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Confronting the Legacies of Esau and Amalek:
Historical Criticism, Jewish Extremist Violence, and Decolonial Judaism

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Adam T. Strater
M.A., Graduate Theological Union, 2010
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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

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The figures or tropes of Esau, Edom, and Amalek have been a violent presence in the Jewish psyche for millennia. This dissertation shows how writers have used Esau, Edom, and Amalek throughout the majority of Jewish literary history as "othering" mechanisms to justify violence, real or symbolic, toward perceived "others." Judahites in the Late Iron Age II period, then Judeans in the Second Temple period, and finally Jews from the rabbinic period to the present, created violent representations of their particular others by depicting them as Esau, Edom, and/or Amalek. By outlining the trajectory of how writers have depicted Esau, Edom, and Amalek, the dissertation highlights the ubiquity of these representations and confronts the inherent violence of associating these biblical characters with living people and communities. Lastly, by confronting the violence associated with Esau, Edom, and Amalek, the dissertation models another tactic for Jewish peacebuilders to use in their efforts to promote peace.

The method for this dissertation is highly interdisciplinary as it draws from both Hebrew Bible scholarship and Ethics. The project can be split conceptually into two halves. The first half consists of chapters one and two, in which the focus is on historical criticism of biblical, pseudepigraphic, and rabbinic texts and their depictions of Esau, Edom, and Amalek. The second half consists of chapters three and four, which are focused on how the subfields of Jewish Ethics and Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding (RCP) can be used to analyze contemporary Jewish uses of Esau, Edom, and Amalek. The dissertation ends by proposing a new "decolonial" reading of Esau, Edom, and Amalek influenced by Jewish Ethics and RCP that promotes Jewish self-reflection rather than violent othering. What unites the two halves is that they both explore the concept of the "other" by using Esau, Edom, and Amalek as litmus tests to show how one's political status, one's sense of religious identity, and one's construction of the other change in relation to one another.

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My advisor and co-chair of the dissertation committee, Carol Newsom, deserves special thanks for guiding me in the dissertation process, keeping me on track, and being a constant source of support throughout my time at Emory. I have often remarked that I did not apply to the Hebrew Bible program at Emory University, I applied to Carol Newsom, and she has consistently exceeded any and all of my expectations. Carol is not only a brilliant scholar, she is also a kind and thoughtful presence in my life, and I cannot thank her enough for her generosity and encouragement. I am also thankful for the role that the

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INTRODUCTION

My purpose in this dissertation is to uncover, critique, and confront the violent legacies of the biblical characters Esau, Edom, and Amalek. The French-Algerian Jewish philosopher Jacques Derrida declared: "Every culture is haunted by its other,"[1] and Esau, Edom, and Amalek have haunted Jews throughout history as eternal, violent others. But, as Gerald Cromer explains, "a society does not simply discover its other/s. It creates them."[2] I will show how writers have used Esau, Edom, and Amalek throughout the majority of Jewish literary history as "othering" mechanisms to justify violence, real or symbolic, toward perceived "others." Judahites in the Late Iron Age II period, then Judeans in the Second Temple period, and finally Jews from the rabbinic period to the present day, have created violent representations of their others by depicting them as Esau, Edom, and/or Amalek. By outlining the trajectory of how writers have depicted Esau, Edom, and Amalek, I hope to highlight the ubiquity of these representations, and confront the inherent violence of associating these biblical characters with living people and communities. Lastly, I hope that by confronting the violence associated with Esau, Edom, and Amalek, I will be able to model another tactic for Jewish peacebuilders to use in their efforts to promote peace.

My approach to this dissertation is highly interdisciplinary, as I draw from both Hebrew Bible scholarship and Ethics. Conceptually, the project can be split into two halves. The first half consists of chapters one and two, in which I use historical criticism to analyze biblical, pseudepigraphic, and rabbinic texts and their depictions of Esau, Edom, and

[1] Jacques Derrida, "Deconstruction and the Other," in *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 116.

[2] Gerald Cromer, "Amalek as Other, Other as Amalek: Interpreting a Violent Biblical Narrative," *Qualitative Sociology* 24 no. 2 (2001): 191.

Amalek. The second half consists of chapters three and four, in which I engage the subfields of Jewish Ethics and Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding (RCP) to analyze contemporary Jewish uses of Esau-Edom and Amalek. But I also use Jewish Ethics and RCP to suggest an alternative reading of Esau, Edom, and Amalek that promotes Jewish self-reflection rather than violent othering. What unites the two halves is that they both explore the concept of the "other" by using Esau, Edom, and Amalek as litmus tests to show how political status, religious identity, and construction of the other shift in relation to one another. What I hope to do in this dissertation is to connect Hebrew Bible scholarship explicitly to RCP in a sustained, long-form argument as a model for Jewish peacebuilders—rabbis, Jewish educators, and activists—to use and to supplement their work. In short, I hope to show how historical criticism and deep exegesis can be another tool in the Jewish peacebuilder's toolkit for confronting the violence that I show is inherent to the tradition.

Focusing explicitly on RCP in a Hebrew Bible dissertation is unique, but biblical scholarship that incorporates contemporary scholarship on violence more broadly precedes and paves the way for this project. I am especially indebted to my teachers Joel M. LeMon and Jacob L. Wright, as well as to the work of Leo G. Perdue, Warren Carter, and Brad E. Kelle, who incorporate contemporary theories on violence in their work on the Bible in compelling ways that influenced this dissertation. Outside of Hebrew Bible and more within Jewish Studies and/or Jewish Ethics, Robert Eisen, Elliott Horowitz, Alan Mittleman, and Reuven Firestone all helped me to think about how I incorporated RCP scholarship into this dissertation. And while all of the aforementioned scholars did foundational work on the intersections of Bible, Jewish Studies, and violence, I hope that this dissertation fills what I have found to be a consistent gap on work done on the Second

Temple period. I also see a gap on the RCP side and in Jewish peacebuilding that I hope to fill with this dissertation. I explore some extant methods for Jewish peacebuilding in chapter four, but as a whole the dissertation suggests an approach to Jewish peacebuilding that will supplement those models. I believe that critical historical knowledge of events depicted in the Bible can help contemporary peacebuilders to historicize—and thereby demystify—potent symbols for violence within the tradition. My hope is that Jewish leaders and peacebuilders—rabbis, Jewish educators, and lay leaders who have chosen peace—feel that they can use similar historical-critical methods to supplement their exegesis of biblical and rabbinic texts when advocating for peace.

OUTLINE AND STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation has four chapters. The first three chapters analyze and interpret previous depictions of Esau, Edom, and Amalek in Jewish literary history, while the fourth is prescriptive and proposes an alternative way of reading Esau, Edom, and Amalek in order to break the long-established cycle of violence within the Jewish literary corpus.

Chapter one, "Esau, Edom, and Amalek as Cyphers for the Edomites and Idumeans in Iron Age Judah and Second Temple Judea," traces the way Judahite, Judean, and then Jewish writers used Esau, Edom, and Amalek to represent their "others." I show that from the Iron Age through the end of the Second Temple Period, authors used the characters to "other" the Edomites and then the Idumeans so as to define their own identity over and against a culturally similar neighbor whom they perceived as a threat. I begin with the representation of the relationship of Edom and Judah that started as an etiological story using Esau and Jacob in Genesis to describe the relationship between the two separate but

similar and neighboring cultures before the Babylonian destruction of Judah. After the destruction, however, Edom (and Esau by association) became eternal enemies in prophetic literature because of the nation's perceived affiliation with the Babylonians. The depiction of the relationship then evolved further as the region came under Persian and then Greek rule, as Esau-Edom became the basis for discourse referring to Idumea, and a field on which to play out Judean insecurities regarding ethnic and religious identity. Amalek in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple literature further highlight the violent nuances inherent in the Esau-Edom motif. I show how writers used Amalek to promote explicitly violent othering in Judean attempts to malign the Idumeans and justify their demise.

Chapter two, "Israel Against Empire: Esau, Edom, and Amalek as Cyphers for Rome in Rabbinic Literature," shows how the rabbis continued to use Esau, Edom, and Amalek to negotiate their political and religious identity while enduring Roman rule. Esau and Edom no longer represented either Edom or Idumea, Judah's neighbors who encroached on the border and threatened Judean identity. Instead, the characters became cyphers for the gentile empire responsible for destroying the second temple, for exiling the Jews from their native land, and for dominating the Jewish population. Such a drastic alteration requires an appreciation for Israel's relation to empire, and a framework for understanding Jewish reactions to power is necessary to understand the change in rabbinic depictions of Esau, Edom, and Amalek. I therefore begin with a broad outline of the literary responses to the successive foreign empires that subjugated the Judahites, Judeans, and then the Jews from the eighth century BCE until the second century CE. I then return to Esau and Edom to show how the rabbis drastically altered their received tradition in the violent aftermath of

the Bar Kokhba Revolt and used the characters as a part of a larger project intended to pacify the Jewish response to gentile domination. The rabbis labeled Rome as Esau-Edom and in so doing shifted the inherited pattern for configuring gentile empires ideologically. Finally, I look to rabbinic discourse on Amalek to show further how the rabbis pacified received tradition and moved toward an accommodationist stance to gentile hegemony that endured until the Modern Period.

Chapter three, "Esau and Amalek in Contemporary Orthodox Jewish Ideology and Extremist Discourse," jumps to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to illustrate how Esau, Edom, and Amalek have been used in contemporary Jewish discourse, specifically Jewish extremist rhetoric. The goal of chapter three is to show the malleability inherent in depicting people as Esau, Edom, and/or Amalek and how the characters have been used in the recent past and today to encourage violence. I begin the chapter with an overview of Orthodox Jewish exegesis on Esau and Edom from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and then do the same with regard to Amalek in order to contextualize the development of Esau, Edom, and Amalek to the present day. I conclude with an extended treatment of the Jewish extremist Meir Kahane, who used Esau and Amalek to promote his violent ideology now known as "Kahanism," an ideology that has helped produce some of the most heinous acts of Jewish terrorism in both the US and Israel.

Chapter four, "Confronting the Violent Legacies of Esau-Edom and Amalek: Jewish Cultural Violence and forming Multidirectional Memory," is different from the preceding chapters because it is both descriptive and prescriptive. I begin chapter four by looking at how Kahane's extremist depiction of Esau, Edom, and Amalek function within the context of traditional Jewish historiography and memory. I then turn to the academic subfield of

Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding (RCP) to show how those conceptions of historiography and memory support and engrain Jewish violence in the case of Esau, Edom, and Amalek. Next, I propose a response to the ways these three biblical characters have been violently attached to people throughout Jewish literary history by forming and sustaining "multidirectional memory" among Jews and how Jews can be "critical caretakers" by using their tradition and history as mechanisms to support nonviolent solidarity with others. Finally, I suggest a decolonial direction for reading Esau and Amalek that Jewish critical caretakers can use to promote solidarity and multidirectional memory rather than violent exclusion.

Ultimately, the point of this dissertation is not to suggest that Judaism is a peaceful religion that extremist Jews have misinterpreted over the course of history in order to justify their violence. Rather, the historical arc that I outline using Esau, Edom, and Amalek shows that violence is a well-established option justified by both Jewish religious texts and their interpretations. Judaism is ambivalent about whether the tradition justifies violence or peace. It is therefore up to Jews to decide whether they want to use their religion to promote peace or violence—and then to advocate for either. This dissertation means to give those who choose to promote peace another model for depicting how violence has negatively affected the Jewish experience over the course of millennia in the form of a combination of historical criticism and RCP.

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON VIOLENCE

I refer to various acts of violence throughout this dissertation. I describe realized violence in the terrorism that Esau, Edom, and Amalek have justified in contemporary Judaism, as

well as the symbolic violence contained in biblical, pseudepigraphic, and rabbinic literature. More than anything, I refer to the act of "othering" throughout this dissertation, which is an inherently violent act, even when it is done by the comparatively "pacifist" rabbis.

I speak at greater length on my conceptualization of violence in the Jewish tradition in chapter four, but it is worthwhile to address it briefly here, before the reader begins exploring my argument on violence in the Jewish tradition. Rather than offer my own definition, I lean on the sociologist Johan Galtung's framework for describing violence.[3] According to Galtung, peacebuilders can respond to violence within a society by analyzing what he calls the direct-structural-cultural violence triangle. Direct violence is physical harm or the threat of physical harm—killing, maiming, and limiting human needs. Structural violence is "violence that does not manifest itself physically or visibly ('to the naked eye')."[4] Structural violence is not necessarily purposeful, but rather it manifests itself in structures in which inequality and exclusion are interlocked as a part of the structure. Structural violence happens despite a system's pretext of equality, justice, and democracy. Finally, cultural violence consists of "those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and

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[3] Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: SAGE Publications, 1996); Ibid., "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27 no. 3 (1990): 191–305; Ibid, *Transcend and Transform: An Introduction to Conflict Work* (London: Pluto, 2004); Ibid., "Peace, Negative and Positive," in *The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195334685.001.0001/acref-9780195334685-e-533?rskey=XhgJ99&result=6&print; Johan Galtung, Yakın Ertürk, and Chrissie Steenkamp, "Violence," in *The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195334685.001.0001/acref-9780195334685-e-747. See also Jason A. Springs, "Structural and Cultural Violence in Religion and Peacebuilding," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding,* ed. Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 146–81.

[4] Springs, "Structural and Cultural Violence in Religion and Peacebuilding," 152.

formal science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence."[5] Cultural violence helps convince people within the culture that violence makes sense and is either justified or necessary. The three legs of the triangle together create, sustain, and justify violence within a society, and the majority of this dissertation focuses on how Esau, Edom, and Amalek function as a part of Jewish cultural violence in a way that has been used to justify direct violence. I spend the bulk of the dissertation analyzing how Esau, Edom, and Amalek have supplemented the cultural violence inherent to the Jewish tradition for millennia, cultural violence that has continued to be used to justify direct violence in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

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[5] Galtung, "Cultural Violence," 291.

1

Esau, Edom, and Amalek as Cyphers for the Edomites and Idumeans in Iron Age Judah and Second Temple Judea

In this chapter, and in those that follow, I use the Esau-Edom motif as a test case to emphasize the ways in which one's political status, construction of the other, and sense of religious identity shifted in relation to one another in Judahite, Judean, and Jewish discourse. This chapter lays the groundwork for the discussions that follow, and covers Judahite/Judean and Edomite/Idumean history from the Iron Age through the Second Temple Period. My focus is on the ways in which the histories of these ancient peoples affected how the writers of the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Jewish literature used Esau, Edom, and Amalek to depict the Edomites and the Idumeans as the other against which Judahite and Judean authors could define themselves and their people.

I begin by showing how the representation of the relationship of Edom and Judah started as an etiological story used to describe the relationship between two separate but similar and neighboring cultures trying to survive on the fringes of society in the southern Levant. That etiological tale depicts both a complex fraternal bond influenced by a shared struggle to endure ecological challenges and foreign political domination, as well as deep abhorrence in response to how Edom eventually responded to that domination. I then move to the Second Temple Period and a corpus of literature that is often ignored in contemporary treatises on violence in the Jewish tradition and in Peace and Conflict studies. I show how the depiction of the relationship evolved when the region came under Persian and then Greek rule as Edom, and then Idumea, developed an ethnically diverse,

nomadic, and quasi-Arab character on the edges of empire. Using Edom's betrayal of Judah as the basis for discourse referring to Idumea, this ethnic other became a field on which to play out Judean insecurities regarding ethnic and religious identity. Lastly, I analyze the related but separate Amalek motif in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple literature to highlight yet further the violent nuances inherent in the Esau-Edom motif and to show how it was used to promote explicitly violent othering in Judean attempts to malign the Idumeans.

What I hope will become clear in this chapter is that these foundational texts depict Esau and Edom in reference to a neighboring people who often lacked the same political and economic power as their neighbors to the north and west, but who shared many cultural similarities, as well as political interests. Yet despite these socio-political overlaps, Judahite and Judean authors consistently othered the Edomites and the Idumeans in an effort to define their own political and religious identity, and this created an enduring precedent. In the end, Jewish authors punished Edom and Idumea in the Jewish literary corpus beginning in the mid sixth century and continuing to this very day because of the actions of larger, violent hegemonic powers, while Edom simply tried to survive its circumstances.[6] Eventually, as I will show, the Idumeans sought to join the Judean state by becoming Jewish themselves, but Edom continued to be a scapegoat despite evidence that Edom and Idumea had little control over their own condition as they survived foreign aggression and adverse ecological circumstances. As with most forms of othering, then, the rhetoric used by the Judahites and then the Judeans was far more about their own identity

[6] No Edomite or Idumean literature depicting Judah or the Judahites survives. Perhaps their disdain was mutual.

and what they themselves were going through rather than what the Edomites or the Idumeans did or did not do to deserve what became their enduring reputation.

