

Polemics within Judaism: Negotiating Boundaries in 2nd Temple Judaism

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Abstracts (alphabetized by last name)

1. Christopher Beecher

This paper will discuss the origins of the Septuagintal translation in order to argue that the Septuagint was created as a series of anchored public representations to preserve Judean ethnic identity in the diaspora.

2. John Dunne

Paul's letters reveal that he attracted a number of enemies throughout his ministry, but the rhetorical construction of his opponents in Galatia is notorious. Yet who these figures were and what Paul was charging them with has been variously understood. These figures have been called many things (e.g., Gnostics, pneumatics, Judaizers, agitators, Jewish Christian missionaries, etc.), and have sometimes been connected to opponents mentioned in Paul's other letters. Focusing squarely on Galatians, my study seeks to provide clarity on the specific accusation that Paul lays against his opponents on the grounds of nomistic observance, namely, that they do not keep the law (Gal 6:13). Many proposals have been offered, and the variety of options has even led some scholars to contend that what Paul meant is unknowable. I contend, against previous proposals, that the meaning of this accusation is found in connecting two features of Galatians: (a) Paul's rhetorical strategy to vilify his opponents as violent, nefarious, and divisive (Gal 3:1; 4:16–17, 29; 5:15, 19–21; 6:12), and (b) Paul's positive statements about what law fulfillment looks like (Gal 5:14, 22–23; 6:2). In their promotion of circumcision, Paul presents his opponents as failing to display prototypical in-group behavior characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, loving neighbor, and bearing burdens. This suggests that Paul presents his opponents, rhetorically at least, as stereo-typical out-group members who force circumcision rather than merely advocate it. This reading of Galatians is connected to other polemical passages in the NT that critique violence as nomistic failure (e.g., Jn 7:19; 8:37–47; Acts 7:51–53; 23:2–3).

3. Nick Ellis: Baptism and Jewish Sectarian Switching

This paper will examine instances of intramural “switching” through examining cases of clear baptismal transfer (e.g., the initiation rites of Qumran; the transfer from the sect of John the Baptist to Jesus of Nazareth), and then will look at other less clear-cut examples in the New Testament where this expectation of sectarian identity and allegiances may have interpretive pay-off, most notably in 1 Corinthians 1 and 3.

4. Crispin Fletcher-Louis: Paul’s Foolish and Tragic Boasting in Philippians 3:4–6

This paper offers a new reading of Philippians 3:4–6, which today is typically viewed as straightforward evidence that, prior to his conversion, Paul was confident of his status and achievements, free of any troubled conscience. This is to misread the verses’ genre and purpose. Here, Paul feigns a gauche and deeply tragic self-praise, that develops the polemical distinction he makes in 3:2–3 between the true circumcision (those who “boast in Christ Jesus”) and “the mutilation”. His biographical claims appear Jewish, but his readers would hear a gross caricature of a foolish boaster (ἀλαζών).

Generically, the short, verbless clauses of vv. 5–6 echo the (self-)praises of funerary and honorific inscriptions, and the speech of a *miles gloriosus* (“braggart soldier”) (of Greek and Roman comedy). To the ears of the letter’s non-Jewish audience, this self-praise is full of the shocking and the perverse. In civic discourse, the worthy were praised for their zeal (ζήλος), for their pursuit (διώκω) of glory (δόξα) (cf. Phil 3:12–21), their conformity to the laws of a city, and avoidance of factional conduct. Paul strangely boasts of his allegiance to one tribe and nation—and to a faction (the Pharisees). In his jealousy (ζήλος), he has hounded some civic assembly (ἐκκλησία, contrast the “ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ” of Gal 1:13) thereby disqualifying his claim to be “blameless”. This is vainglory (κενοδοξία—2:3) that lacks “humble mindedness (ταπεινοφροσύνη—2:3)”. It is not right boasting in others who are being conformed to Christ (2:16; 4:1) or praise of those in whose weakness God’s resurrecting power is manifest (2:25–30). This is “confidence” (πεποίθησις) not in the one God (3:3) lately revealed in Christ Jesus (2:6–11) but, as the LXX use of perf. forms of *πείθω* shows, it is an idolatrous confidence in created “flesh”—3:3–5). Boasting in his native pedigree, paradoxically, Paul thinks and speaks ἐθνικῶς (like a pagan). These verses tell us much about Paul’s rhetorical skill and nuanced understanding of discrete and overlapping identities in the light of Christ; much less about his pre-conversion self-understanding or state.

