous les deux la musique de chambre, les ivoires du moyen âge; appliquant à l'objet de leur distraction le même instinct utilitaire, le même esprit professionnel qui les guide dans leur carrière, ils les retrouvent à des séances où nul profane n'est plus admis qu'à celles qui réunissent des amateurs de vieilles tabatières, d'estampes japonaises, de fleurs rares, et où, à cause du plaisir de s'instruire, de l'utilité des échanges et de la crainte des compétitions, règnent à la fois, comme dans une bourse aux timbres, l'entente étroite des spécialistes et les féroces rivalités des collectionneurs (20)

In the *Recherche*, Sodom is associated with overt sexuality (embodied by Charlus and his mondaine relations), while Gomorrah is the domain of hidden sexual practice (Albertine and her secret friendships with the "jeunes filles en fleurs"). Nonetheless the two inverted "worlds", apparently incompatible, according to the Vigny epigraph, are interrelated and will come together in the course of *Sodome et Gomorrhe II*. Likewise the two "ways" ("côtés") of the *Recherche*, the bourgeois way (Swann) and the mundane way (the Guermantes) merge in *Le temps retrouvé*, because of relationships and marriages. *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* already points to this mutual approach of the two "ways".[12] Just before the encounter of Charlus and Jupien, the narrator refers back to another important key event of his adolescence, which he apparently considers a replica of the event in the Guermantes courtyard: the meeting in Montjouvain, near Combray where he used to spend his holidays as a boy, a meeting that unexpectedly he happened to witness too, between two Lesbian young women, Mlle Vinteuil and her older girlfriend. During this intimate encounter the older woman sadistically incited her friend to besmirch the portrait of her deceased father, the composer Vinteuil.[13] Although less provocative than the scene in Montjouvain, the copulation between Charlus and Jupien is perverse and grotesque too. The two inverted "ways", it seems, are affiliated:[14]

> ... d'après ce que j'entendis les premiers temps dans celle [= la boutique] de Jupien et qui ne furent que des sons inarticulés, je suppose que peu de paroles furent prononcées. Il est vrai que ces sons étaient si violents que, s'ils n'avaient pas été toujours repris une octave plus haut par une plainte parallèle, j'aurais pu croire qu'une personne en égorgeait une autre à côté de moi et qu'ensuite le meurtrier et sa victime ressuscitée prenaient un bain pour effacer les traces du crime. J'en conclus plus tard qu'il y a une chose aussi bruyante que la souffrance, c'est le plaisir, surtout quand s'y ajoutent [...] des soucis immédiats de propreté (11).

But Montjouvain not only connotes love, hatred, jealousy and sadism, but also art and artistic vocation. Thus a sonata for piano and violin composed by Mlle Vinteuil's father, the musician and composer Vinteuil, occupies an important place in the novel, as a sign of impossible desire and love and as a sesame in the quest for art which colours the whole "sentimental journey" of the protagonist.[15] Hence Montjouvain refers to the two main themes of

[12] Proust has borrowed this motif of the sexual fusion of Sodom and Gomorrah from Baudelaire.

[13] *Du côté de chez Swann* (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade; Paris: Gallimard, 1988) 157-61.

[14] On symmetrical structures in the *Recherche*, see Fraisse, *"Sodome et Gomorrhe" de Marcel Proust*, 43-45.