ESAU AND EDOM IN ANCIENT HISTORY AND IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The Iron Age kingdoms of Judah and Edom shared geographical boundaries and a similar, southern Levantine culture that made it easy to depict them as having a fraternal bond. The Hebrew Bible draws on language of kinship, regarding Edom and Judah as brothers through the eponyms Esau and Jacob, and both similarities and differences between the two peoples added to the nuance of the depiction of brotherhood.[7] The relationship became embittered, however, when Babylon destroyed Judah and Jerusalem in 586 BCE; many biblical authors blamed Edom for participating in the destruction, celebrating it, or benefiting from it. That historical event created a dichotomy in biblical depictions of the kingdom. Hebrew Bible sources that were written before 586 typically depict a complex relationship that both affirmed kinship and expressed the kind of tension that was inevitable between local kingdoms in the late Iron Age Levant. By contrast, sources from after the exile, especially late prophetic texts, describe Edom as evil, violent, and vindictive toward Judah.

What was the trajectory of the relationship between Edom and Judah, Esau and Jacob in Iron Age history and in biblical literature? I begin by describing the archeological record of the two kingdoms from initial settlement to the violence of the mid sixth century BCE and into the Babylonian exile. I then show how the realities of destruction motivated a

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[7] Juan Manuel Tebes, "'You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite, for He is Your Brother': The Tradition of Esau and the Edomite Genealogies from and Anthropological Perspective," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 6 (2006): 3.

change in the Esau-Edom motif to help explain the existential crisis Judah faced. Finally, I summarize how the political history of the two kingdoms informed the construction both of Edom as the other, and by extension of a sense of religious identity in Iron Age Judah.

The Kingdoms of Edom and Judah in the Iron Age

The biblical land of Edom sat in the Transjordan on a high plateau that extends from Nahal Zered (Wadi el-Hasa) south toward Eilat, with the Wadi Arabah as Edom's western border and the Arabian Desert as its southern and eastern borders.[8] Egyptian literary evidence suggests there were pastoral nomads present in the area by the thirteenth century BCE, but there is no evidence of a sedentary population before the Iron Age II period.[9] While Israel and Judah gained national self-consciousness in the Iron Age II period, Edom experienced a delayed, but parallel development with its capital at Bozrah.[10] Edom was at an inherent ecological disadvantage because the climate was, and remains, arid. Øystein S. LaBianca and Randall W. Younker explain that the Transjordanian tribal kingdoms of Ammon, Moab,

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[8] Piotr Bienkowski and Eveline van der Steen, "Tribes, Trade, and Towns; a New Framework for the Late Iron Age in Southern Jordan and the Negev," *BASOR* (2001): 21–47, 22; Diana Vikander Edelman, "Edom: A Historical Geography," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite For He is Your Brother: Edom and Seir in History and Tradition,* ed. Diana Vikander Edelman (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), 1–12.

[9] See especially Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "Edomites Advance into Judah," *BAR* 22 no. 6 (1996): 29–36 and Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "A New Light on the Edomites" *BAR* 14 no. 2 (1988): 29–41; see analysis and summary of Beit-Arieh and other archeological work on Edom in Burton MacDonald, "Early Edom: The Relation between the Literary and Archeological Evidence," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archeology in Honor of Philip J. King,* ed. Michael D. Coogan et al. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 230–46 and Nancy Lapp, "Who is This that Comes From Edom?" in Ibid., 216–29.

[10] See Isa 34:6, 63:1; Jer 49:13, 22; and Amos 1:12. Piotr Bienkowski, "The Edomites: The Archeological Evidence from Transjordan" in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite*, 41–92; Piotr Bienkowski, "The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan: A Framework," in *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan,* ed. Piotr Bienkowski (Sheffield: J.R. Collis Publications, 1992), 1–12; Ibid., "The Date of Sedentary Occupation in Edom: Evidence from Umm el-Biyara, Tawilan and Buseirah," 99–112; Juan Manuel Tebes, "Socio-Economic Fluctuations and Chiefdom Formation in Edom, the Negev and the Hejaz During the First Millennium BCE," in *Unearthing the Wilderness: Studies on the History and Archeology of the Negev and Edom in the Iron Age,* ed. Juan Manuel Tebes (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 16–19.

and Edom developed alongside one another in varying climates with diminishing returns on agricultural investment the further south one planted. Only Ammon offered enough annual rainfall to produce cereal grains, fruit, and vegetables consistently, and "to become permanently attached to cultivatable plots of land in order to produce food has always been most risky in Edom, less so in Moab, and least so in Ammon."[11] Ecology slowed Edom's development and gave Bedouin tribes more representation and influence compared to kingdoms to the north. Nomadic and pastoralist peoples accustomed to subsisting on the periphery of society were best suited to thrive in the borderlands of Edom.[12] Edom looked like a wasteland from both Israel's and Judah's perspective, but a long tradition of copper mining in the region made the area politically relevant to established nation-states to the north and west.[13] Israel and Judah subjugated Edom at various times beginning in the mid tenth century until Assyria asserted its dominance in

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[11] Øystein S. LaBianca and Randall W. Younker, "The Kingdom of Ammon, Moab and Edom: The Archeology of Society in Late Bronze/Iron Age Transjordan (CA. 1400–500 BCE)," 403. Bienkowski and van der Steen summarize LaBianca on the essential features of the tribal kingdom. They note that (1) land-tied and range-tied agriculture co-existed with a large pastoral nomadic component; (2) tribal affiliations were based on the manipulation of generative genealogies, which allowed for liberal affiliation to other groups; (3) the tribal social structure continued under kings who were incorporated into the tribal genealogies; (4) the tribal hinterlands were administered from fortified towns; (5) most people lived in the rural hinterlands; (6) there were several political centers whose powers were based on different resources; (7) territorial units overlapped; (8) militias were maintained to protect the interests of each tribal kingdom. Bienkowski and van der Steen, "Tribes, Trade, and Towns," 29.

[12] Øystein S. LaBianca and Randall W. Younker, "The Kingdom of Ammon, Moab and Edom," 408; Knauf-Belleri, "Edom: The Social and Economic History," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite*, ed. Diana Vikander Edelman, 96–99; Peter J. Parr, "Edom and the Hejaz" in *Early Edom and Moab,* ed. Bienkowski, 41–46; Piotr Bienkowski, "'Tribalism' and 'Segmentary Society' in Iron Age Transjordan" in *Studies on Iron Age Moab and Neighboring Areas in Honour of Michèle Daviau,* ed. Piotr Bienkowski (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 7–26; Øystein S. Labianca, "The Poly-Centric Nature of Social Order in the Middle East: Preliminary Reflections from Anthropological Archeology," in *Studies on Iron Age Moab and Neighboring Areas,* ed. Bienkowski, 1–5.

[13] See Piotr Bienkowski, "New Evidence on Edom in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods," in *Essays on the History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in Honor of J. Maxwell Miller.* ed. John Andre Dearman et al. (London: Bloomsbury, 2002), 198–200; Ernst Axel Knauf-Belleri, "Edom: The Social and Economic History," 111–114; Tebes, "Socio-Economic Fluctuations and Chiefdom Formation in Edom," 4–10.

the mid to late eighth century.[14] Under the Assyrians, "mining and smelting, the caravan trade, technological advances such as agricultural terraces and plow agriculture, a stable political situation, and the need for a service industry"[15] gave Edom newfound economic advantages for a sedentary population. A transition to agrarian settlement in Edom advanced in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE,[16] but the greater population remained tied to their eclectic, nomadic past and did not adopt the traditional power structures common in the settled countries to the north. According to Bienkowski and van der Steen, "this was not a monolithic nation-state; it was a kingdom composed of largely independent tribal groupings held together by bonds of cooperation and allegiance to a supratribal monarchy, a combination of settled agricultural and pastoralist life, always characteristic of this environment."[17] The southern Transjordan was dominated by "chiefdoms," i.e., stateless societies that formed through the coalescing of several tribes into a tribal confederation that had hierarchies, but which lacked the monopoly of force that more established nation-states and their political apparatuses had.[18]

The isolated and culturally diverse Edom prospered both economically and politically as Assyria destroyed Israel in 722 and turned Judah into a submissive vassal

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[14] See Piotr Bienkowski, "Transjordan and Assyria" in *The Archaeology of Jordan and Beyond: Essays in Honor of James A. Sauer*, ed. Lawrence E. Stager et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 44–58; Knauf-Belleri, "Edom: The Social and Economic History," 108–111.

[15] Burton MacDonald, *The Southern Transjordan Edomite Plateau and the Dead Sea Rift Valley: The Bronze Age to the Islamic Period (3800/3700 BC–AD 1917).* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2015), 41, 24–41; Bienkowski and van der Steen, "Tribes, Trade, and Towns," 22–24.

[16] Stephen Hart, "Iron Age Settlement in the Land of Edom," in *Early Edom and Moab,* ed. Bienkowski, 93–98; Ernst Axel Knauf, "The Cultural Impact of Secondary State Formation: The Cases of the Edomites and Moabites," in ibid., 47–54.

[17] Bienkowski and van der Steen, """Tribes, Trade, and Towns," 40. See also Labianca, "The Poly-Centric Nature of Social Order in the Middle East," 1–5.

[18] Tebes, "Socio-Economic Fluctuations and Chiefdom Formation in Edom," 1–2.

kingdom. Edom bowed to King Sennacherib, and Assyria left the remote kingdom to its own devices on the empire's edge.[19] The Assyrian king destroyed the Judahite wilderness, but southern Judah was quickly re-occupied, and both Edom and Judah fought to survive Assyrian rule alongside one another.[20] A shared goal of surviving in the southern Levant and enduring foreign occupation facilitated an allied relationship and a fraternal bond between the kingdoms.[21] The nature of the geopolitics for a Levantine local tribal kingdom, however, meant that Edom's survival inevitably came at Judah's expense as the Edomites began to occupy traditional Judahite land, ultimately straining their close relationship.[22]

Babylon defeated Assyria in the late seventh century BCE and proceeded to pressure Judah violently to submit to their authority in the early sixth century. King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Judah and Jerusalem, exiled its people, and destroyed the temple in 586. Edom took advantage of the opportunity and used "shrewd diplomacy and cautious political policies" not only to preserve its boundaries, but also to establish Edomite settlement even further in southern Judah under the auspices of the new hegemonic power.[23] Edom

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[19] Alan Millard, "Assyrian Involvement in Edom," in *Early Edom and Moab,* ed. Bienkowski, 35–39.

[20] Yifat Thareani, "The Judean Desert Frontier in the Seventh Century BCE: A View from 'Aroer' in *Unearthing the Wilderness,* ed. Tebes, 242.

[21] See discussion in "Torah and Former Prophets" below.

[22] Diana Edelman explains: "In the process, the 'Arabah came to be part of Edom, as did the eastern Negeb highlands, otherwise known as Mt. Seir, the Negeb and southernmost Judah." Edelman, "Edom: A Historical Geography," 11. According to John Lindsay, Edomite expansion into what was traditionally considered Judahite territory began unsuccessfully as early as the ninth century. Settlements finally gained a foothold under the Assyrians in the late eighth century, but those settlements were destroyed during King Hezekiah's reign at the end of the eighth century / beginning of the seventh century. John Lindsay, "Edomite Westward Expansion: The Biblical Evidence," *ANES* 36 (1999): 48–89.

[23] Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "A New Light on the Edomites," 31; Itzhaq Beit-Arieh, "Edomites Advance into Judah," 34; Assis, *Identity in Conflict*, 79–82. The Hebrew Bible hints at Edomite expansions in 2 Kings 16:6, a reference to Edom capturing Elath, and 2 Chronicles 26:17, an Edomite invasion of Judah that is otherwise unattested. See also John R. Bartlett, "Edomites and Idumaeans," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 131 no. 2

accommodated Babylon and benefited from Judah's destruction, but as Glazier-McDonald points out, Edom acted in its best interests given the political situation: "Unless the Edomites were extremely myopic, they saw the Babylonians coming and recognized that their survival meant dissociation from Jerusalem."[24] According to Aryeh Kasher, an Arab invasion of the Land of Edom exacerbated the Edomite need to expand into Judahite territory, but Edom's plight was of no consequence to Judahites.[25] From Judah's perspective, the Edomites were continually encroaching on their territory and profiting at Judah's expense. Once Babylon destroyed Judah and Jerusalem, Edom annexed the land they had occupied west of the Arabah.[26] The political vacuum in southern Judah and the Negev was therefore filled with an Edomite, Arab, and Judahite refugee tribal culture that gave the region a unique character.[27] Edom's gains as a nation-state were short-lived, however, and the Babylonian king Nabonidus likely abolished the Kingdom of Edom during his 552/551 BCE march to Arabia. Edom ceased to be a political entity, but the population remained, and "an Edomite-speaking population" continued their settlements in the Negev,

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(1999): 102; Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 128–43. Bienkowski suggests that Edom, as opposed to Ammon and Moab, was likely able to avoid annexation by the Babylonians and remained an independent kingdom, with its own king ruling from Busayra. Bienkowski, "New Evidence on Edom in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian Periods," 211.

[24] Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," 28. Kasher asserts: "It is inconceivable that the Edomite incursion into the domination of the regions in the south took place without a base of consent and cooperation from the Babylonian regime of those days. For that reason it seems that from then onwards Edom became the symbol of evil in Jewish consciousness, at least to the end of the Ptolemaic period." Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs,* 3.

[25] Aryeh Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs,* 2.

[26] Lindsay suggests that the Edomites were proactive in their use of violence to secure the land: "Edom successfully attacked and probably held sites in the Negev such as Arad," but there is no evidence outside of Hebrew Bible literature that Edom actively participated in the violence against Judah in the sixth century. Lindsay, "Edomite Westward Expansion," 75.

[27] Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs,* 3.

the southern Shephleh, and the southern hill country.[28] There, Arabs, Edomites, and Judahites, along with others, lived under the Babylonian and then the Persian Empires and intermarried for centuries on the edges of civilization.[29] This diverse society essentially went unnoticed in biblical and early Jewish sources until the Hasmonean era, when it reappears in the Judean consciousness as the Idumeans.

Torah and Former Prophets

The relationship between Israel/Judah and Edom outlined above, which begins with a delayed but parallel development of two southern Levantine tribal kingdoms, is filtered through a Judahite perspective in Hebrew Bible literature and the eponyms Jacob and Esau. Texts that were written before the Babylonian destruction and exile, or which depict pre- and early monarchic Israel, portray a fraternal bond between Jacob and Esau, Edom and Israel/Judah. Texts use the fraternal analogy for the allied relationship shared by the kingdoms because, as discussed above, Edom and Judah shared similar cultures, as well as a shared goal of surviving in the late Iron Age Levant. The kingdoms worked toward their shared goal together, or at least alongside one another, and drew on kinship language that "creates a bond that coalesces the members of the society, thereby ideally legitimizing relationships between groups."[30] The kingdoms' political interests and cultures were

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[28] Yigal Levin, "The Southern Frontier of *Yehud* and the Creation of Idumea," in *A Time of Change: Judah and its Neighbors in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods,* ed. Yigal Levin (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 245. See also Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites,* 157–161; Bradley L. Crowell, "Nabonidus, as-Sila', and the Beginning of the End of Edom," *BASOR* 348 (Nov., 2007): 75–88.

[29] Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites,* 163–168; Ernst Axel Knauf, "The Persian Administration in Arabia," *Transeuphratène* 2 (1990): 201–217.

[30] Tebes, "You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite," 21. According to Tebes (21), "Middle Eastern Bedouin, for example, usually believe that groups descend from a common ancestor who acquired the rights to the land

sufficiently aligned to reference brotherhood as a way to acknowledge a tribal, diplomatic relationship, and early texts depict the complexities of two neighboring people surviving under late Iron Age circumstances.[31] Juan Manuel Tebes explains:

> Put simply, the assumption is that this period provided the historical *Sitz im Leben* for the origin and development of the brotherhood story in its pre-literary form, and that thereby its present arrangement can be dated to this period. At a later stage, the saga was transferred in written form into the Hebrew Bible as it stands today.[32]

Genesis contains the longest account of Esau's relationship with Jacob, which sets up the narratological relationship between Esau and Jacob's progeny, and "is largely a narration of familiar events that occur in a tribal, semi-pastoral society."[33] Esau is Isaac's firstborn and the patriarch of Edom and the Edomite people, while Jacob, the third Hebrew patriarch, is Esau's younger twin brother and Israel's namesake. The sibling rivalry begins with their violent struggle to share Rebecca's womb. God explains to their mother: "Two nations are in your womb, two separate peoples shall issue from your body; one people shall be

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they occupy. Moreover, when two or more groups have a common interest, especially due to geographical proximity or joint use of the land, they are usually regarded genealogically related. It is in this sense that political and geographical relationships are expressed through the kinship language."

[31] The concept of "segmentation," that is that stateless communities are "organized into tribes and different levels of tribal segments based on lineage," is useful here. According to Tebes, "members of one's segment will wage war against same-level adjacent segments, and will join forces with the members of same-level adjacent segments against higher-level segments." Tebes, "You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite," 20.