5. Robert Gagnon: A Perspective on the "New Perspective on Paul"

What was Israel's main problem or mistake according to Paul? The options of ethnocentrism (posed by some on the New Perspective side) and legalism (posed by some traditional readings) present a false dichotomy. This paper offers a way forward between those two options.

6. John Goodrich: Cast Out the Slave Woman and Her Son: Paul, Scripture, and Liberation from the Law in Galatians 4:21-5:1

The Hagar-Sarah allegory in Galatians 4:21-5:1 is one of the most confusing passages in all of Galatians, as well as one of the most contentious texts in Jewish-Christian relations. Perhaps most disputed in contemporary scholarship are (1) the referent of "present Jerusalem," whom Paul describes as "in slavery with her children" (4:25), and (2) the objects of Paul's intertextual directive to "cast out the slave woman and her son" (4:30; cf. Gen 21:10). Does the personified city of "present Jerusalem" refer to unbelieving Jews, Judaizing Gentile-believers, false teachers, or some other group? And relatedly, is Paul instructing his audience to cast out only certain persons or also the Law of Moses (= Hagar/Sinai Covenant)? These difficult questions will be the focus of this paper. Against J. L. Martyn and those who maintain that Paul has in view mainly law observant Jewish-Christian missionaries, as well as against the newly published "non-supersessionist" reading of Ryan Heinsch, I will argue that while the Mosaic Covenant (Hagar) is included among those which Paul calls on the Galatians to "cast out," he also has in view the persecuting agitators (not all Jews) as the sons of the flesh (Ishmael) who are to be removed from the church. The paper will end with some reflection on the Paul within Judaism perspective.

7. Kevin Grasso: What Would It Mean To Be a Jew in the Messianic Era? Disputes over the Prominence of Torah after the Messiah.

Many proponents of the Paul within Judaism school are particularly concerned with Paul's relationship to the Torah. It is often assumed that for Paul to be "within Judaism" means that he remains faithful to Torah. However, not all Jews agreed on what life would look like in the messianic era, including the role of Torah post-Messiah. In this study, we survey a variety of diverse texts that speak about the messianic era, particularly the Damascus Document, 1QSa, Sibylline Oracle 3, Psalms of Solomon 17, and Vayikra Rabbah. I argue that these texts demonstrate that, like many other topics within Second Temple Judaism, there were a variety of opinions about the role of Torah in the Messianic era. The Qumran texts show that the advent of the messiahs would inaugurate a new world order and, thus, change how Torah would be followed. In Sibylline Oracle 3, the Torah is upheld in the Messianic era, but no mention is made of distinctively Jewish practices, especially Kashruth and Sabbath. Psalms of Solomon 17 envisions a Messianic era where righteousness reigns, but it is only the Messiah that creates the

righteous world, with no mention of Torah. Finally, the early Rabbinic text of Vayikra Rabbah shows that not all commandments would be relevant in the world inaugurated by the Messiah. Thus, not every strand of Second Temple Judaism would have been implemented Torah in the same way in the Messianic era. Paul, then, may remain “within Judaism” without submitting to Torah as a means to righteousness after the advent of the Messiah. I argue based on 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 that Paul considered himself to be one such Jew who remained within Judaism without being under the Mosaic Torah, though he still considered himself to uphold Torah against his opponents (Rom. 3:31).