[15] This binary metaphorical function of the "phrase de Vinteuil" is prefigured in *Du côté de chez Swann*, by the unhappy love story of the aesthete Swann, an acquaintance of the narrator's parents (in many aspects an example and model for Marcel) and Odette, a woman

the novel, like most key events in the *Recherche*: desire and art. In the fourth chapter of *Sodome et Gomorrhe II*, for example, the Montjouvain-adventure comes obsessively to the narrator's mind as a morbid memory of sadism and perversion: every time he remembers the scene in Montjouvain, the protagonist falls prey to jealousy and despair because he suspects Albertine to have the same Lesbian sympathies and even is told by Albertine herself that she is close friends with Mlle Vinteuil. But these torturous suspicions make him forget his artistic vocation which is also associated with the name of Vinteuil. Not until the revelation of his artistic vocation in *Le temps retrouvé*, will he associate Vinteuil's composition with his own aesthetics of involuntary memory. On the other hand, Sodom's way too is associated with art, Charlus being an aesthete who maintains a lot of connections with artists:

> En Charlus, 'la stérilité de l'autofécondation' rend l'inversion en partie responsable de sa condition de 'célibataire de l'art' qu'il partage avec Swann: son androgynie, proche des formes originelles de la vie, en fera, pour le narrateur du *Temps retrouvé*, une ébauche informe de l'artiste. [...] Dans l'économie de la *Recherche*, l'homosexuel en société, soit Charlus aussi bien chez le prince de Guermantes que chez les Verdurin, offre un équivalent dégradé de l'artiste en milieu mondain, incompris et dépensant en pure perte ses talents.[16]

2. Inversion and botanics

At the time of the first drafts of the *Recherche*, between 1908 and 1912, the theme of sexual inversion was no longer a taboo in Western literature and art. It even had been one of the favourite hobby-horses of decadence but already had become outmoded at the time.[17] Other themes had been brought into prominence, such as the cult of strength, energy and sport. However Proust joins the range of ideas of the French decadents of the 1880's – Verlaine, Rimbaud, Huysmans, who associated homosexuality with artistic genius. He also draws his inspiration from older authors who in their texts gave voice to the taboo of inversion: Balzac (see the key character of Vautrin that figures in several novels, and the Lesbians in *La Fille aux yeux d'or*) and Baudelaire.

But although in artistic, aristocratic circles homosexuality seemed a commonplace, in daily life it was not. In this respect too the gap between

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of easy virtue. It is Swann who first associates his love for Odette with the "phrase de Vinteuil".

[16] Fraisse, *"Sodome et Gomorrhe" de Marcel Proust*, 110.

[17] One of the latest examples is Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice" (1912), but already homosexuality is not presented here as a human right that has to be gained, it is rather criticized as a decadent sign of aestheticism.

art and life, accentuated by the decadents, was widening.[18] In *Sodome et Gomorrhe I*, Proust is trying to explain sexual inversion as a natural phenomenon that has been stigmatized by human culture. Consequently society has marginalized and victimized the inversion-ridden race. Proust posits homosexuality as a hereditary manifestation of the man-woman, that is to say of the man who is genotypically determined by a feminine temperament or soul.[19] Proust has taken this idea from German and French psychiatrists (Krafft-Ebing, Hirschfeld, Moll, Charcot, Magnan) and from medical theories on neurosis and heredity (Claude Bernard) from the second half of the 19th century. For the first time these scientists no longer considered homosexuality as an abnormal vice, as had done their precursors. They regarded it as a congenital nervous disorder.

Proust had become familiar with these ideas and will try them out in his fiction. His father, Adrien Proust, was a doctor interested in psychotherapeutics, the forerunner of Freud's psychoanalysis. In 1897 he published a *Hygiène du neurasthénique*. His brother, Robert, was a surgeon who made a study of hermaphroditism. In *Sodome et Gomorrhe II*, the narrator develops the idea stated in the exposé that the feminine soul in fact is a distant ancestor who is using the invert as a medium. From time to time the soul manifests itself clearly, for example in the voice (the cooing laughter of Charlus, the vulgar, hoarse voice of Albertine):

> Et il [Charlus] eut un petit rire qui lui etait spécial – un rire qui lui venait probablement de quelque grand-mère bavaroise ou lorraine, qui le tenait elle-même, tout identique, d'une aïeule, de sorte qu'il sonnait ainsi, inchangé, depuis pas mal de siècles dans de vieilles petites cours de l'Europe ... (332)

The homosexual temperament manifests itself through crises or trances often accompanied by sadism and perversion. It is an innate, nervous temperament that from time to time crops up.