[32] Tebes, "You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite," 26. The Pentateuch did not receive final form until the exilic period, but I generally agree with scholars such as Joel S. Baden that the narratives likely took shape in the pre-exilic period and reflect perspectives of individual schools and segments within Israelite society and a relation to the socio-political realities of that time. See Joel S. Baden, *J, E, and the Redaction of the Pentateuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); Ibid., *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis* (New Haven: Yale University Press). Cf. Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2000); Jean Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch,* trans. Pascale Dominique (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006).

[33] Tebes, "You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite," 5. See also Elie Assis, *Identity in Conflict: The Struggle Between Esau and Jacob, Edom and Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 18–64; Carol Bakhos, *Ishmael on the Border: Rabbinic Portrayals of the First Arab*, 23–29; John Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 83–90. Cf. Il-Seung Chung, *A Revisionist Reading of the Esau-Jacob Stories in Genesis 25–36: Understanding Esau in a Positive Light* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2011) for a "favorable reading of Esau."

mightier than the other, and the older shall serve the younger" (Gen 25:23).[34] The narrative asserts a dichotomy that sets the brothers against one another through a divine oracle, thus making conflict fated rather than a matter of a circumstantial balance of power. Jacob and Esau develop opposing personalities that each appeal to a different parent. Esau, Isaac's favorite son, becomes a skilled hunter, while Jacob becomes Rebecca's refined tent dweller. Esau's wild, outdoorsy nature, combined with a different physical appearance (Gen 25:25), are likely references to the observable differences between the more settled Judahite culture to the north and the Arab, Bedouin, nomadic nature of the Edomite kingdom. The narrative intensifies when Jacob demands that a famished Esau sell his birthright for lentil stew (Gen 25:27–34), and then steals the blessing that Isaac intended for Esau by deceiving their father (Gen 27:1–45),[35] to which Esau responds violently, "Let but the mourning period of my father come, and I will kill my brother Jacob" (Gen 27:41). Hearing word of Esau's anger, Jacob escapes to Paddan-aram, where he establishes himself under the authority of his uncle Laban, marrying Leah and Rachel and fathering sons who would come to be the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen 29:1–30:24). After twenty years, Jacob decides to return home and sends Esau a message of peace, to which Esau responds by amassing troops to meet Jacob and his party, thereby creating a dramatic scene charged with

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[34] All biblical translations are JPS unless otherwise noted.

[35] Regarding the difference between blessing and birthright, see Bradford A. Anderson, *Brotherhood and Inheritance: A Canonical Reading of the Esau and Edom Traditions* (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 82–87; Shubert Spero, "Jacob and Esau: The Relationship Reconsidered," *JBQ* 32 (2004): 245–250; and David J. Zucker, "The Deceiver Deceived: Rereading Genesis 27," *JBQ* 39 (2001): 46–58. According to Anderson, "the transfer of the birthright seems to have given Jacob the larger portion of the inheritance; the rights of the firstborn had been transferred. And yet, the father still had a blessing for his sons, which Esau expected and which all involved though was worth pursuing…What was at stake was the *better* blessing." Cf. Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 80–81; Frederick E. Greenspahn, *When Brothers Dwell Together: The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 56. Both R. Schwartz and Greenspan argue that the element of scarcity in regard to the blessing and inheritance is important to the narrative development of the Esau-Jacob relationship.

violence. Luckily for Jacob, Esau apparently forgave his brother during their separation because upon greeting him, despite the militaristic display, "Esau…embraced him and, falling on his neck, kissed him; and they wept" (Gen 33:4). Jacob and Esau were reunited, but the text suggests that suspicion lingered as Jacob resisted following Esau to Seir, and instead went in the opposite direction, toward Succoth (Gen 33:12–15). Finally, the narrative is punctuated with fraternal intimacy as Jacob and Esau together bury their father Isaac. The brothers complete the narrative living separately, but at peace (Gen 35:27–29). The two references to Esau's descendants in Deuteronomy supplement Genesis's positive view of the character and his progeny and implore the Israelites to treat Esau's offspring with respect because they are Israel's kin: "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your kinsman…Children born to them may be admitted into the congregation of the Lord in the third generation." According to Deut 23:8–9, the Edomite is a kinsman, the only people outside of greater Israel given such distinction in Deuteronomy.

Negative textual references to Edom that speak to the complicated nature of the brotherly relationship nuance the fraternal sentimentality toward Esau in Genesis and Deuteronomy. Numbers 20:14–21 offers the first hint of hostility in the Torah narrative when Moses sends messengers to ask the established, but anonymous, king of Edom for permission to traverse his land.[36] The king refuses the request with a violent warning: "You

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[36] The pericope in Num 20:14–21 is a notoriously difficult text and a continuing nuisance for many source-critical scholars. Source critics who take a "fragmentary" approach tend to assign Num 20:14–21 to a late redactional layer, and the hostility expressed by Edom toward Israel supports a post-exilic date as it could reflect the hostilities following the destruction and exile in the first quarter of the sixth century BCE. Baden, however, makes a strong case for a pre-exilic date for Num 20:14–21, arguing that the source (E) is not only unaware of the later connection between Esau and Edom, but is entirely ignorant of Esau's existence. Tebes points out that scholars generally agree that the identification of Jacob with Israel and Esau with Edom is secondary, along with associating Esau-Edom with Seir. According to Tebes, the social and demographic circumstances of the Late Iron Age in the southern Negev necessitated Edom's merger with Esau to explain the intense cross-cultural exchange that was happening by using fraternal language. Further, per Baden,

shall not pass through us, else we go out against you with the sword" (Num 20:18). The Israelites assure the king that they will respect Edom's sovereignty on their march, but the Edomites aggressively defend their land rights with a show of military strength: "And Edom went out against them in heavy force, strongly armed. So Edom would not let Israel cross their territory, and Israel turned away from them" (Num 20:20–21).[37] The Edomites do not relent in their denial and the Israelites are forced to go around Edom. Balaam's fourth oracle in Num 24:15–19 is similarly ominous in the way it hints at a violent underlying relationship between the two kingdoms: "A star rises Jacob, a scepter comes forth from Israel; it smashes the brow of Moab, the foundation of all children of Seth. Edom becomes a possession, yea, Seir a possession of its enemies; but Israel is triumphant" (Num 24:17–18). So while Edom is juxtaposed to Moab, who will be destroyed, Edom will become subservient to the people to whom they just denied access. The references from Numbers counter the amiable end to the Genesis narrative and foreshadow a tense relationship between the two kingdoms that is then detailed in the Former Prophets.

Next, 2 Samuel 8 explains that David "subdued" Edom, along with Hamath, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and Amalek, and made Edom a vassal to the United Monarchy based in Jerusalem. The text also describes the violence David enacted against

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Deuteronomy 2:2–9, 12, 22, and 29 appears to use and expand on Num 20:14–21, adding Esau and Seir to the story and showing D's dependence on Num 20:14–21 as an established, pre-exilic source. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch*, 136–7; 143. Tebes, "You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite," 27. Cf. Ska, *Introduction*, 192–93; Kratz, *The Composition*, 283; John Van Seters, *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus-Numbers* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 386–93. Regardless of when Num 20:14–21 was written, Jacob Milgrom suggests that Edom plays a logical role in the narrative outside of historical circumstances. The scene is a "personal blow to Moses who now knows that he cannot enter the land but must die en route" and is not necessarily indicative of the underlying history. Rather, it is a device used to move the story forward. Milgrom argues that these verses, "show that despite the continual murmuring of the Israelites, now by a new generation, and the rebellion of their leaders, Moses and Aaron, God provided His people with all its needs: water, healing, and victory." Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1990), 464.

[37] Cf. Judg 11:17–18.

Edom specifically as a part of his efforts to put the kingdom under his yoke and exploit his growing infamy: "David gained fame when he returned from defeating Edom in the Valley of Salt, 18,000 in all. He stationed garrisons in Edom—he stationed garrisons in all of Edom—and all the Edomites became vassals of David. The LORD gave David victory wherever he went" (2 Sam 8:13–14).[38] David subdued a handful of nations, but the text specifies that David defeated the Edomites and his military occupied Edom while the other nations seem to have been spared the same violence. Edom reestablished autonomy in the generation following David,[39] but the text infers that the kingdom was subservient to Israel once again under the Omride King Ahab because, as 1 Kings 22:48 explains, "There was no king in Edom; a viceroy acted as king."[40] The Edomites eventually revolted against their neighbors to the northwest and set up their own king (2 Kgs 8:16–24; 2 Chr 21:7–11), began to encroach on Judah's land (2 Kgs 14:7–10), and formed alliances against Judah and Israel for their own benefit (2 Kgs 16:5–6).[41]

In comparing the Torah and Former Prophets to the archaeological data analyzed above, it appears that the texts speak of the relationship as it existed from before the

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[38] Cf. 1 Chr 18.

[39] 1 Kgs 11:14–22 explains that Hadad, an Edomite from the royal family, was able to re-establish autonomy away from Israel in the next generation as a part of the dissolution of Solomon's kingdom.

[40] C.f. 2 Kgs 3:4–27. If not a vassal, Edom is at least a close ally to Judah since they assist Israel and Judah in their military efforts against King Mesha of Moab, while Judah appears to be a subservient ally to more powerful Israel. Brad E. Kelle, *Ancient Israel at War 853–586 BC* (New York: Osprey, 2007), 32.

[41] Beth Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite*, ed. Edelman, 23–28. According to Nadav Na'aman, the accounts of Israel and Edom's relationship in Samuel and Kings mostly reflects the relationship between Judah and Edom in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE. The depiction of David subduing Edom in the tenth century, therefore, is likely anachronistic. See Nadav Na'Aman, "Judah and Edom in the Book of Kings and in Historical Reality," in *New Perspectives on Old Testament Prophecy and History: Essays in Honour of Hans M. Barstad,* ed. Rannfrid I. Thelle et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 197–211; ibid., "Sources and Composition in the History of David," *in The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States*, ed. V. Fritz and P.R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 173–83; ibid., "In Search of Reality behind the Account of David's Wars with Israel's Neighbors," *IEJ* 52 (2002): 203–211.

Assyrian invasion until the early sixth century BCE, when Israel and Judah played dominant roles in Edom that vacillated between ally and overlord.[42] Yet the texts spanning from Genesis through Kings offer a biased view of Esau and Edom, and: "They tell us far more about late monarchic or even early exilic perceptions of Edom from the standpoint of Judah."[43] There is, however, some truth to the relationship between the kingdoms of Judah and Edom in the propaganda. The two were allies fighting a similar struggle to survive the Iron Age, and their relationship, while uniquely favored, resembled Judah's relationship with other surrounding kingdoms during the period. That is, they depended on their ally while taking advantage of said ally when necessary, and vice versa.[44] At times, Edom would align themselves alongside Judah and Israel, at other times Edom was subservient to the north. Moreover, Judahite authors needed to account for Edomite encroachment on their traditional land in order to accommodate them into their ideological system, so Edom was merged with Esau in order to make the two peoples brothers.[45] Hebrew Bible texts from before the destruction used fraternal themes to add a layer of complexity to the relationship between the two nations. These texts show how Judah understood the political alliance: Judah expected Edom to behave like an obedient brother. The complexity of the

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[42] Tebes, "You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite," 8.

[43] John R. Bartlett, "Biblical Sources for the Early Iron Age in Edom," in *Early Edom and Moab,* ed. Bienkowski, 16.

[44] Elie Assis, "Why Edom? On the Hostility towards Jacob's Brother in Prophetic Sources," *Vetus Testamentum* 56 no. 2 (2006): 2; Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites,* 103–113; for a source critical examination of these sections of 2 Sam and 1 Kgs, see Nadav Na'aman, "Sources and Composition in the Biblical History of Edom," in *Sefer Moshe: The Moshe Weinfeld Jubilee Volume: Studies in the Bible and Ancient Near East, Qumran, and Post Biblical Judaism,* ed. Chaim Cohen et al. (Winona Lake: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 313–20.

[45] Tebes, "You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite," 26–27.

relationship was simplified, however, after the Babylonian violence of the early sixth century.

Latter Prophets and Writings

The trauma associated with the Babylonian destruction in 586 BCE and the subsequent exile manifested itself in violent resentment towards Judah's neighbors to the south and east. That some Judahite prophets blamed Edom for their suffering fundamentally changed the nature of the relationship and, "thus Edom came to equal the enemy of the Jews."[46] Late Hebrew Bible literature simplified the Edom-Esau motif and focused on vengeance against the neighboring kingdom for betraying Judah in their time of need. The rhetoric toward Edom became aggressive and, according to Elie Assis, "Out of all nations criticized in the prophetic writings, the attitude toward Edom is markedly the most hostile."[47] But the evolution from brother to enemy took some time.

Prior to the destruction in 586 BCE, conflicts with Edom in biblical literature were described in the context of Levantine political discourse appropriate for the Late Iron Age II period, as outlined above. Contemporary Later Prophets and Writings—such as Isa 21:11–12; Jer 9:24–25, 25:15–26; Amos 1–2, 9; Ezek 32:29; and Ps 60 and 8—all refer to Edom negatively, but Edom is not unique; the kingdom is "merely one enemy among many."[48]

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[46] Bruce Cresson, "The Condemnation of Edom," in *The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays: Studies in Honor of William Franklin Stinespring,* ed. James M. Efird (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972), "The Condemnation of Edom," 147.

[47] Assis, *Identity in Conflict*, 74.

[48] Assis, *Identity in Conflict,* 70; Julia M. O'Brien, "Edom as (Selfish) Brother," in *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor: Theology and Ideology in the Prophets,* ed. Julia M. O'Brien (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 163.

Judah and Edom had disputes, like all Levantine allies did, and it was many years after the destruction before Edom became the eternal villain. Jeremiah 49:7–22, for example, emphasizes how the chief prophetic witness to Jerusalem's destruction did not view Edom's actions during the destruction as extraordinary. In part of Jeremiah's so-called "Oracles against the Nations," the prophet followed precedent and cast Edom as one nation among many in Jer 46–51.[49] Against Edom specifically, Jeremiah prophesies: "But it is I who have bared Esau, have exposed his place of concealment; he cannot hide. His offspring is ravaged, his kin and his neighbors—He is no more" (Jer 49:10). But while Jeremiah's prophecy is harsh, Edom is judged alongside the rest of the condemned nations, and Jeremiah's opinion of Edom does not seem to be remarkable in comparison.[50] The likely reason for the equal treatment was that it took a while for authors to ascribe blame to Edom for the calamities of the sixth century. Julia O'Brien points out that the major narrative accounts of Jerusalem's destruction (2 Kgs 24 and Jer 39) do not speak of Edom's

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[49] Jeremiah condemns Egypt (46), Philistia, Tyre, and Sidon (47), Moab (48), Ammon (49:1–7), Edom (49:7–22), Damascus (49:23–26), Qedar and Hazor (49:28–33), Elam (49:34–39), and Babylon (50–51). Assis, *Identity in Conflict,* 92. See also Rhiannon Graybill, "The Jeremian Oracles against the Nations," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 387–404.

[50] According to Assis, Jeremiah's prophecy against Edom likely predates the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, the source of Edom's sin, so the prophet does not display the hostility toward Edom that is characteristic later. Assis, *Identity in Conflict,* 92–101. Cf. Bert Dicou, *Edom, Israel's Brother and Antagonist: The Role of Edom in Biblical Prophecy and Story* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 88–98. Dicou argues that the original core of the oracle is Jeremiah 49:9–10a and 14–16 and that verses 7–8, 12–13, and 1721 were added with a *terminus a quo* of 550 BCE for the last expansion of the oracle against Edom. Graham Ogden suggests that Jer 49:7–22 and Obadiah are prophetic responses to the Psalm 137, covered below, which is typically dated to after the Judahite return from exile. Graham S. Ogden, "Prophetic Oracles Against Foreign Nations and Psalms of Communal Lament: The Relationship of Psalm 137 to Jeremiah 49:7–22 and Obadiah," *JSOT* 24 (1982): 98–97. Cf. Linda Haney, "YHVH, the God of Israel…and of Edom? The Relationships in the Oracle to Edom in Jeremiah 49:7–22," in *Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen,* ed. John Goldingay (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007), 78–115, whose reading of this section of Jeremiah is more aggressive than Assis. See also Na'Aman, "Judah and Edom in the Book of Kings and in Historical Reality," 197–211 for the connection between the Book of Kings and the economic growth in the form of copper mining in the Arabah, discussed below.

participation.[51] "When those passages that *do* blame Edom for sixth-century crimes are read in their larger contexts, they do not single out Edom for special censure," she notes.[52] Again, Edom is one among many.