8. Andrew Higginbotham: ‘Let him come and be whipped!’: The Slapstick Satire of Unauthorized Halakha

This paper will synthesize a characterization of Jacob of Kefar Nevoraya in terms of his “striking” interactions with R. Haggai in several parallel texts (*y. Shab* 19:5 [17b], *y. Yeb* 2:6 [4a], *y. Qid* 3:12 [64d], and *Genesis Rabbah* 7). In other words, R. Haggai’s violent speech-act, “Let him come and be whipped!,” in response to Jacob’s transgressive exegesis is not metaphorical vengeance, but enacted anger. This paper seeks to look at the satire of the conflict-scenes between the rabbi and the non-rabbi. At this point, the characterization of Jacob elsewhere (*y. Bik* 3:3 [65d]/*Midrash Samuel* 7:6 [Buber, 34b]) as a critic of “ignorant rabbis” also will be investigated as a metaphor of indirect violence (i.e. othering by character assassination). Finally, this paper will examine the question, “why are Jacob’s rulings of *kashrut* not ‘kosher’ with R. Haggai and (by extension) the author(s) of the text?” In other words, what does the competition described in the text tell us about the security of the rabbinic position in society or about hatred of their nascent authority? The goal of this study is to understand how the literary character of Jacob is being used to communicate a prohibition against teaching *halakha* outside of the purview of the Rabbis, as well as how the social boundaries between the Rabbis and those around them, communicated through narrative, embody the rhetoric of violence.

9. Douglas Hoffer: What Has Sinai to Do with Mamre? Parsing the Pentateuchal Covenants in Second Temple Judaism

Since the publication of E. P. Sanders’ seminal *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977), debates have continued over the roles that the concept of covenant and its biblical instantiations played in Paul’s thought. Many scholars have denied them any significant position at all, citing the rarity of the term *diathēkē* (the LXX translation of *berît*) in Paul’s letters and his idiosyncratic interpretations of the covenantal narratives of the Pentateuch (Sanders; Das, 2016). These scholars adduce Gal 3:15–17 in particular, an *argumentum a minore ad maius* in which Paul introduces a surprising separation between the Abrahamic and Sinaitic *diathēkai* on the basis of

an analogy from Greco-Roman testamentary practices. Since Paul seems to rest this radical move on a wordplay with the term *diathēkē* (“testament,” “covenant”), many infer that this proof is merely Paul’s ad hoc response to his opponents’ arguments rather than a reflection of his own interest in the concept of covenant.

In this paper, I argue that scholars have misjudged the significance and probative value of Gal 3:15–17 by overlooking the ways in which this text reflects intra-Jewish debates over the connections between the covenantal narratives of the Pentateuch. First, I draw attention to the ambiguity of these narratives in the Hebrew Bible, which can support *multiple* interpretations of the covenantal relationships. Second, I offer two examples of the diverse ways that ancient Jewish authors interpreted those relationships, specifically those between the Abrahamic and Sinaitic *berîtôt* in the *Damascus Document* and the Mosaic and Noachic covenants in Jubilees. Finally, I situate Paul’s argument in this milieu of ancient Jewish scriptural interpretation, contextualizing his proof in light of his debate with rival missionaries over the relationship between the Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants. I conclude that, rather than an ad hoc, Hail Mary play, Gal 3:15–17 reflects Paul’s participation in a common Jewish practice of harmonizing the Pentateuchal narratives.

10. Casey Hough: ‘God Is With You’: Echoes of Eschatological Conversion

In her important work, *Paul, the Pagan’s Apostle*, Paula Fredriksen argues that while gentiles were “included in Israel’s redemption,” this inclusion should not be regarded as a “conversion” that results in gentiles taking on the identity of eschatological Israel. In this paper, I propose that Fredriksen has failed to reckon adequately with the significance of Paul’s language in 1 Corinthians 14:25. I take Paul’s language in 1 Corinthians 14:25 to be an allusion to Zechariah 8:23, which explicitly describes the recognition of the nearness of God with eschatological Israel. Given Paul’s seeming appropriation of Zechariah 8:23 in 1 Corinthians 14:25 and application to the primarily Gentile congregation in Corinth, I believe that Fredriksen is guilty of dismissing a key example of how the presence of the Spirit among the “gentiles-in-Christ” has not only resulted in the inclusion of gentiles “in Israel’s redemption” but also resulted in the taking of the vocational identity of eschatological Israel as participants in Christ. As the gentiles were gathered to God and became his people in the church, they took on the identity and commission of the eschatological people. Such an understanding of the gentiles’ inclusion into and conversion to eschatological Israel helps us as interpreters make better sense of Paul’s exhortation for the Corinthian believers to “imitate” him “as he “imitates Christ.”