Besides remnants of psychiatrical theories, Proust, in order to underpin his social and psychologic portrait of the inverts in *Sodome et Gomorrhe I*, quotes Darwin's ideas on the sexuality of plants. Between 1870 and 1880

[18] "Death in Venice" again confirms this.

[19] See Gide's comments on Proust's ideas on the man-woman, in his preface to the reissue of *Corydon*: "Certains livres – ceux de Proust en particulier – ont habitué le public à s'effaroucher moins et à oser considérer de sang-froid ce qu'il feignait d'ignorer ou préférait ignorer d'abord. [...] Mais ces livres du même coup, ont beaucoup contribué, je le crains, à égarer l'opinion. La théorie de l'homme-femme, des 'sexuelle Zwischenstufen' (degrés intermédiaires de la sexualité) que lançait le Dr Hirschfeld en Allemagne, assez longtemps déjà avant la guerre, et à laquelle Marcel Proust semble se ranger - peut bien n'être point fausse; mais elle n'explique et ne concerne que certains cas d'homosexualité [...] - les cas d'inversion, d'efféminement, de sodomie". I have borrowed this citation from the excellent introduction to Proust by A. Compagnon, *Proust entre deux siècles* (Paris: Seuil, 1989) 268-9.

three French translations had been published of Darwin's evolution theory regarding botany (*Des différentes formes de fleurs dans les plantes de la même espèce, Des effets de la fécondation croisée et de la fécondation directe dans le règne végétal, De la fécondation des orchidées par des insectes et des bons résultats du croisement*). The final pages of *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* on the hermaphrodite flowers refer directly to Darwin ("Je trouvais la mimique, d'abord incompréhensible pour moi, de Jupien et de M. de Charlus aussi curieuse que ces gestes tentateurs adressés aux insectes, selon Darwin, par les fleurs dites composées..."; 31). Other sources consulted by Proust were Maeterlinck's *L'intelligence des fleurs* (1907) and Schopenhauer's *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1819). In this text, Schopenhauer explains homosexuality, a non procreative sexual instinct, as a means of auto-regulation of the human species thought-out by the Will in order to prevent adolescents and old men to procreate too feeble infants.

Notwithstanding his protests against any scientific claim regarding the lose parallels that he is playing with in his comparison between the sex life of humans and plants – the comparisons are "sans la moindre prétention scientifique de rapprocher certaines lois de la botanique et ce qu'on appelle parfois fort mal l'homosexualité" (9), the narrator for more than twenty pages expatiates on these stunning correspondences.[20].The similes touching on homosexuality and vegetal hermaphroditism are worth studying. Like in other Proustian similes, the vehicle tends to supplant the tenor, so that vegetal life is ranked with human conduct and botany is related to human morality:

> Les ruses les plus extraordinaires que la nature a inventées pour forcer les insectes à assurer la fécondation des fleurs qui, sans eux, ne pourraient pas l'être parce que la fleur mâle y est trop éloignée de la fleur femelle, [...] et la ruse qui, pour que la fleur soit réservée au pollen qu'il faut, qui ne peut fructifier qu'en elle, lui fait sécréter une liqueur qui l'immunise contre les autres pollens – ne me semblaient pas plus merveilleuses que l'existence de la sous-variété d'invertis destinée à assurer les plaisirs de l'amour à l'inverti devenant vieux: les hommes qui sont attirés non par tous les hommes, mais – par un phénomène de correspondance et d'harmonie comparable à ceux qui règlent la fécondation des fleurs hétérostylées trimorphes comme le Lythrum salicaria – seulement par les hommes beaucoup plus âgés qu'eux (29-30).