Ezekiel 25 is another example of how the negative sentiment toward Edom took time to manifest. As in Jeremiah and the other sources named above, Ezek 25:12–14 is part of an extended prophesy in Ezek 25–32 that assembled multiple nations to condemn them as a group. The prophecy features Ammon (25:2–7), Moab (25:8–11), Edom (25:12–14), Philistia (25:15–17), Tyre (26–28), Sidon (28:20–23), and Egypt (29–31), and calls for vengeance against Edom because of what they did to the "House of Judah":

> Thus said the Lord GOD: Because Edom acted vengefully against the House of Judah and incurred guilt by wreaking revenge upon it—assuredly, thus said the Lord GOD: I will stretch out My hand against Edom and cut off from it man and beast, and I will lay it in ruins; from Tema to Dedan they shall fall by the sword. I will wreak My vengeance on Edom through My people Israel, and they shall take action against Edom in accordance with My blazing anger; and they shall know My vengeance—declares the Lord GOD (Ezek 25:12–14).

Thus, Ezek 25 condemned Edom to the sword because Edom violently attacked Judah, but Edom's actions were, again, not understood to be unique. Ezekiel accused Philistia of similar criminality and sentenced them to an analogous punishment in 25:15–17. Furthermore, Ammon and not Edom is the only nation associated with the temple's destruction and the exile. According to Assis, Ezek 25 "captures the attitude toward Edom at the actual time of the destruction in comparison with the attitude toward other nations.

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[51] Julia M. O'Brien, "Edom as (Selfish) Brother," 162. O'Brien points out that Jeremiah 40 indicates that Judahites fleeing the Babylonians sought refuge in Edom, among other places, making Edom sound positive. See also Juan Manuel Tebes, "The Edomite Involvement in the Destruction of the First Temple: A Case of Stab-in-the-Back Tradition?" *JSOT* 36 no. 2 (2011): 221–228.

[52] O'Brien, "Edom as (Selfish) Brother," 163.

Edom's violation of Judah was harsh but not deviant from the offenses of other nations."[53]

The realities and trauma effected by the destruction and its aftermath took time to manifest, but once processed, Edom shouldered much of the blame for the transgressions committed against Judah. The Babylonian violence that brought heretofore unknown devastation eventually helped to create what Bruce Cresson refers to as the "Damn Edom" theology prevalent in the latter prophets and writings. According to Cresson, "bitterness, hatred, and contempt characterize these references."[54] Judah's destruction was, eventually, a watershed moment in the relationship between the two kingdoms. Late biblical texts altered the Esau-Edom motif so that Judah's ally was no longer one among many, but was instead singularly responsible for Judah's violent misery. Ezek 35–36 shows a turning point in the prophetic attitude toward Edom, where Edom becomes the singular villain. Ezek 35:1–9 threatens to make Edom "utter waste" and "desolation" because they brought bloodshed to their neighbors: **"**Because you harbored an ancient hatred and handed the people of Israel over to the sword in their time of calamity, the time set for their punishment—assuredly, as I live, declares the Lord GOD" (35:5–6). Edom's violence was unique and it justified Yahwistic revenge: "I will doom you with blood; blood shall pursue you; I swear that, for your bloodthirsty hatred, blood shall pursue you" (35:6).[55] According to Ezek 35, the Edomites betrayed Israel (Judah) by turning them over to their doom, and they will suffer YHVH's violent revenge for doing it. The chapter builds toward the

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[53] Assis, *Identity and Conflict,* 104.

[54] Cresson, "The Condemnation of Edom," 125.

[55] Joel 4:19 also accuses Edom of bloodshed toward Judah and threatens to make Edom a desolate waste. Like the previously cited texts, Joel also associates Edom with other neighboring nations. Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," 29.

accusation that the Edomites benefited directly from Israel's loss and openly celebrated the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem: "As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they shall know that I am the LORD" (Ezek 35:15). Edom rejoiced as they benefited from the destruction of the temple, and they will therefore be destroyed for their affront to YHVH. As the prophecy moves into chapter 36, Edom ceases to be one of many Levantine allies and becomes the representative of all the enemy nations who will suffer God's vengeful wrath:

> …therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I am speaking in my hot jealousy against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who, with wholehearted joy and utter contempt, took my land as their possession, because of its pasture, to plunder it. Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains and hills, to the watercourses and valleys, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am speaking in my jealous wrath, because you have suffered the insults of the nations; therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I swear that the nations that are all around you shall themselves suffer insults (Ezek 36:5–7).

Ezekiel 35–36 understands Edom in a completely different light than the earlier sources. Edom was not an ally with whom Judah shared a fraternal, if occasionally hostile, bond. Edom was also not one among many enemies of Judah. Instead, Edom became a symbol of violence because it turned Judah over to the sword and joyfully benefited from the kingdom's downfall. Edom functioned as the representative of all the evil nations.

Second Isaiah thrusts the struggle against Edom into the cosmic realm and puts Edom's situation in God's hands. Thus, Isa 34–35 uses violent imagery to depict YHVH attacking Edom in the future (Isa 34:5–6) because that prophet expects the Edomites to become the enemy that will serve as YHVH's ritual slaughter (Isa 34:8), a slaughter that will result in eternal destruction (Isa 34:10) when wild beasts will occupy the otherwise desolate Edom (Isa 34:11–17). Third Isaiah continues to rail against Edom in Isa 63, where

Edom is again regarded as the future enemy. It predicts that YHVH will carry out bloody vengeance in the future and return from Edom covered in red, as though from treading grapes. Rather than having made wine, however, YHVH will have trampled Edom and returned to his people with "their life-blood [having] bespattered My garments, and all My clothing... stained" (Isa 63:3).

The post-exilic prophets did not forget the kingdoms' fraternal beginnings, and instead emphasized that Edom's betrayal was made worse by the brotherly relationship.[56] The prophet Malachi refers to the fraternal relationship between Esau and Jacob to show Yahwistic rejection: "After all—declares the LORD—Esau is Jacob's brother; yet I have accepted Jacob and have rejected Esau. I have made his hills a desolation, his territory a home for beasts of the desert" (Mal 1:2–3).[57] At 21 verses, Obadiah is the shortest book in the biblical canon, and it is entirely devoted to three prophecies against Judah's brother, Edom (1–9; 10–14, 15b; and 15a, 16–21).[58] Obadiah accused Edom of merely standing by while kinfolk were being terrorized: "For the slaughter and violence done to your brother

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[56] Johanna Stiebert, "The Maligned Patriarch: Prophetic Ideology and the 'Bad Press' of Esau," in *Sense and Sensitivity: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll,* ed. Alastair G. Hunter and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 39–41; O'Brien, "Edom as (Selfish) Brother," 165–173.

[57] Malachi's reference to Esau and Edom is extreme but brief, and the rest of the book appears to be unrelated to the harsh opening lines. The second prophecy reproaches the priesthood and the nation for bringing defective sacrifices (1:6–2:9), the third criticizes intermarriage (2:10–16), the fourth and sixth deal with reward and punishment for the righteous and the wicked (2:17–3, 6; 3:13–21), and the fifth reproaches the people's dishonest dealing with tithes (3:7–12). Assis, *Identity in Conflict*, 153.

[58] Obadiah continually refers to the kingdoms alternatively as Jacob and Israel, and Esau and Edom, and only a few times refers to Edom without also referencing the brotherhood motif. See Dicou, *Edom, Israel's Brother and Antagonist,* 29. According to Assis: "The first prophecy implicates Edom for its arrogance; this arrogance will be corrected through utter humiliation. The second oracle charges Edom with grave war crimes against Judah during Jerusalem's fall. Edom cut off Judah's refugees; hence they will be cut off. The third prophecy penalizes Edom, as well as other neighboring nations, for seizing Judean territory. In retaliation, the prophet promises that Judah will reclaim their inheritance, as well as the lands of their colonizers. Each crime is met with a punishment according to the principle of measure for measure." Assis, *Identity and Conflict,* 151.

Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. On the day that you stood aside, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth, and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you too were like one of them" (Obad 10). The Edomites also gloated at Judah's destruction (Obad 12), captured prisoners, and participated in the murder of its citizens (Obad 14)—crimes that will be avenged. Both Obadiah and Malachi refer to Jacob and Esau's familial bond, and according to O'Brien, this act of "brothering" creates "a mental picture of a norm of closeness, commonality, sameness. The brother metaphor implies that Judah and Edom are two parties of relatively equal abilities obligated by a permanent relationship to mutual defense."[59] The brotherly aspect of the motif was therefore maintained and leveraged against Edom in order to shame them. Edom should not be concerned with its own glory; instead, "Judah's welfare should be of primary value," because the two are kin.[60]

In the Writings, Lamentations also speaks of the bitterness caused by the perceived betrayal and the desire for Edom to receive its just desserts after the destruction and exile:

> Rejoice and exult, Fair Edom,
> Who dwell in the land of Uz!
> To you, too, the cup shall pass,
> You shall get drunk and expose your nakedness.
> Your iniquity, Fair Zion, is expiated;
> He will exile you no longer.
> Your iniquity, Fair Edom, He will note;
> He will uncover your sins. (Lam 4:21–22)

Jon Levinson explains, "it is reasonable to think that when Edom's allies dupe and defeat the Edomites, the latter will experience just what Israel experienced at their hand: the cup

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[59] O'Brien, "Edom as (Selfish) Brother," 168.

[60] O'Brien, "Edom as (Selfish) Brother," 168.

will pass from Fair Zion to Fair Edom."[61] According to Levinson,[62] there is a connection between Lamentations and Obadiah with regard to these pronouncements and their desire for retribution because Edom betrayed their allies. The vitriol toward Edom caused by the kingdom's betrayal, however, reaches its most violent climax in Psalm 137:7–9, which contains "the most horrifying closing line of any psalm"[63]:

> Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites
> the day of Jerusalem's fall;
> how they cried, "Strip her, strip her
> to her very foundations!"
> Fair Babylon, you predator,
> a blessing on him who repays you in kind
> what you have inflicted on us;
> a blessing on him who seizes your babies
> and dashes them against the rocks! (Ps 137:7–9)

Adele Berlin points out that the idea of smashing little children against rocks is certainly horrific, but that the concept occurs elsewhere in the Bible too.[64] According to Graham Ogden, there is wordplay in these verses with regard to the rock because "the rock" (הסלע) is "synonymous with Edom itself" and is a reference to Edom's rocky geographical

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[61] Jon D. Levinson, "The Horrifying Closing of Psalm 137, or, The Limitations of Ethical Reading" in *Biblical Essays in Honor of Daniel J. Harrington, SJ and Richard J. Clifford, SJ: Opportunity for No Little Instruction,* ed. Christopher G. Frechette et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 2014), 27–28.

[62] See also Ogden, "Prophetic Oracles Against Foreign Nations and Psalms of Communal Lament," and Adele Berlin, "Psalms and the Literature of Exile: Psalms 137, 44, 69, and 78," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception,"* ed. Peter W. Flint et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

[63] Richard J. Clifford, *Psalms 73–150* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 275. Joel LeMon expresses a similar view of the psalm. "Many psalms contain images of violence against the enemies. But no other psalm conveys such vivid descriptions of the violent deaths of the enemies' children." Joel M. LeMon, "Violence Against Children and Girls in the Reception History of Psalm 137," *Journal of Religion and Violence,* 4 no. 3 (2016): 318. See also Arie Versluis, "'Knock the Little Bastards' Brains Out': Reception History and Theological Interpretation of Psalm 137:9," in *Violence in the Hebrew Bible: Between Text and Reception,* ed. Jacques van Ruiten and Koert van Bekkum (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 373–96.

[64] See also 2Kgs 8:12; Isa 13:16; Hos 14:1; Nah 3:10. Berlin, "Psalms and the Literature of Exile," 69.

features.[65] Berlin adds that Ha-Sela is the name of a fortress city in Edom in 2 Kings 14:7, which leads Levinson to conclude that "the 'rocks' against which the psalmist wishes to see the enemy's babies dashed are the Edomites' own stronghold, which they once thought impregnable. They will, the prophets aver, learn otherwise."[66] So while the psalm's violence is addressed to the daughter of Babylon, the interpretive focus should be on Edom, who will ultimately be dashed against the rock because they betrayed Judah.[67]

According to John Hayes, the pronouncements against foreign nations, such as those seen here with regard to Edom, should be linked with the concept of national lament in response to the Babylonian destruction and exile.[68] Edom is ultimately blamed for the violence enacted against Judah under the Babylonians, or at least for celebrating the violence, but the reality was likely more complicated, as Tebes explains:

> [T]here is no question of the animosity towards Edom shown by the biblical authors, who seem to believe sincerely in the Edomite involvement in the cataclysm of Judah. It is completely likely that Edom celebrated, if not favored, the fall of their bitter enemy; it is possible that they acted by omission against Judah (e.g. not providing asylum to the Judaean refugees); it is even possible that they took the circumstance as an occasion for territorial and economic gain, as some scholars argue based on a few epigraphic discoveries in the Negev. However, there is no evidence of the direct intervention of Edom in the attack on or plunder of Jerusalem. Neither the specific actions nor the names of the Edomite commanders turn up. And, surprisingly, there is no mention of the involvement of Edom in the burning of the temple, as a later tradition will declare.[69]

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[65] Ogden, "Prophetic Oracles Against Foreign Nations and Psalms of Communal Lament," 91.

[66] Berlin, "Psalms and the Literature of Exile," 69–70. Levinson, "The Horrifying Closing of Psalm 137," 36.

[67] Ogden, "Prophetic Oracles against Foreign Nations and Psalms of Communal Lament," 91.

[68] John H. Hayes, "The Usage of Oracles Against Foreign Nations in Ancient Israel," *JBL,* 87 no. 1 (1968): 81–92.

[69] Tebes, "The Edomite Involvement in the Destruction of the First Temple," 230.

Edom likely chose selfishly when confronted with the opportunity to help either Babylon or Judah, and Esau and his progeny are forever condemned for choosing the former over what some writers in Judah perceived to be kin. In reality, however, Edom had little choice given their circumstances, as they were faced with a large and violent hegemonic military capable of destroying the fledgling kingdom. For Edom, it was better to survive, and potentially thrive, than join forces with Judah against Babylon in what would become their inevitable destruction.

Summary and Conclusions: Edom-Esau and Identity in Iron Age Judah

The Late Iron Age II period leading to the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of a proportion of its residents was a difficult span for Judah, and the Edom-Esau motif helps set up the complex issues concerning how political status, construction of the other, and sense of religious identity changed in relation to one another during that time. According to Assis, the election material in the Esau and Jacob narrative caused anxiety among writers in Judah because Judah, as the surviving remnant of Israel, was chosen and his brother, Edom, was rejected, but no one knew why.[70] The situation in southern Judah, where Edom occupied traditional Judahite land and which culminated in Babylon destroying Judah to Edom's benefit, meant it was within the realm of possibility that the Judahite writers had it all wrong and that Esau was in fact the true and chosen son. Judah was in a state of despair as survivors of the violence pondered whether the destruction meant God had abandoned them: "Since Edom was seen as an alternative to Israel, being identified with Esau, Jacob's

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[70] Assis, "Why Edom?" 11–12.

brother, it was thought possible that God had now chosen Edom as his people in place of Israel."[71] Edom's actions and inaction during the destruction was inevitably thrust onto Esau, which gave the political situation theological significance and allowed Judahites to perceive their contemporary situation as a continuation of the ancient struggle between the two brothers. According to Assis, the harsh prophecies against Edom "were designed to extirpate from the people's consciousness the view that God had abandoned them and had chosen another people in their place."[72] The prophets comforted the people by announcing a better future that included, or even depended on, Edom's destruction. The vision helped combat the despair Judahites felt toward their awful circumstances following the destruction because it assured the listener that the relationship between God and Israel had not changed.[73] Israel will be resettled in the land and YHVH's people will once again prosper in Judah, but "Edom's destruction is viewed as the indispensable prelude to Israel's restoration."[74] Edom was no longer an allied local kingdom and, according to Beth Glazier-McDonald, instead "came to symbolize the hostile, encroaching world when the hope of an actual restoration of Israel was being vitiated by the recognition of human powerlessness in the face of cold political reality—as Babylonian hegemony gave way to Persian."[75] Yet

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[71] Assis, "Why Edom?" 14.

[72] Assis, "Why Edom?" 16; Assis, *Identity in Conflict*, 5.

[73] Assis, *Identity in Conflict*, 152; 162.

[74] Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," 31. According to Assis, "The rhetorical features, structure, and motifs of this unit are designed to portray Edom as God's enemy. The vivid depiction of God's intervention was calculated to reassure Judah that Edom was an unsuitable candidate to replace Israel: Edom was not only their enemy, but God's. At the same time, the prophecy emphasizes that Israel belongs to God, and that these divine acts of vengeance are executed for the sake of their salvation." Assis, *Identity and Conflict*, 140.

[75] Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," 31; Assis, *Identity in Conflict*, 130.