11. Chris Kugler: 2 Corinthians 3–4 within Judaism? Thinking with and beyond Joshua Garroway

Joshua D. Garroway, “Second Corinthians 3 ‘within Judaism’” in František Ábel, ed., *The Message of Paul the Apostle within Second Temple Judaism* (Lanham: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2020), 237–50 (239) is probably right to say: “‘Paul within Judaism’ scholars have of course produced elegant, thoughtful, and nuanced interpretations of many passages in the Pauline *corpus*, especially in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians. But 2 Corinthians 3 has proved elusive. It is no small oversight either; in my view, no passage poses a greater challenge to the radical new perspective on Paul because in it Paul unambiguously takes up the relationship between Jews and the Torah. The readers envisioned in the letter might be Corinthian Gentiles, but Paul’s discussion, in 2 Cor 3:12–18, of Moses, the Israelites, and the veil, and all the more so of the blindness of contemporary Jews before the Law complicates the refrain so often invoked by the ‘Paul within Judaism’ school, namely that Paul’s negative assessments of the Law relate to Gentiles only.” In this paper, I take up Garroway’s challenge, suggesting where he is right, where he is wrong, and how even 2 Corinthians 3–4 does not answer all of our questions on Paul’s relationship to his ancestral tradition.

12. Raymond Morehouse: Jeremiah’s Eschatology: 2nd Temple Jewish Debate in 1 Enoch, Damascus Document, and Romans

Students of intramural Jewish debates need look no further than Israel’s scriptures for fierce examples. In particular, Israel’s prophetic literature provides ample evidence that such debates were widely read and zealously preserved. In this literature we find the polemic attributing the hardships experienced by the nation to the rebellion and waywardness of those within the nation. Jeremiah is characteristic, including numerous prophecies relating to its contemporary frame. It also includes prophecies with a further eschatological vision. Jeremiah 23-25 contains overlapping prophecies that describe four phases of history: pre-exile, exile, end of exile, and post-exile. This final phase can be taken as, properly speaking, “eschatological.” During this phase, God’s covenant lawsuit against wicked Israelites is again accentuated, and the scope of the covenant lawsuit is widened to include “all flesh.” As such, Jeremiah’s eschatology could have provided rich ground for later polemics, both intramural and external. And indeed, we find evidence of this in the major 2nd Temple literature 1 Enoch, the Damascus Document, and Romans.

In this paper, I will describe this “eschatology of Jeremiah” and explore how its themes are taken up by these texts. Each text is demonstrably dependent on Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning a future, universal covenant lawsuit, and in the case of Romans this reading is invaluable for Paul’s description of the universal plight humanity, the Jew first and also the Greek. With the “plight” so identified, we can better understand the solution provided by Paul’s soteriology. Like others amongst his contemporaries, Paul’s theological reasoning did not run from solution to plight. Nevertheless, it does not run in the precise way that later Christian theologians would understand it, but rather along the same contours as his Jewish contemporaries.