Near the end of his argument the narrator even carries the comparison between human and plant homosexuality as far as to presume a primitive state of hermaphroditism, in which the female and male body still contained respectively male and female organic remains. In this he again bases himself

[20] However such lessons of comparative biology were a trend in contemporary literature – see for example the lessons given by Vincent Profitendieu on comparative zoo-technics and botany in Gide's *Les faux monnayeurs* (1925 - first part, ch. XVII).

on Darwin who believed that the separation between male and female in the evolution of the species had occurred rather late. Briefly, homosexuality is a simple consequence of a law of nature to which humans and vegetables are subjected. It was human culture however who put it under taboo.

Thus as a human herbalist and a moral botanist (30) the narrator-mouthpiece of the author strives to naturalize sexual inversion. He does not try to justify it; he only medicalizes it. Proust's way of thinking is atheistic. He is reticent about good and evil in human nature, although in his novel he brings up at length cruelty, perversion and sadism. In contrast with Baudelaire, his great source of inspiration in the domain of sadism and perversion, human nature in Proust may be alternately malicious or benevolent. Baudelaire departs from the metaphysical idea that human nature is subjected to a double postulation, toward God and toward Satan. On the contrary Proust does not conceive of human nature as a source of evil nor of goodness. As a moralist and psychologist Proust is mainly concerned about the individual character or temperament of men, and when exceptionally he generalizes individual idiosyncrasies by making them part of human nature, he compares them with botany. With that he joins many of his contemporaries of the post-Nietzschean era who depict vividly human corruption and evil, while keeping silent about its roots. Whereas up to 1800 in western Christian civilization moral evil was generally linked to the relationship between man and God, this union with the Creator of the universe is questioned and rejected throughout the 19th century. But the problem of good and evil cannot be denied. The Czech author Franz Kafka for example constantly in his texts asks the question of who is guilty. Kafka's protagonists are continually involved in a juridical process, although they totally ignore who their accusers are or how to refute their accusations. Other authors such as Joyce, Mann, Pirandello and Svevo depict with irony and humour the corrupt society. In his novel *La coscienza di Zeno* (1923) for example, Svevo argues that society is suffering from several diseases, and that man thanks to humour and coincidence only has a chance to remain healthy. In his works Pirandello describes sarcastically the meaninglessness of what he calls the form, the social straitjacket which is strangling human spontaneity. All those authors confront their readers with moral disease in society without suggesting any remedy to it. Only in the thirties French existentialism tries to formulate an answer to the question how to survive in a society where man is a wolf for his fellow men. Life, according to existentialism, is contingent, evil is not an essence at the origin of life but related to existence, as a consequence it does not infect the origins of human acts but results from them.

Although Proust by medicalizing homosexuality restricts from legitimizing it, in the prologue nonetheless he sometimes discretely pleads for acceptance. On occasion he supports human desire for happiness:

> car tout être suit son plaisir, et si cet être n'est pas trop vicieux, il le cherche dans un sexe opposé au sien. Et pour l'inverti le vice commence [...] quant il prend son plaisir avec des femmes (23).
>
> il n'est pas indifférent qu'un individu puisse rencontrer le seul plaisir qu'il est susceptible de goûter, et 'qu'ici-bas tout être' puisse donner à quelqu'un 'sa musique, sa flamme ou son parfum' (36)[21]

Occasionally the narrator hazards to aestheticize sexual inversion:

> Mais c'était un miracle aussi auquel je venais d'assister, presque du même genre, et non moins merveilleux. Dès que j'eus considéré cette rencontre [between Charlus and Jupien] de ce point de vue, tout m'y sembla empreint de beauté (29-30).

But a long time before he started to dedicate his life to the *Recherche*, Proust already had indirectly given his opinion on sexual inversion, in some short stories in *Les Plaisirs et les Jours* (1896). Quite remarkable too sounds "Avant la nuit", a story about lesbianism that has not been included in *Les Plaisirs et les Jours* (published in *La Revue Blanche*, 1893). The conclusion of the story is that if love does not support the will to procreate, the homosexual act is not more immoral than the heterosexual one.