Edom was not just an enemy like Tyre, the Philistine city states, or even Assyria or Babylon: Edom became the enemy *par excellence,* the epitome of wildness and the lust for power, the symbol of Yahweh's foes throughout the world who oppose the deity in the eschaton.[76] Further complicating the situation were the potential theological similarities between the kingdoms. As Tebes points out, "the two peoples shared a common religious framework... in particular, that the gods Yahweh of Israel/Judah and Qaus (קוס) of Edom shared analogous characteristics."[77] Furthermore, there are multiple references to Yahweh's original province coming from "Edom," "Seir," "Mount Paran," "Bozrah," and "Teman."[78]

Judah and Edom were too similar for comfort for the Judahite writers, and the fact that Edom prevailed at Judah's loss created cognitive dissonance to which exilic and postexilic Judahite literature responded. Naming Edom and Esau as the ultimate enemy to Judah had the effect not only of comforting the people as they processed the destruction and exile, but also of helping to provide a sense of self definition at a time when Judahite consciousness was particularly vulnerable. Edom and Esau became an "other" against whom Judah could define itself. According to Saul Olyan, "Through defining the other, a group determines what it is not; in short, it establishes its boundaries. The other is, therefore, an essential component of any group's project of self-definition."[79] Edom and

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[76] Glazier-McDonald, "Edom in the Prophetical Corpus," 24. Johanna Stiebert emphasizes the foreign aspect of Edom and Esau otherness: "He epitomizes all that is within the parameters of Second Temple ideology detestable: foreignness, defilement and shamefulness." Stiebert, "The Maligned Patriarch," 47.

[77] Tebes, "You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite," 11. See also John Bartlett, "The Brotherhood of Edom," *JSOT* 4 (1977): 6–7.

[78] See Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4; Isa 63:1; and Hab 3:3. Tebes, "You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite," 11.

[79] Saul M. Olyan, *Rites and Rank: Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 63. See also Christine E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7. According to John

Esau functioned as one of many "others" before the destruction, as Judah defined itself as a settled and prosperous nation that subjugated their neighbors to the south But Edom-Esau as an othering mechanism took on uniquely violent overtones following the destruction when Judah needed to redefine itself, and the rhetoric presented in the Hebrew Bible that maligned Edom was far more about Judah than Edom.

ESAU AND EDOM IN SECOND TEMPLE HISTORY AND LITERATURE

We know comparatively little about the beginning of the Second Temple period in the Land of Edom. It is clear, however, that Judahite and Edomite civilizations continued to develop for centuries alongside one another as Judah transitioned to Yehud and then Judea and Edom to Idumea under the Persians and then the Greeks. In what follows, I outline the continued development of the two kingdoms and how they appear in the archeological record. I then show how Judean authors continued to use Edom and Esau to negotiate their changing political situation and sense of self over and against the Idumeans, despite their attempts to join the Judean state and become Jewish themselves.

The Kingdoms of Judea and Idumea in the Second Temple Period

The Babylonian King Nabonidus likely dissolved the Edomite kingdom in 552 or 551 BCE, leaving the area without a formal political apparatus. Judah became the Persian province "Yehud" when the Babylonians ceded their authority in 539, and the southern border was shifted north to Hebron, indicating further withdrawal from traditional Judahite territory

Turner, people who understand themselves to be a part of a group are influenced by their participation in that group to view insiders and outsiders in a particular way. That is, "(t)he perception of people in terms of their social group membership leads to a tendency to exaggerate the perceived similarities within groups and the perceived differences between groups." John C. Turner, "An Introduction," in *Social Groups and Identities: Developing the Legacy of Henri Tajfel,* ed. W. Peter Robinson (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1996), 13.

under Achaemenid rule.[80] Those living on the edges of civilization continued to be left to their own devices on the empire's northwestern boundary with Arabia. Yehud's new southern border and Persian disinterest created a political vacuum in which the diverse society that began to form in the eighth century was able to continue limited settlement in the southern Negev. This indigenous population continued to inhabit what had become Edomite territory under the Babylonians, and the Persian King Cambyses II gave limited authority to his Qedarite Arab allies, further strengthening ties between the border region and tribal, nomadic cultures. According to Ian Stern, "post-collapse" conditions facilitated a cultural exchange among the surviving people in which traditional ethnic boundaries collapsed and a mixed society continued to form organically and unencumbered. The result was a population composed of Arabs, Edomites, Phoenicians, Judahites, and other "Western Semitic" people who intermarried, shared resources, and created what would become Idumean culture.[81]

Things changed administratively for the remote area after Alexander the Great's conquest of Gaza in 332 BCE. Unlike the Persians, the Greeks sought to maintain direct control of the area and created the "eparchy of Idumea." With urban centers in Marisa and Adora, Hellenistic Idumea encompassed what was once the southern edge of biblical Judah, now Judea, in the northern Negev, the southern Shephelah, and the southern Judean hill

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[80] See Neh 3.

[81] Ian Stern, "The Population of Persian-Period Idumea According to the Ostraca; A Study of Ethnic Boundaries and Ethnogenesis," in *A Time of Change, Judah and its Neighbors in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods,* ed. Yigal Levin (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 212–15; MacDonald, *The Southern Transjordan Edomite Plateau*, 42–49. Yigal Levin, "The Southern Frontier of Yehud and the Creation of Idumea," 243–45; Nikos Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty: Role in Society and Eclipse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 86. Theophoric names referencing the Edomite god QWS found on ostraca in the Negev, the southern Shelphelah, and the southern hill country attest to continuous Edomite presence in the area.

country.[82] I will detail the violence that societies native to the Levant endured under Greek rule in the next chapter; here it will suffice to say that Judea and Idumea resumed a dynamic under the Greeks similar to the one their Judahite and Edomite ancestors embodied under the Assyrians. That is, the tribal kingdoms did their best to survive foreign hegemony. Greek domination ended with the Seleucid defeat in the Maccabean Revolt, and Judeans once again turned their ire toward Idumea. Maccabean sovereignty brought renewed calls for violence against the Idumeans who occupied Judea's ancestral land, and according to 1 Maccabees 5:3, "Judas (Maccabee) made war on the descendants of Esau in Idumea…because they kept lying in wait for Israel."[83] The rivalry between Jacob and Esau appeared to continue after the Maccabean Revolt. The Hasmonean leader and Jewish high priest John Hyrcanus eventually sought to annex Idumea into the sovereign Judean state in 112/111 BCE in an effort to consolidate power and reestablish sovereignty over traditional Judean lands.[84] Depending on the source, the annexation under Hyrcannus was the result of either the violent coercion of a resistant Idumean populous that clung to their own culture, or a shared political interest and the appeal of joining the Judean state for the average Idumean. Josephus describes the violent coercion:

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[82] Nikos Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 36–79.

[83] According to Kokkinos, Judas fought the Idumeans in Hebron, Marisa, and Azotus, where "he pulled down their altars and burned their carved images with fire." 1 Macc 5:65–68; Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty,* 87. Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 12.353.

[84] Benedikt Eckhardt, "'An Idumean, That is, A Half-Jew' Hasmoneans and Herodians Between Ancestry and Merit," in *Jewish Identity and Politics Between the Maccabees and Bar Kokhba: Groups, Normativity, and Rituals,* ed. Benedikt Eckhardt (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 100. Eckhardt explains that Josephus dates these events to 129 BCE, but archeology suggests otherwise. Ibid., 100 n. 28; Joseph Sievers, *The Hasmoneans and Their Supporters: From Mattathias to the Death of John Hyrcanus I* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), 142–142.

> Hyrcanus also captured the Idumaean cities of Adora and Marisa, and after subduing all the Idumaeans, permitted them to remain in their country so long as they had themselves circumcised and were willing to observe the laws of the Jews. And so, out of attachment to the land of their fathers, they submitted to circumcision and to making their manner of life conform in all other respects to that of the Jews. And from that time on they have continued to be Jews.[85]

Josephus explains that the Idumeans were given a choice: undergo circumcision and follow Jewish law, or leave their ancestral lands. This appears to be an exaggeration. The Greek historian Strabo contradicts Josephus' account and argues that the incorporation of the Idumeans into the expanding Judean state was voluntary.[86] According to Strabo, the west Semitic Idumeans were given a choice to leave behind their east Semitic, Arab compatriots and join the growing and prosperous Judean state. This was a relatively easy choice for many Idumeans, given the growing power of the Hasmoneans, and given that the Idumeans shared many of the same customs as the Judeans, including circumcision.[87] Thus the truth is likely somewhere in between. A significant number of Idumeans had practiced circumcision for centuries, like many of their Semitic neighbors in the region. Some Idumeans, under the influence of Hellenism, had stopped circumcising their children and had in general ceased following traditional customs, like many of their Semitic neighbors in the region. Hellenized Idumeans were required to make a choice when presented with the opportunity to join the Judean state.[88] Those Idumeans were therefore forced to adhere to

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[85] Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.257–258. See also 1 Macc 2:45–48.

[86] Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.34.

[87] Steven Weitzman, "Forced Circumcision and the Shifting Role of Gentiles in Hasmonean Ideology." *HTR* 92 no. 1 (1999): 41. Cf. Andrea Berlin, "Manifest Identity: From *Ioudaios* to Jew," in *Between Cooperation and Hostility: Multiple Identities in Ancient Judaism and the Interaction with Foreign Powers,* ed. R. Albertz et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 160–72; Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs,* 44–78.

[88] While many chose to become Judeans, some Idumeans fled to Egypt to escape Hasmonean tyranny, and the Costobar affair early in Herod's reign shows that tension lingered for some time. Josephus, *Antiquities*

a traditional set of laws similar to those they had consciously chosen to leave behind in favor of their new Hellenized culture. The situation for the Hellenized Idumeans was no doubt dejecting, but the idea that all of Idumea was forced to submit to body modification against their will in a manner reminiscent of Gen 34 appears to be an exaggeration. Furthermore, the way the Hasmoneans facilitated their administration on the fringes of their territory was through a set of “friendships”: vassal relationships with the inhabitants of territories like Idumea that allowed for diversity within the larger Judean state. According to Seth Schwartz, annexed territories such as Idumea, “though subjected to the Judaean kings, were ruled by native vassals, or ‘friends’ of the kings, and retained their ethnic and political, and perhaps even some religious, distinctiveness.”[89] The ascendant Hasmonean Dynasty was an attractive ally, the majority of Idumeans likely wanted to become Judeans, and the cost of entry was relatively low for most Idumeans.[90] Once Hyrcanus annexed Idumea, the native inhabitants “politically became Judaeans, citizens in the Judaean state (or Judaean League). Religiously, they became Jews, at least to the extent that they were expected to observe the laws and customs of the Judaeans. Ethnically, however, they remained as they had been, Idumaeans.”[91]

15.253–266; Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 117; Seth Schwartz, “Herod, Friend of the Jews,” in *Jerusalem and Eretz Israel: Arie Kindler Volume,* ed. Joshua Schwartz et al. (Ramat Gan: The Ingeborg Rennert Center for Jerusalem Studies, 2000), 72; Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty,* 88–94.

[89] S. Schwartz, “Herod, Friend of the Jews,” 72.

[90] Reasons for Idumeans to support the alliance include making the best of the inevitable, wanting allies to protect them from exploitation by the Hellenized cities, a feeling of sympathy with the anti-Seleucid and anti-Hellenistic posture of the Maccabees, and the political, economic, and military advantages that would accrue to them as a result of joining a larger and more prosperous state. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness,* 117.

[91] Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 18. Similarly, Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 36–42; Daniel R. Schwartz, “Judeans, Jews, and their

Edom-Esau in Second Temple Literature

The incorporation of Idumea into the Judean state was not for Idumea's benefit alone. The economic and ecological reality of a fragmented eastern Mediterranean meant that the Judean state needed outside help to maintain minimum subsistence requirements in order to thrive.[92] Hyrcanus indeed used Idumeans to bolster the Jewish population, but the incorporation of Idumeans into the Judean fold eroded Hasmonean legitimacy among a Jewish elite that valued ethnic purity.[93] Despite opposition, Idumeans were quickly promoted within the Hasmonean administration in Jerusalem, but continued to maintain a distinct ethnic identity.[94] The Herodian dynasty was Idumean, and Josephus refers to the Judean King Herod as "a commoner and an Idumaean, that is, a half-Jew."[95] Idumeans continued to occupy a liminal space into the Common Era; an Idumean contingent joined the Zealots in the Jewish Revolt, and the rabbinic House of Shammai included Idumean students.[96] Idumeans were accepted to varying degrees as Judean rulers, rebels, and religious thinkers, but they remained ethnically Idumean. The difference between ethnic Judeans and Idumeans who were now considered under the banner "Jewish" created space

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Neighbors: Jewish Identity in the Second Temple Period," in *Between Cooperation and Hostility: Multiple Identities in Ancient Judaism and the Interaction with Foreign Powers,* ed. Rainer Albertz et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 13–31.

[92] Seth Schwartz, "Conversion to Judaism in the Second Temple Period: A Functional Approach," in *Studies in Josephus and the Varieties of Ancient Judaism: Louis H. Feldman Jubilee Volume,* ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 223–36.

[93] Saul M. Olyan, "Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Toll to Reconstitute the Community," *JSJ* 35 no. 1 (2004): 1–16; Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*, 19–34. Josephus claimed that Jewish faith in the Hasmoneans eroded because of Hyrcanus' assumption of the high priestly offices. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.288–298.

[94] Alan Appelbaum, "'The Idumaeans' in Josephus' *The Jewish War," JSJ* 40 (2009): 1–22.

[95] Josephus, *Antiquities* 14.403.

[96] Josephus, *War* 4.224–232; 5.358–6.92. Haim Shapira, "The Schools of Hillel and Shammai," in *The Jewish Law Annual,* ed. Berachyahu Lifshitz (New York: Routledge-Cavendish, 2008), 170–71.

for some Judean authors to continue to use the Edom-Esau motif to negotiate identity vis-à-vis Idumeans, and the subsequent texts often turned to violence.

Edom in 1 Esdras

1 Esdras survives as a second-century BCE Greek translation of a lost Semitic account of the biblical books of Chronicles, Ezra, and some of Nehemiah.[97] The updated events contained therein includes an explicit reference to Edomite violence when Zerubbabel reminds King Darius of the promises he made to the Judahite returnees: "Remember the vow that you made on the day you received the kingdom, to build Jerusalem, and to return all the vessels that had been taken out from Jerusalem...And you vowed to build the Temple that the Edomites (IdoumaiVoi) set on fire when Judah was destroyed by the Chaldeans" (1 Esd 4:43–45).[98] 1 Esdras used the Chronicler as the basis of their story, but by ascribing blame for the burning of the temple to the Edomites rather than to the Babylonians, the author changed the narrative and created the strongest accusation against the Edomites to date.[99] The accusation comes, however, after 1 Esdras 1:44–55, which describes the Chaldeans (Babylonians) polluting the sanctified temple, after which: "They (the Babylonians) set the house of the Lord on fire, broke down the walls of Jerusalem, and burnt all their towers by fire, and utterly destroyed—putting out of use—all her glorious things. Those who survived

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[97] Sara Japhet explains that there is a distinction between the original Hebrew or Aramaic edition of 1 Esdras and the Greek translation, and that there is no explicit historical or linguistic data to support a specific date for the Semitic edition, but that it is likely a product of the third century BCE, while the translation was likely completed in the second. Sara Japhet, "1 Esdras," in *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture,* ed. Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and Lawrence H. Schiffman (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 141.

[98] Translations for 1 Esdras comes from Japhet, "1 Esdras."