13. Kyle Sherling: Contesting Jewish Identity in Philo, Josephus, and Paul

Debates have raged over the identity of “the one who calls himself a Jew” in Romans 2:17. Interpreters more traditionally took this moniker at face value, believing that Paul was turning his attention to Jews and including them in his universal condemnation of all humanity for its sin. More recently, a smaller group of interpreters, taking their cues from Runar M. Thorsteinsson, have called the ethnic identity of Paul’s interlocutor into question. They argue that this person was indeed a gentile and was taking the name “Jew” wrongfully. Paul, then, is pointing out the illegitimacy of the interlocutor’s claim on the way towards demonstrating that God has acted through Jesus and the Spirit to allow for an alternative way for gentiles to be reconciled to the God of Israel without becoming Jews (something that was perhaps impossible anyway). In this paper, I will argue that each of these views is right in some respects—that Paul’s interlocutor did have some rightful claim to Jewish ethnic identity *and* that Paul was calling his ethnic identity into question. To clarify this issue, I will set Paul’s argument in Romans 2:17-29 within the context of Jewish ethnic discourse. As David Horrell has demonstrated, ‘way of life’ was often important in how various Jewish writers constructed the boundaries around what it meant to be Jewish. For Josephus and Philo in particular, when a Jewish person participated in certain ways of life, they could label this an abandonment of one’s ancestral laws/worship in favor of those of another nation (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 12.240) or a forfeiture of “the currency of their noble birth” (Philo, *Praem.* 152). Paul, was defining these boundaries in his own way in light of what God was now doing by the Spirit. The practice of the law was not sufficient in and of itself for claiming the heritage of the Jews and all that belonged to it. One also had to bear the circumcision of the heart that functioned as the authentic sign of the new covenant. Thus, Paul was contesting the Jewish identity of someone who could otherwise lay claim to it because they lacked this covenant sign. He did not seek to rob them of it completely as he continues to refer to them as Jews in other places. Rather, Paul seeks to destabilize their claim to the fullness of their heritage because they do not practice the way of life that legitimizes such a claim, namely, a life of trusting in the messiah Jesus and of transformation by his Spirit.

14. Taylor Terzek and Ryan Quandt: Rabbi Gamliel Among the Gentiles

In Bereshit Rabbah, I.ix., a philosopher confronts Rabbi Gamliel with an alternative reading of creation (Ber. 1.1). Similar encounters can be found in earlier texts. For example, Rabbi Gamliel explains to a Roman official that the Torah had a written and oral transmission (Sifre 351). He tells a philosopher why God did not destroy pagan idols despite his omnipotence (Mikilta 20.5). And he met the philosopher, Proclus, in the bathhouse of Aphrodite (m. Avodah Zarah 3.4). The rabbi has been described as “open and tolerant” in these depictions. Seemingly out of character, then, Rabbi Gamliel curses the philosopher for lessening the glory of God in Bereshit Rabbah. There is a sharp break in the earlier texts, and so we are left with a “riddle of Gamliel’s portrait.” Some ascribe this to the hostile and oppressive Christianized Rome in which Jews lived. Some, too, read this episode as the rabbis picking sides in the debate over creatio ex nihilo. Scholars seek to place where Palestinian Jews fall in this debate. Yet we think there is something else at stake. In our presentation, we argue that the rabbi reconciles himself to the philosopher through interpreting Torah for him. If the curse denounces the philosopher’s lesser view of the Creator, the rabbi’s subsequent interpretation reconciles them. We defend our claim in two ways: (i) compare stories of Rabbi Gamliel encountering other pagans, then (ii) closely examine Rabbi Gamliel’s reading of Bereshit 1.1. There is consistency across the rabbi’s acts and words, yet also revealing nuances. In these stories, we witness a portrait of compassion set in the challenges of the day.

15. Steven Winiarski: Whose Honorable according to Whom? Finding Social Value as a 1st Century Jew

While Judaism in the 1st century had elements of commonality (the importance of the temple, land, and torah), a closer examination shows a fractured society with competing values that made it difficult for the common 1st century Jew to succeed sociologically or to only find sociological success in one subsection of Judaism while experiencing failure according to others. This paper intends to identify the socio-cultural values of major subsections of Judaism in the 1st century in order to determine how members of each subsection attained sociological value and honor from that subsection in relation to competing models. In doing so, I hope to portray an accurate picture of the sociolegal challenges posed to the common 1st century Jew as they navigated the honorable standards of each subsection of their socio-religious world.