3. Sexual inversion and the human temperament

What does Proust strive for in *Sodome et Gomorrhe*? The most obvious answer we can give, after this brief overview of *Sodome et Gomorrhe I*, is that Proust considers homosexual love a too wide-spread social phenomenon to remain a taboo any longer and that he proposes to map it. Proust proves himself a master in social portraying. He demonstrates that one's sexual proclivity affects the whole social system in which one partakes. But there is more. As a sociologist and moralist Proust is interested in the social interaction between human beings, as a psychologist it is the human psyche that fascinates him. The *Recherche*, as I have said already, is in the first place a sentimental novel telling the story of an individual who has to learn the hard way toward adulthood. Among other things, the hero has to become familiar with the deepest human feelings, the feelings of love. Proust uses sexual inversion as an instrument to analyze the never ending mystery of human love. Unfortunately Proust did not have the possibility

[21] Quotation from the collection of poems *Les voix intérieures* (1837) by Victor Hugo. In *Oeuvres poétiques, tome I* (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade 171; Paris: Gallimard, 1964) no. XI.

to take note of Freud's theory about human complexes, the first translations of which into French appeared after his death. Nonetheless the pages on which he analyzes love as a source of jealousy, aversion and sadism, belong to the most beautiful on the subject in 20th-century French literature.

Love and affection, according to Proust, are the mainspring of man's sentimental life. In *Sodome et Gomorrhe II* (148-178) the narrator relates how he suddenly experienced the loss of his grandmother who had died more than a year before. Up to that moment he had remained insensitive and indifferent to her death, but at that very moment the real mourning process started. The narrator explains this postponed sorrow by the perturbations of memory that are linked with what he calls the "intermittencies of the heart". Our sensible life consists of a disruptive succession of temporal strata, that is to say series of impressions and emotions related to different I's. Due to a certain accidental analogy between the present and the past, the temporal strata abruptly come in tact to the surface of memory. The functioning of this "involuntary memory" will be explained in detail in *Le temps retrouvé* as the driving force of metaphor and therefore as the essence of Proustian poetics.[22] Partly Proust's "intermittencies" were also inspired by Schopenhauer's ideas on the relationship between I and the world as seen by the I. With the law of the intermittencies Proust handles down his version of pre-Freudian theories about the unconscious. He considered it the essence of his novel, and therefore he originally had conceived of the idea to entitle it "The intermittencies of the heart".

For Proust the homosexual constitutes an outstanding example of a stratified personality. In the prologue he already posits that in the sexual invert hidden temperaments suddenly can come to the surface of consciousness, can change his personality and influence his relationship with other people. In the succeeding chapters this idea is further developed. Proust gives the example of homosexuality to illustrate his pessimistic ideas on love and affection in general.[23] According to him, love, eroticism, cruelty and hatred are inseparable comrades. In the steps of late 19th-century decadence Proust is obsessed by evil but does not sublimate it, as does Baudelaire for example. For him the sadist will not enjoy sadism, he will never get to the highest level of it. Moreover, Proust states that love is illness. A priori desire is projected unto a person that cannot satisfy it or, if he or she can, it provokes hatred. To love someone means to refrain from doing good to him or her. Consequently, as Proust argues, as soon as one does not love anymore, one does not abhor anymore.

[22] In *Albertine disparue* the narrator will come back to the intermittencies of the heart by analyzing the way he has come to terms with the death of Albertine.

Sexual inversion thus is playing a crucial role in Proust's novel. Only in the last volume it will be outstripped by the vocational issue. In *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, Proust cautiously makes known his view-point on sexual inversion, by converting it into a social phenomenon that is undistinguished from any other form of social conduct. Mixed with the dust of the earth, Sodom and Gomorrah are part of our everyday reality.

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