[99] See 2 Chr 36:17–21; cf. 2 Kgs 25:8–12.

he carried away by the sword to Babylon" (1 Esd 1:52–53). According to the updated account in chapter 4, however, Edom did not simply passively benefit from Judah's destruction: Edom actually set the temple ablaze. In addition, 1 Esdras depicts Darius writing letters to the governors over whom he had sovereignty. "And he wrote concerning all the Judeans…that all the land that they occupy shall be free of tribute, and that the Edomites hand over the villages that they took from the Judeans" (1 Esdras 4:50). In other words, the Idumeans that now occupied what had once been traditional Judahite land needed to return said land to the rightful owners, now the Judeans. For 1 Esdras, Babylon appears to be of secondary concern. According to Bartlett, "For this author, rewriting Chronicles and Ezra, the Babylonians are past and gone; but the Idumaeans are a very present reality."[100]

Esau and Edom in the *Book of Jubilees* and the *Testament of Judah*

1 Esdras contains a relatively short but effective supplement to the story that escalates Edomite culpability and had potentially disastrous effects for the surviving Idumeans who may have been actively trying to join the Judean confederacy. The *Book of Jubilees,* on the other hand, contains a sustained attack against Esau that portrays the character and his progeny as inherently violent and intent on doing harm to Jacob and his kin through sustained warfare. *Jubilees* is a quasi-apocalyptic retelling of Israelite history from Genesis 1 to the revelation at Sinai written around the mid-second century BCE. Often classified as "rewritten Bible" or "rewritten scripture," *Jubilees* inserts itself into the Sinaitic tradition by presenting itself as part of the revelation given to Moses during his forty days on top of the

[100] Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites,* 156. See also Japhet, "1 Esdras, 172–73.

mountain.[101] *Jubilees* thus positions itself so as to give its writer great authority to interpret the beginning of the Torahitic tradition to their own ends.[102] *Jubilees* is creative in its retelling of the story, as it "does not simply reproduce the scriptural content but omits parts, adds units, and shapes the whole for the writer's audience and theological purposes."[103] We know little about the context in which it was written, but *Jubilees* was highly influential among ancient Jews.[104] The work was originally written in Hebrew by a Jewish author well trained in his tradition, and *Jubilees* enjoyed early and widespread popularity.[105] Rabbinic literature forbade reading such "outside books," but some early Christians included it in their canons and preserved it in Ge'ez, Latin, Greek, and Syriac.[106]

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[101] Some scholars have classified *Jubilees* as an apocalypse, but the book's focus on scriptural history, rather than on an eschatological future, has put it on the margins of the genre. According to John Collins, *Jubilees* is a hybrid work and "it may be regarded as a marginal member of the genre apocalypse, on the 'fuzzy edge' of the genre, without claiming that this is its only generic affiliation." John J. Collins, "The Genre of the Book of *Jubilees*," in *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam,* ed. Eric F. Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 2.754. *Jubilees'* date cannot be determined with certainty, but James VanderKam concludes it was written between the 170s and 125 BCE, and more specifically, "a time not too far from the 160s—perhaps the 150s—is the most likely time frame for when the author wrote the book of Jubilees." James C. VanderKam*, Jubilees: A Commentary in Two Volumes* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018), 19, 25–38. Cf. Exod 24:12–18. VanderKam*, Jubilees,* 1

[102] According to VanderKam, "the writer of Jubilees fashions a revelatory chain that makes evident the authority he asserts for his work. God speaks to Moses in chap. 1 but soon orders an Angel of the Presence to dictate to him from heavenly tablets. Each person in this chain represents the very highest level of authority in his category of being, and the source of the revelation is unimpeachable." VanderKam*, Jubilees,*18. For further analysis of how Jubilees ascribes authority to itself, see Hindy Najman, "Interpretation as Primordial Writing: *Jubilees* and its Authority Conferring Strategies," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 30 no. 4 (1999): 379–410.

[103] VanderKam*, Jubilees*, 1.

[104] According to Kugel, "The book of *Jubilees* is arguably the most important and influential of all the books written by Jews in the closing centuries BCE. It is a treasure-house of ancient biblical interpretation, composed by an unknown author who thought deeply about the Torah and Judaism." James L. Kugel, "*Jubilees*," in *Outside the Bible,* 272.

[105] There were at least fourteen manuscripts found at Qumran. James C. VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 18–96, 255–88.

A Christian missionary "rediscovered" a manuscript in the middle of the nineteenth century, and scholars have engaged with the text ever since.[107]

The author of *Jubilees* was creative in rewriting scripture, but the book follows the biblical text in a way that makes the story recognizable to its readers. Furthermore, the work depends on an understanding of the Sinaitic covenant because the work is "*fundamentally* a covenantal document."[108] The author explains biblical history in light of his conviction that his contemporaries were not adhering to the covenant and expressed his displeasure through a retelling of God and his angel addressing Moses at Sinai:

> Set your mind on everything which I shall tell you in this mountain, and write it in a book so that their descendants might see that I have not abandoned them on account of all the evil which they have done to instigate transgression of the covenant which I am establishing between Me and you today on Mount Sinai for their descendants (*Jub* 1:5).[109]

In this statement, the author of *Jubilees* claims that none of the violent circumstances in which Jews find themselves are because God abandoned them. God adheres to the covenantal relationship: it is the people who have strayed from the covenant, and this justifies God's allowance for violence.

Within *Jubilees*' covenantal framework, Jacob and Esau are set in opposition to one another in order to show that Israel was deserving of the people's chosen status. *Jubilees*

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[106] VanderKam, *Jubilees*, 1–15. Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1. The discussion in 10:1 focuses on who among the Jewish people have a share in the world to come and who does not. According to Rabbi Akiva, "one who reads external literature" is excluded from the world to come.

[107] For an in-depth discussion of *Jubilees'* manuscript traditions, see James C. VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees* and James C. VanderKam, "The Manuscript Tradition of *Jubilees*," in *Enoch and the Mosaic Torah: the Evidence of Jubilees,* ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Giovanni Ibba (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 3–21.

[108] William K. Gilders, "The Concept of Covenant in Jubilees," in *Enoch and the Mosaic Torah: the Evidence of Jubilees,* ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Giovanni Ibba (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 3–21.

[109] *Jubilees* translations come from Kugel, "*Jubilees*," in *Outside the Bible.*

19:14 is the first hint of a negative portrayal of Esau, as it notes that "Jacob learned to write, but Esau did not learn, for he was a man of the field, and a hunter, and he learned war, and all his deeds were fierce." Esau is not just a hunter: he is a fierce warrior; and Jacob is juxtaposed to Esau as a learned scholar.[110] Once Jacob assumes Esau's birthright, Esau's nature becomes not only violent, but also sinister. Rebecca petitions Isaac as she prepares to die: "One request I beg of you. Make Esau swear that he will not harm Jacob and will not pursue him hostilely, because you know Esau's inclination, that it has been evil since his youth. And there is no goodness in him because he wants to kill him after your death" (*Jub* 35:9). Miryam Brand explains the seriousness of Rebecca's claim:

> The description of Esau as 'evil from his youth' is a reference to Gen 8:21, where God describes the inclination of all humankind as 'evil from his youth.' The author of *Jubilees* has reduced this statement regarding all humankind to refer to Esau alone…The author thereby succeeds in transferring the deterministic aspect of Gen 8:21 to the paradigmatic Gentile Esau.[111]

Rebecca's words are prophetic, and chapters 37 to 38 depict the course of events that leads to Esau going to war with Jacob upon Isaac's death. The episode begins with Esau's sons confronting Esau over what they understand to be their stolen inheritance (*Jub* 37:2). Esau explains that he sold his birthright and promised his father not to harm Jacob (*Jub* 37:3–4), to which his sons respond violently: "We will not listen to you in order to make peace with him because our might is stronger than his might and we are stronger than he. We will go against him (Jacob) and we will kill and destroy him and his sons. And if you (Esau) do not go with us we will do harm to you" (*Jub* 37:5). Esau's progeny are so violent and filled with rage that they threaten their own father in order to convince him to join their campaign

[110] Najman, "Interpretation as Primordial Writing," 41–49.

[111] Miryam T. Brand, *Evil Within and Without: The Source of Sin and Its Nature as Portrayed in Second Temple Literature* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 145.

against their kin. Esau's sons then hire mercenaries from Aram, Aduram, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia, as well as from the Hurrians and the Kittim. Once these warriors, four thousand in all, are amassed, Esau "remembered all the evil which was hidden in his heart against Jacob" (*Jub* 37:13), and joins the contingent as they approach Jacob to do battle. Yet anonymous men from Hebron warn Jacob, "because they loved Jacob more than Esau. And they spoke to him because Jacob was a more generous and merciful man than Esau" (*Jub* 37:15). Jacob reminds Esau of the oath he swore to Isaac and Rebecca not to do harm to him, to which Esau responds indignantly: "Mankind and beasts of the field have no righteous oath which they have surely sworn forever. But daily they seek evil, one against the other, and each one (seeks) to kill his enemy and adversary. And you will hate me and my sons forever. And so there is no observing fraternity with you" (*Jub* 37:1819). Esau's speech continues through verse 23 in most manuscripts, but the Syriac version has an interesting addition in Jacob's voice that depicts him pleading with his brother: "Do not act (thus), my brother. As for me there is no evil in my heart against you. Do not plan evil against me….Calm down the heat of your anger and do not do anything rashly so that evil will come upon you" (*Jub* 37:19). Jacob sees Esau and his evil nature for what it is, and the author draws briefly on animal imagery in order to refer to Esau's wicked and inherently violent nature: "Jacob saw that he (Esau) had planned evil against him from his heart and from his whole being so that he might kill him…he had come leaping like a wandering boar who had come upon a spear which was piercing him and killing him, and he would not withdraw from it" (*Jub* 37:24). Esau is a wild boar, a theme used in the *Animal Apocalypse* that will be analyzed below, and he is unable to overcome his violent nature. Judah petitions his father Jacob and adds a significant and violent detail to the Jacob-Esau

narrative: "'O father, stretch your bow and shoot your arrows and strike down the enemy and kill the adversary'…And then when Jacob drew his bow and shot an arrow and struck Esau, his brother, on his right breast, he killed him" (*Jub* 38:1–2). The escalation in violence that leads to Jacob killing his brother Esau in battle is a radical departure from the biblical tradition.[112] Rather than living separately, but at peace, the Jacob-Esau narrative ends with Esau dying in battle at the hands of his brother. With Esau dead, a battle ensues in which Jacob's sons each slay a separate social group/battalion,

> And Judah…and Naphtali and Gad…killed everyone they found before them. And not a single one escaped from them. And Levi and Dan and Asher…killed the warriors of Moab and Ammon. And Reuben and Issachar and Zebulun…killed the fighting men of the Philistines. And Simeon and Benjamin and Enoch, the son of Reuben…killed four hundred strong men, warriors, of the Edomites and the Hurrians (*Jub* 38:4–8).

Israel as a whole successfully conquers the rest of the opposing nations, and Jacob's sons are specifically tasked with subjugating Esau and the Edomites:

> And Jacob's sons besieged the children of Esau on the mountain of Seir. And they bowed down their neck to become servants of the children of Jacob…And they made peace with them and placed a yoke of servitude upon them so that they might pay tribute to Jacob and his sons always….And the children of Edom have not ceased from the yoke of servitude which the twelve sons of Jacob order upon them until today (*Jub* 38:10–14).

Israel is unique in that God has chosen them to be the righteous covenant holders and the ones who will answer foreign violence with violence and subjugate others, especially Esau and the Edomites, in order to take their rightful place as God's chosen.

The author of *Jubilees* used the Esau and Jacob relationship to show that Jacob's sons are predisposed to the covenant, making them the true chosen people, while Esau's are

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[112] Kugel, "*Jubilees*," in *Outside the Bible.* 1754.

not.[113] According to Brand, "In *Jubilees*…the sinful nature of Esau, the paradigmatic forefather of Edom, is explained by referring to his inclination."[114] Jacob therefore deserves the birthright he acquired from Isaac, but Esau deserves to be killed, and the Edomites deserve to be subjugated to Judah, all because of their inherent natures. Ian Scott explains: "The later patriarchs…are portrayed as morally pure…Jacob, a dubious character in Genesis is entirely virtuous in *Jubilees…*Esau's pursuit of Jacob is no longer the just action of a cheated older brother, but rather the madness of a man whose inclination, 'has been evil since his youth.'"[115] The author comes up with multiple reasons for Jacob's and Esau's natures, but most of the evidence is based on Esau's inherent violence. Moreover, Esau's own violence is manifested in his sons, as they seek to "kill and destroy" (*Jub* 37:5) Jacob and his sons for their inheritance to the point that they want to "uproot" (*Jub* 37:6) Jacob by hiring foreign mercenaries to do battle against their enemy (*Jub* 37:9-10). It is not only Esau's sons, however, but Esau himself who eventually acknowledges both the evil in his own heart toward Jacob (*Jub* 37:13) and that he is inherently different from him: "If a boar changes his hide and his bristles (and) makes (them) soft as wool, and if he brings forth horns upon his head like the horns of a stag or sheep; then I will observe fraternity with you" (*Jub* 37:20). Jacob's actions toward Esau are therefore warranted according to *Jubilees* because Jacob rightfully protects himself against Esau's evil aggression. Furthermore, *Jubilees* argues that Esau gave up any right he once had either to his inheritance or to his

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[113] See Gilders, "The Concept of Covenant in Jubilees."

[114] Brand, *Evil Within and Without,* 144.

[115] Ian W. Scott, "Epistemology and Social Conflict in Jubilees and Aristeas," in *Common Judaism: Explorations in Second-Temple Judaism,* ed. Wayne O. McCready and Adele Reinhartz (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008), 201.

birthright. Esau acknowledges his own agency and explains that Jacob rightfully acquired the birthright from Isaac, and speaks with acceptance of his father's decree. The presumption that Jacob, while shrewd, ultimately acquired the birthright fair and square, and the fact that it is put in Esau's mouth makes any subsequent violence committed by Esau unjustifiable. The author of *Jubilees* is able to back these arguments by relying on the authority he claims for *Jubilees* by putting the entire book in the form of a revelatory chain from God to Moses, and the Angel of the Presence to Moses (*Jub* 1:27).

Kugel suggests there is a possibility that a Hellenistic Jewish writer's heroic account of the brave deeds of Jacob's sons, especially Judah, created a Greek tradition that influenced a handful of Jewish texts (including *Jubilees* and the *Testament of Judah*) in their accounts of the war between Jacob and the sons of Esau.[116] The *Testament of Judah* is part of a larger work, the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,* an extended elaboration on Genesis 49 and Jacob's deathbed scene written sometime after *Jubilees.* The *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* contains twelve self-contained units in which each of Jacob's sons gives their father a "testament" for the future of their tribe.[117] The *Testament of Judah* interrupts its account of the Judah and Tamar story in order to describe, in condensed form, the war against Esau:

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[116] James L. Kugel, *A Walk Through Jubilees: Studies in the Book of Jubilees and the World of its Creation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 166. See also Kugel's larger discussion on Jacob's war against the Amorites that leads into the war against Esau, ibid., 165–79. See also *Midrash Vayyissa'u* chapter 3.

[117] Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 302–15. The roles in Gen. 49 are reversed in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* as Jacob is the one giving the testament in Genesis, but his sons give him testaments in the latter.

> For eighteen years my father was at peace with his brother Esau, and his sons with us, after we had come from Mesopotamia, from Laban's [house]. And when the eighteen years had passed, in the fourth year of my life, my father's brother Esau came against us with a strong and powerful army. And he was felled by Jacob's bow, and he was taken up [close to] dead to Mount Seir, and he died on the way, above Eiramna. And we chased after Esau's sons. And they had a city with iron walls and brass gates. And we could not get inside, so we encircled it and began a siege against them. And when, after twenty days, they [still] had not opened [the city] to us, I set up a ladder and, with them looking on, went up with my shield over my head, pelted by stones up to three talents [in weight]; and once I was up, I killed four of their fighters. And Reuben and Gad killed six more. Then they asked us for [our] terms for a peace, and following the counsel of our father Jacob, we accepted them as tributaries. And they gave us two hundred cors of wheat, five hundred baths of oil, fifteen hundred measures of wine, until we went down to Egypt (*T. Jud.* 9:1–8).[118]

Behind the narrative account presented in *Jubilees* and the *Testament of Judah* is a likely historical reality that is relevant to the larger topic of his chapter and the cause of its violent rhetoric, as George Nickelsburg suggests: "The passage reflects contemporary Jewish-Idumean hostility and explains its origin, stressing Jewish superiority. The point is made in a lengthy narrative describing relationships between Jacob and Esau that culminate in a war in which Jacob kills Esau."[119] Kugel supports Nickelsburg's assertion that the underlying historical reality is based in Idumean hatred, suggesting that a writer or copyist updated the text after John Hyrcanus had subjugated Idumea to the Judean state.[120] The resulting text depicts perpetual violence toward and forced submission of the Idumeans, the inheritors of anti-Edomite propaganda and scorn.

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[118] Kugel, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *Outside the Bible,* 1754–1755.

[119] George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 71. With regard to *T. Jud.*, Kugel asserts, "this tradition seems to be based on a projection of later events—in particular the Maccabean wars, or perhaps John Hyrcanus's conquest of Idumea (Edom). Kugel, "*Jubilees*," in *Outside the Bible,* 1754.

[120] James L. Kugel, "Jubilees," in *Outside the Bible*, 424.

Edom in the Book of Judith and 1 Maccabees

Separate from the war between Jacob and the sons of Esau tradition preserved in *Jubilees* and the *Testament of Judah* are the various descriptions of the "nations roundabout" Israel, who constitute a perpetual and violent threat to the chosen people in Judith and 1 Maccabees. In reference to Judith, Lawrence Wills explains that "the small nations roundabout nurse a particular animus against Israel and are increasingly limited to Ammon, Moab, and Edom as the main instigators against Israel."[121] Little is known about the authorship or date of Judith, but scholars generally assume that the book originated in Hebrew some time during the Maccabean era, despite the fact that there are no original Hebrew manuscripts of it available to us.[122] We can understand the account of the surrounding nations to be an ahistorical depiction of the eternally evil enemy nations described in Torah and likely a reference to the descendants of those nations living beside the Judeans in the second century BCE.[123] In chapter seven of Judith, leaders of the Edomites, the Moabites, and of the coastal area advise the enemy general Holofernes to lay siege to the Israelite village of Bethulia:

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[121] Lawrence M. Wills, *Judith* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2019), 197. See also Seth Schwartz, "Israel and the Nations Roundabout: 1 Maccabees and the Hasmonean Expansion," *JJS* 41 (1991); Daniel R. Schwartz, "The Other in 1 and 2 Maccabees," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Christianity and Early Judaism,* ed. Graham Stanton (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 30–37; Deborah Levine Gera, *Judith* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 235–43.

[122] Betsy Halpern-Amaru, "Judith," in *Outside the Bible,* 2580.

[123] Wills, *Judith*, 197. Wills points out the connection to the War Scroll: "At Qumran, the War Scroll refers to the army of Belial as composed of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Amalekites, Philistia, and the Kittim of Assur."

> Then all the chieftains of the Edomites and all the leaders of the Moabites and the commanders of the coastland came to him and said, "Listen to what we have to say, my lord, and your army will suffer no losses. This people, the Israelites, do not rely on their spears but on the height of the mountains where they live, for it is not easy to reach the tops of their mountains. Therefore, my lord, do not fight against them in regular formation, and not a man of your army will fall. Remain in your camp, and keep all the men in your forces with you; let your servants take possession of the spring of water that flows from the foot of the mountain, for this is where all the people of Bethulia get their water. So thirst will destroy them, and they will surrender their town. Meanwhile, we and our people will go up to the tops of the nearby mountains and camp there to keep watch to see that no one gets out of the town. They and their wives and children will waste away with famine, and before the sword reaches them they will be strewn about in the streets where they live. Thus you will pay them back with evil, because they rebelled and did not receive you peaceably." (Jdt 7:8–15, NRSV).

Moab and Edom show initiative by helping plan the siege against the Israelites, which includes depriving them of water before their attack. The surrounding nations also secure the mountaintops around Bethulia as the Assyrian army prepares for the siege. Edom, as well as Moab and the non-Israelites living along the coast, are therefore co-conspirators in a war against the chosen people.

The author of 1 Maccabees is similarly unknown, but it is clear that he was an educated Jew, well-versed in his tradition, and one who viewed the Hellenized Jews around him in the first century BCE as sinners and apostates. The author is therefore biased in his retelling of Judean history. 1 Maccabees is more historically accurate than *Judith*, describing the period from around 175 to 134 BCE.[124] Like Judith, however, 1 Maccabees describes the gentile nations surrounding Judea as perpetual enemies, and groups Esau and his progeny with those nations in Judas's 163 BCE attacks:

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[124] Daniel Harrington, *First and Second Maccabees* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 5–7.

> When the Gentiles all around heard that the altar had been rebuilt and the sanctuary dedicated as it was before, they became very angry, and they determined to destroy the descendants of Jacob who lived among them. So they began to kill and destroy among the people. But Judas made war on the descendants of Esau in Idumea, at Akrabattene, because they kept lying in wait for Israel. He dealt them a heavy blow and humbled them and despoiled them (1 Macc 5:1–3).

The gentile nations consist of Idumea, the otherwise unknown sons of Baean, the Ammonites, the Nabateans, and the nations living in all the regions surrounding Judea.[125] According to Daniel Harrington, the attacks are set up as revenge for the harm they committed against the Jews, and Seth Schwartz adds that this section, "epitomizes the mindless hatred of Judaeans the author attributes to the gentiles of Palestine and the Transjordan—an attitude detectable in most of the stories of the chapter."[126] With regard to the Idumeans specifically, Schwartz adds that they are said to have attacked Israel: "But Judas' response is not to rescue the local Jews (assuming that this is what the verse means by 'Israel'), but to 'humiliate the (Edomites) and despoil them."[127] For 1 Maccabees is concerned with Judean apostates and the surrounding nations, and the text treats the Idumeans as eternally hostile to the Jews and deserving of any and all brutality visited upon them by Judeans.[128] There is concern notwithstanding the fact that the Idumeans had been afforded the opportunity to join the Judean state by the time of 1 Maccabees's authorship, and many Idumeans likely actively tried to become Jewish. But despite Idumean efforts to be Jewish, Judeans remained hostile toward the neighboring people and

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[125] John R. Bartlett, *1 Maccabees* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 75–77. 1 Macc 5:63 again depicts Judas attacking the sons of Esau, but then quickly turns its ire to the Philistines. According to Bartlett, the focal point of the chapter is on Judas' campaigns in Galilee and Gilead, which are flanked by attacks on Idumea and the Tansjordanian regions and then the "land to the south." Ibid., 75.

[126] S. Schwartz, "Israel and the Nations Roundabout," 26.

[127] S. Schwartz, "Israel and the Nations Roundabout," 26

[128] S. Schwartz, "Israel and the Nations Roundabout," 28.

a need to use them as an other against which Judeans could position themselves.

AMALEK IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE

Esau and Edom thus became motifs that Judean authors used to negotiate their own sense of religious and political identity throughout the Second Temple period. Violent resentment not only remained, but also increased, and the character's connection to the figure Amalek exacerbated the literary violence directed at Edom. Edom was Judah's enemy *par excellence* after the Babylonian destruction; they were the ultimate other against whom Judahites could define themselves as victims of Edomite treachery in order to demarcate themselves as chosen, despite their circumstances. In the late Second Temple period, however, those neighbors who once benefited from Judah's defeat were trying to join the now ascendant Judean state. But the Edomites, now the Idumeans, remained the eternal other in Judean literature. The complete turn-around in circumstances for the progeny of both Jacob and Edom did not ease the literary tension between the characters, and the Idumeans remained the other against whom Judeans continued to define themselves politically and religiously, even after they joined the Judean state. Esau and Edom helped Judahite and Judean authors position themselves as the true chosen people, and the characters' association with Amalek condemned them to eternal scorn and violence.

Amalek in the Hebrew Bible

Genesis recounts "the descendants of Esau (that is, Edom)," and explains that Amalek is Esau's grandson through his son's mistress (Gen 36:1, 11–12, 15–16). Genesis is silent with regard to Amalek's character, but the rest of the Hebrew Bible turns him into "the *typus* of

the foremost and irreconcilable enemy of Israel."[129] Exodus depicts Amalek's army attacking the weak and defenseless Israelites in their march through the desert, an act that incenses YHVH: "I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven…The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exod 17:8–16.). Deuteronomy 25:17–19 recounts the episode and provides information about the nature of the assault:

> Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey out of Egypt, how he attacked you on the way, when you were faint and weary, and struck down all who lagged behind you; he did not fear God. Therefore when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your enemies on every hand, in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; do not forget.

The cruel act in the desert is indicative of the way in which the Amalekites are treated throughout the rest of the Hebrew Bible, that is, with vitriolic disdain. That desert scene becomes the ultimate justification for eternal scorn.[130] Amalek's legacy continued to affect the Israelites as King Saul captured the Amalekite King Agag in 1 Sam 15. Yet rather than destroying the Amalekties, including their women, children, and cattle as the prophet Samuel had instructed him (1 Sam 15:3), Saul spared Agag as well as the choicest of his flocks (1 Sam 15:8–9), and this insubordination led to King Saul's ultimate downfall.

Saul's transgression has lasting consequences beyond his own failure. Amalek's final appearance in the Hebrew Bible comes in the form of Haman, the antagonist in the Book of

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[129] Johann Maier, "Amalek in the Writings of Josephus," in *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Fausto Parente and Joseph Sievers (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 109.

[130] Baden asserts: "There can be no question that this D passage is based on the story of Exod 17. Though details from the earlier narrative are not given in this much briefer version, and in fact the reverse is true, the outline of the story is unmistakable…Furthermore, there is a direct verbal parallel." Baden, *J, E, and the Redaction of the Pentateuch*, 184–85. See also Num 24:20 and 1 Chr 42–43.

Esther who is singularly focused on destroying the Jews living in the Persian Empire. The text describes Haman as the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which makes Haman an Amalekite through King Agag of 1 Sam 15 (Esth 3:1). Haman served as the vizier in King Ahasuerus' court who became incensed with rage when Mordecai, a Jew, refused to bow to him. Haman responded by asking the king for permission to kill Mordecai's people, the entire Jewish community in Persia. The climax of the book comes when Ahasuerus's wife, Queen Esther, who is herself a Jew and Mordecai's niece, reveals Haman's plot to kill her and her people (Esth 7). The "evil Haman," the "enemy of the Jews" is then hanged from the gallows he himself had built for Mordecai (Esth 7:9–10). In the aftermath of Haman's execution, the Jews mustered troops and killed Haman's ten sons (Esth 9:6–10), as well as 75,000 of their enemies (Esth 9:16). As will become clear in the next two chapters, Amalek, as expressed through the character Haman, has the longest effect on the Jewish consciousness to the present day.

Edom and Amalek in the *Animal Apocalypse*

Although Esau and Amalek are not mentioned together in biblical texts outside of the genealogy provided in Genesis, the connection between them appears to have affected the image of Esau in later tradition. As James Kugel suggests, "As the ancestor of the Amalekites, then, Esau became, so to speak, retroactively more wicked."[131] Second Temple period authors explored this connection between the two characters toward violent, even genocidal ends. The *Animal Apocalypse* (*AA*) combines the Esau and Amalek motifs precisely to such violent ends. The *AA* is a subsection of the Jewish pseudepigraphic text 1

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[131] James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 355.

Enoch that recounts history from Genesis to the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt through an eschatological perspective. As the name suggests, animals depict human socio-political groups, and the key to understanding the *AA* and the nature of the rhetoric contained therein is to recognize it as an allegory.[132] The author used the biblical narrative and its characters and set them in a unique animal/color schema in order to reinterpret their contemporary historical situation. The *AA* depicts Israel as sheep and God as the "Lord of the sheep," but the analogy runs deeper than the Israelites. The author sets up the allegory by depicting Adam as a white bull, Cain as a black bull, and Abel as a red bull. Eventually Noah, a white bull, begets three other bulls—one white, one red, and one black, and in doing so the author continues the white/black/red paradigm through to the next generation in which white Israelites and their genetic predecessors are set against the black nations. White denotes righteousness, or at least the potential for it, while black represents wickedness, and red represents moral ambivalence. The white bull, Shem, produces another, Abraham, at which point the narrative hones in on Abraham's progeny, "and the white bull (Abraham) which had been born among them sired a wild donkey (Ishmael) and a white bull-calf (Isaac) with it….But the bull calf which was born from it sired a black wild boar (Esau) and a white ram of the flock (Jacob). And the wild boar sired numerous wild boars, while the ram sired twelve lambs" (*1 En.* 89:11–12).[133] Here Jacob, a

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[132] In an influential, yet unpublished graduate seminar paper, Carol Newsom concluded that rhetorical analysis garners two observations about the Animal Apocalypse's literary structures and symbolic language. First, "the history of Israel is not a story to be told but a text to be exegeted"; and second, "its deeper meaning is the reflection in history of a set of relationships between the righteous and the wicked which exists on a trans-historical level." Carol A. Newsom, "Enoch 83–90: The Historical Résumé as Biblical Exegesis (unpublished PhD seminar paper, Harvard University, 1975), 36.

[133] Olson, *A New Reading of the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch*, 163. As noted above, *Jub.* 37:24 uses animal imagery to describe Esau's behavior. He is a "wandering boar," a creature incapable of overcoming his

white ram, is contrasted with Esau, a black wild boar. The dichotomy introduces a new element to the schema that suggests Esau has an especially wicked nature because there is a disparity between wild and domesticated animals, and his porcine nature exacerbates the dichotomy. The wild/domesticated dichotomy corresponds to the color scheme, as white goes with domestic and righteous animals and black goes with wild and wicked animals. The wild animals consist of lions, leopards, wolves, dogs, hyenas, foxes, hyraxes, pigs, falcons, vultures, kites, eagles, ravens, and donkeys, who represent such social-political groups as the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Moabites, Amonites, and the Philistines. Within the framework, Esau is the worst possible scenario — black, wild, and treyf (or non-kosher). At this point in the narrative Esau's only fault is the fact that he was born a black, wild boar, but the phrase "that wild boar begat many boars" (*1 En.* 89:12) makes Esau and his role in the narrative seem especially menacing.

The allegory continues through the Israelite narrative, and the wild boar reappears a few verses later when the sheep stray from God, who gives the violent wild animals hegemonic power. "And sometimes their eyes were opened, and sometimes blinded, until another sheep rose up and led them, and brought them all back, all their eyes were opened. And the dogs and the foxes and the wild boars began to devour those sheep until the Lord of the sheep raised up a ram from among them which led them" (*1 En.* 89:41–42.). The verse echoes the Book of Judges and the cycle of straying, abandonment by God, suffering, salvation through leadership, and a return to apostasy following the death of the leader found throughout Judges. Only here the ram whom the sheep raise is Saul, not a judge. Saul leads and violently protects the sheep against the wild animals. "And that ram began to butt

violent nature. According to Othmar Keel, the wild boar was a symbol for chaos in the ancient Near East. Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (New York: Seabury, 1978), 107–109. Cf. Ps 80:13.

those dogs and foxes and wild boars, on one side and on the other, until it had destroyed them all" (*1 En.* 89:43.). According to Miryam Brand, "the fight with the 'wild boars' refers to Saul's battle against the Amalekites in 1 Sam. 15,"[134] not Esau, creating what could be the first explicit mixing of the two motifs. The episode in Samuel leads to God choosing David over Saul, which is mirrored in the *AA* as a second ram, David, who replaces the first. Solomon then succeeds David and builds the Temple in which the sheep (the Israelites) worship and offer sacrifices. Things seem to be going well now that the Temple has been built, but the sheep go back to vacillating between being religiously observant and going astray, ultimately prompting God to remove his presence from his home and hand over the sheep to the wild animals, who devour the sheep and destroy the Temple. "And the lions and the tigers devoured and swallowed up the majority of those sheep, and the wild boars devoured with them; and they burnt down that tower and demolished that home" (*1 En.* 89:66–67). The lions here are the Babylonians and the Ammonites, whom the Edomites join—the black, wild, and treyf animals finally do what they were meant to do: do violence to the sheep and their house. *AA*'s view of Edom clearly depends on the Damn Edom theology in Prophetic literature and looks remarkably similar to 1 Esdras.

According to Daniel Olson, the *AA* and the larger *Book of Dreams* functioned as pro-Hasmonean propaganda that petitioned its readers to resist Seleucid hegemony through religious punctiliousness and by supporting the Maccabean Revolt:

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[134] Miryam T. Brand, "1 Enoch," in *Outside the Bible,* 1421. See 1 Sam 15:9–11, 28.

> Judas Maccabee was still alive and leading the revolt, and he had scored a string of significant military victories against Seleucid forces…The Temple had been reclaimed and cleansed. Momentum was clearly running in Judas's favor, and the *An. Apoc.* threw its support to the effort, seeing the earthly inauguration of the kingdom of God at the end of the process then underway.[135]

According to Anathea Portier-Young, "Antiochus IV imposed on Judea a program of de-creation and re-creation, assigning to himself the roles of creator and provider and commanding his subjects to obey his edict and forsake their tradition, identity, and God."[136] In response to horrible oppression, the author of the *AA* promoted the idea that God allowed others to gain hegemony, but that God retains ultimate control and that God will redeem his chosen people, eventually.[137] What people needed to do in order to attain salvation, therefore, was to be obedient to the covenant, use prayer and prophetic preaching as guides, and gain knowledge and understanding through biblical precedent and the Enochic revelations.

A significant claim that *AA* promotes is that "God permits the existence of powers inimical to his elect, yet he will never allow them to perish utterly but will secure their ultimate victory."[138] Jews are still God's elect people whom the deity will redeem, despite a submissive position living under Seleucid domination that might suggest YHVH has abandoned them. This primary claim influences the way in which the author deals with every aspect of the story, including Esau/Edom and Amalek. A related, secondary claim is

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[135] Daniel C. Olson, *A New Reading of the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch: "All Nations Shall be Blessed"* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 5.

[136] Anathea E. Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 346.

[137] Newsom, "Enoch 83–90," 33. See also Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 346–67.

[138] Newsom, "Enoch 83–90," 33.

that social groups have inherent natures: people are righteous, wicked, or morally ambivalent by default, and Esau/Edom and the Amalekites are the most wicked of all the groups in the *AA*'s framework. These claims, which influence *AA*'s view of Esau/Edom and Amalek, are grounded in violence; the righteous/wicked dichotomy is supported by the violence that consistently proceeds from the wicked(ness).[139] To support the author's understanding of the world, it is important to define Israel and its people as white, domestic, and kosher because that is the designation for righteousness, and anyone outside those boundaries is by definition wicked and therefore not qualified for salvation and is instead destined for violence. The *AA*'s claims, grounded in violence, are warranted through the text's internal logic that dictates that God has complete control, despite any appearances to the contrary. When the Jews are loyal to God, he protects them; when they are not, he delivers them into the hands of the nations, symbolically characterized as wild animals.[140] God has not abandoned the people Israel, but has intentionally given others power, and Israel should feel assured that God has created a world in which their very nature as white, domestic, and kosher is by definition assured of salvation. In contrast, the black, wild, and treyf boar and any other non-white, non-kosher, or non-domesticated animal is wicked and therefore destined for destruction or submission to the righteous chosen, even if the wild animals are currently powerful or adjacent to power. Within this logic, Israel (the white sheep) represents God's only elect people, while Esau and Amalek, though not the only black, wild, and treyf animals, nonetheless as black and wild boars, specifically, hold the most wicked spot according to the *AA*'s logic. The author used a

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[139] Ari Mermelstein, *Creation, Covenant, and the Beginnings of Judaism* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2014), 137.

[140] Mermelstein, *Creation, Covenant, and the Beginnings of Judaism*, 135.

combination of biblical traditions, and the repeated references to foundational myths for the Israelites kept the *AA*'s backing in Torah, despite the author's creative deviations. From the Torah base, the author uses the figure of Enoch as apocalyptic seer as a guarantor of the authority needed in order to permit the creativity. "Enoch…narrates both in past tense. He has seen the future of the world and of God's chosen people not as something that will happen, but as something that already has happened. The device underscores that the outline of God's plan for the future has already been made known in events of the past."[141] The author of the *AA* buttresses his authority by suggesting he has unique knowledge of the future, but by basing it on the past he is able simultaneously to ground his work in Israel's history and do so while drastically reinterpreting his current circumstances.

Edom and Amalek in the *War Scroll*

Although the *AA* combines the Esau and Amalek motifs in certain contexts, it does not develop them in detail or explore their implications. That connection reaches its most logical and violent conclusion in the Qumran *War Scroll. The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* commonly referred to as the *War Scroll*, the *War Rule, 1QMilḥamah*, or 1QM, was one of the first sectarian texts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Literary and paleographic evidence shows that 1QM was not completed until the second half of the first century BCE, but from the evidence found in caves 4 and 11, it is clear that the scroll was developed over a long period of time.[142] A redactor combined different

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[141] Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 352. See also Newsom, "Enoch 83–90," 40–53.

[142] The texts from cave four are particularly useful in highlighting how these three traditions might have entered the *War Scroll*. The content of the texts that predate the War Scroll is similar to the War of Divisions, but, other than *4Q496*, lack any information that suggests any affinity to the War against the Kittim.

sectarian war traditions in order to depict the battle sequence that will happen at the eschaton, the end of times. For YHVH will support the righteous "Sons of Light" in the eschatological battle by sending angelic mercenaries to assist the true Israelites in their fight against the wicked "Sons of Darkness." According to Alex Jassen, "the *War Scroll* should best be understood as a propagandistic tool to prepare the Sons of Light as they inched closer and closer to what they believed was the imminent end of days and the eschatological war" and an example of a "violent imaginary."[143] This violent imaginary contained enemies fit for destruction, some of whom were fictitious or long extinct, while others, including Edom/Idumea, were still very much real.

The *War Scroll* describes the righteous sectarian army in detail as it fights to annihilate the foreign nations who have oppressed them, as well as Jews the sect deemed to be worthy of divinely mandated destruction.[144] The scroll has four identifiable sections that

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The War against the Kittim, however, is a popular motif found in the texts contemporaneous to or succeeding the War Scroll. From these observations, Schultz concluded, "the early layer of M was composed sometime in the second half of the second century BCE, while its last stage, principally the addition of cols. 15–19, but also 10–14, is contemporaneous to M itself." Thus, 1QM is the only manuscript that preserves the important elements found in the other War Texts in a single document, and as only two other compositions contain more than just a single tradition (*4Q496* and *4Q491*), therefore, "it appears that M combined the War of the Divisions with the universal War against the Kittim, while its source(s), like *4Q491*, kept them separate." Brian Shultz, *Conquering the World: The War Scroll (1QM) Reconsidered* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2007), 380–84 and Ibid., "Compositional Layers in the War Scroll (1QM)," in *Qumran Cave 1 Revisited*, ed. Daniel K Falk, Sarianna Metso, Donald W. Parry and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Boston, MA: Brill, 2010) 153–64.

[143]Alex P. Jassen, "Violent Imaginaries and Practical Violence in the *War Scroll*," in *The War Scroll, Violence, War and Peace in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essays in Honour of Martin G. Abegg on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday,* ed. Kipp Davis et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 176.

[144] For analyses of the eschatological violence expressed in Qumran literature generally, see Alex P. Jassen, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Violence: Sectarian Formation and Eschatological Imagination," in *Violence, Scripture and Textual Practice in Early Judaism and Christianity,* ed. Ra'anan S. Boustan, Alex P. Jassen, and Calvin J. Roetzel (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 13–44; Raija Sollamo, "War and Violence in the Ideology of the Qumran Community," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Violence: Sectarian Formation and Eschatological Imagination*, ed. Alex Jassen (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 341–52; P.R. Davies, "The Biblical and Qumranic Concept of War: Warfare in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in *Hebrew Bible and Qumran,* ed. James H. Charlesworth (North Richland Hills: BIBAL Press, 1998), 275–305; M. Broshi, "Hatred—an Essene Religious Principle and its Christian Consequence," in *Antikes Judentum und Frühes Christentum*, eds. Bernd Killmann and Annette Steudel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), 245–52. Jassen concludes, "The construction of an exclusive understanding of the meaning

depict various aspects of the eschatological war: the "Regional War Against the Kittim" (col. 1), the "War of Divisions" (cols. 2–9), prayers for the liturgy that will accompany the wars (cols.10–14), and the "Universal War Against the Kittim" (cols. 15–19). Each section has its own style and ideological focus that suggests that sectarian authors wrote separate war narratives independent of one another and at different times. The redactor collected these traditions for a new, expanded war text, adding transitions and entire sections to create the first-century composition.[145] The redactor was able to create a somewhat coherent depiction of the eschatological war with two battle successions, but significant dissonance remains. First, the "War Against the Kittim" (a combination of cols. 1 and 15–19) will rid Jerusalem of its foreign rulers, then the "War of Divisions" (cols. 2–9) will bring together all of the tribes of Israel to fight and defeat the remaining "Sons of Darkness."[146] The liturgical prayers in columns 10 to 14 will accompany the troops into battle and provide a ritual framework for the fort-year long war. While this outline is the product of a generation of scholarship on the War Scroll's literary structure, the sketch masks a complicated war progression that is difficult to render comprehensible in the final manuscript. When

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of Scripture, the administration of sacred space, and the salvific privileges enjoyed only by the community members served to legitimize the systemic violence to others as outlined throughout sectarian literature. In its mind, this program was quite successful. Other Jews and Romans were undoubtedly members of the Sons of Darkness, a status that had been preordained by God from before they were even born. Thus, violence against such individuals is not only justified, but part of God's original plan." Jassen, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Violence," 43.

[145] Paleographic data and literary clues from the cave 4 and 11 fragments show that the War of Divisions began its literary life in the middle of the second century BCE and that the other two sections were written in the middle of the first century BCE, around the time of the War Scroll's final redaction. Schultz, *Conquering the World*, 380–84 and "Compositional Layers in the War Scroll (1QM)," 153–164. Jean Duhaime, *The War Texts: 1QM and Related Manuscripts* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004).

[146] See Schultz, *Conquering the* World; Ibid., "Compositional Layers in the War Scroll (1QM)"; and Ibid., "Not Greeks But Romans: Changing Expectations for the Eschatological War in the War Texts from Qumran," in *The Jewish Revolt against Rome: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Mladen Popović (Boston, MA: Brill, 2011).

studied as individual units, however, each section has the potential to illuminate the original authors' concerns and ideology.

Column 1, likely a product of 1QM's final redaction, is direct about the enemy and their destruction: "The first attack of the Sons of Light shall be launched against the lot of the Sons of Darkness, against the army of Belial, against the troops of Edom, Moab, the sons of Ammon, the A[malekites, the people of] Philistia and against the troops of the Kittim of Asshur, these being helped by those who violate the covenant" (1QM 1:1–2). Enemy names appear throughout 1QM, but it is only here that they are cataloged as such. The Sons of Darkness, the Qumranite enemy par excellence, consist of Edom, Moab, and Ammon, as well as the Amalekites, the Philistines, the Kittim of Asshur, and apostate Jews, and are always referred to as a collective. The manuscript is unfortunately damaged where the Amalekites are supposedly listed, which leaves some uncertainty as to whether they are one of the enemies. Comparing the text to other lists of traditional enemies, however, makes Amalek the most likely people to occupy that space in the manuscript, and scholarly consensus supports that reading.[147] The carnage the enemies will experience the manuscript describes in detail: the will be subject to an "everlasting destruction" (1QM 1:5) at the hands of the Sons of Light. The Qumranites will subdue wickedness "without remnant" (1QM 1:6) by enacting "fierce carnage" (1QM 1:6) through a "destructive war against the Sons of Darkness" (1QM 1:10) on a "day of calamity" (1QM 1:11) on which the Sons of Light will hasten "toward the end for an everlasting redemption" and the Sons of

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[147] See, for example, Ps 83:5–8, "They conspire with one accord; against you they make a covenant—the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also has joined them; they are the strong arm of the children of Lot." Jassen also concludes that "(b)ased on the rhetorical function of the list…Amalek is the most likely suggestion." Jassen, "Violent Imaginaries and Practical Violence in the War Scroll," 185.

Darkness will be "[refined in a] carnage" (1QM 1:12–13) until "the destruction of the Sons of Darkness" (1QM 1:16).

Column 1 is exceptional, with regard to the permanent nature and severity of the divine punishment, even when compared to the other sections of 1QM. But while it is easy to write off the rhetoric as Qumranite fantasy, Alex Jassen asserts that 1QM's "practical violence is framed by the belief that the Sons of Light would in fact be fighting a battle against the Sons of Darkness in the near future," and that 1QM "represents the imagined violence that must transpire prior to the outpouring of real violence."[148] The sectarians likely read this text in preparation for what they understood to be imminent violence in an "us vs. them" scenario. Moreover, the Idumeans are the only nation cited that survived to the time of the War Scroll's composition. I conclude that the Qumranite war tradition was leveraged toward the Idumeans who were seen as a serious threat to Jewish identity as they attempted to join the Judean state but remained perpetual others to a certain conservative strand of late Second Temple Judaism.

The Qumranites thus employed Edom and Amalek as symbols for the other who justifies the Israelites in a *jus ad bellum* attack. The Edomites/Idumeans were, after all, coconspirators with Amalek, whom God commands to destroy in perpetuity. Moreover, the Qumranites grouped all nations considered outside the fold of traditional Judaism together within the Sons of Darkness. Edom/Idumea are therefore particularly condemned for being outside of the confines of a pure, ethnic Judaism.[149] According to Jassen, the list of enemies is itself a powerful rhetorical device:

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[148] Jassen, "Violent Imaginaries and Practical Violence in the War Scroll," 203.

> The use of names of the ancient enemies is a critical aspect of the rhetorical characteristics of the *War Scroll.* As part of the sectarians' fantasy of eschatological retribution, the eschatological war is an opportunity to reverse the present-time oppression of the sectarians at the hands of more powerful Jews and foreigners. At the same time, the sectarians as the reconstituted Israel renew the age-old conflict with Israel's neighbors. The identification of "Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia" as among the armies of Belial rehearses the many times that these nations have oppressed Israel in the past and waged war against Israel. The end-time armies of the Sons of Light therefore have an opportunity to reverse centuries of Israelite/Jewish disempowerment.[150]

The component parts of the War Scroll negatively depict any and all neighboring peoples, including the Idumeans who were trying to integrate into the Judean state, thus creating an intolerant precedent for the war tradition as Qumran. The War Scroll uses Edom and Amalek, but schematizes their enemies in ways that show an inherent distrust of others who happened to be on the margins of the Jewish community in the Second Temple period. Some Idumeans wanted to be Jewish and assimilated as best they could, but there remained an exclusionary sentiment in Judean literature that rejected the possibility of outsiders being incorporated into the Judean state. What's more, texts such as the War Scroll advocated for violence against perceived others, including the Idumeans, sometimes drawing on genocidal language, language exacerbated by Esau's association with Amalek.

Miscellaneous Uses of Edom and Amalek in Second Temple Literature

Outside of the sustained treatments of Edom, Esau, and Amalek covered above, there are shorter passages scattered throughout literature from the Second Temple period that

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[149] Lawrence Schiffman explains: The Sons of Light are the men of the sect who will be victorious in the end of days. The Gentiles—the nations of the world—are included among the Sons of Darkness, or the Sons of Belial, together with these Jews who by means of their behavior demonstrate that they have been predestined to be among the Sons of Darkness. Lawrence H. Schiffman, "War in Jewish Apocalyptic Thought," in *War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition,* ed. Lawrence Schiffman and Joel B. Wolowelsky (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2004), 486.

[150]Jassen, "Violent Imaginaries and Practical Violence in the War Scroll," 186.

further emphasize the vitriol that remained and continued to develop toward Edom, and the danger of combining the character with Amalek. Here, I cover those sources briefly to show the ubiquity of contempt even in passing references to Edom and Amalek.

The Wisdom of Ben Sira was written in Hebrew in Jerusalem by Joshua Ben Sira sometime in the first quarter of the second century BCE. The text was then translated into Greek by his grandson, and the work was canonized into the Catholic Old Testament and the Protestant Apocrypha.[151] Ben Sira was a professional sage and scribe who wrote in the style of the proverb to expound on what he saw as correct and incorrect conduct for contemporary Jews and to comment generally on the world around him. With regard to some of the nations that surrounded Judea, Ben Sira 50:25–26 states: "Two nations my soul detests, and the third is not even a people: Those who live in Seir [Edomites], and the Philistines, and the foolish people that live in Shechem [Samaritans]."[152] In just a few words the passage conveys the author's contemptuous feelings toward the Edomites, the Philistines, and the Samaritans, but there is no reason or specific context given for them.

The *Testament of Simeon*, another self-contained unit within the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs,* adds to the picture of Amalek from the late second century BCE:

> Behold, I have told you everything in advance, so that I will not be [held to be] guilty for the sin of your souls. But if you put aside from yourselves any ill will and stiff-nakedness, my bones [*better:* branches?] will blossom like a rose in Israel and <my flesh> like a lily in Jacob, and my fragrance will be like the fragrance of Lebanon; holy ones will grow from me like cedars, and their branches will spread far and wide. Then the seed of Canaan will be destroyed, and there will be no remnant of Amalek, and all the Cappadocians will perish and all the Hittites will be utterly eliminated. Then the land of Ham will be forsaken and all the [i.e., its] people shall perish; then the whole land will have rest from trouble, and all the [land] under the

[151] Benjamin G. Wright III, "Wisdom of Ben Sira," in *Outside the Bible,* 2208–2209. See also Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 53–63. The Wisdom of Ben Sira is also known as The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira, the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach, and Ecclesiasticus.

[152] Translation comes from Wright, "Wisdom of Ben Sira," 2347.

> heavens from warfare. Then Shem will be glorified, because the Lord God is the mighty one of Israel….Then all the Spirits of deceit will be given over to being trampled, and people will rule over the wicked Spirits. (*T. Sim.* 6:1–6).[153]

As in the War Scroll, Amalek is grouped with a series of the gentile nations in the vicinity of Judea in a way that suggests that all of the surrounding nations will be destroyed. And like the War Scroll, the *Testament of Simeon* suggests that Amalek and the other enemies are a part of an eternal and evil other, the "Spirits of deceit." Edom, however, is not mentioned specifically as one of the nations considered to be spirits of deceit.

Along with the War Scroll, there are various fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls that refer to Edom and Amalek as eschatological enemies. 4Q *Barkhi Nafshi* (4Q434) states, "[… He changed] their lodgings from there in the wilderness to a "door of hope" (Hos. 2:17) and "He made a covenant" for their welfare "with the birds of the air and the beasts of the field" (2:20). He made their enemies like dung and dust, and he ground Edom and Moab to powder" (4Q434 f7b:2–3). Edom is an enemy that will be destroyed, ground into powder alongside Moab, but the fragment contains only these few lines and thus lacks context for why this destruction will occur. *The New Jerusalem Scroll* (4Q554) describes the physical dimensions for a grand and eschatological Jerusalem with the form of the text coming from Ezekiel 40–48.[154] Likewise 4Q554 is difficult to interpret because of its fragmentary nature, but it provides slightly more context than 4Q *Barkhi Nafshi*:

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[153] Translation comes from Kugel, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," 1721–1722.

[154] Cf., Isa 54:11–17; Zech 2:5–9; Tob 1:9–18; 11QPs[a] 22; and 1 En 90:28–36. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah,* 177–79.

> […] they will come aga[inst … and the kingdom of Babylon] in its place, and the kingdom of Me[dia in its place, and the kingdom of Persia in its place, and the kingdom] of the Kittim in its place, all of them. In the end all of the […] other great [kingdoms] and rulers with them […] with them Edom and Moab and the Ammonites [… and the king] of Babylon [will plunder] the whole land so that there is none to dwell therein […] and they shall do evil to your descendants until the time of […] among all the peoples [of their] kingdoms who have/do/will not […] and the people sha[ll d]o with/against them […] (4Q554 f13:14–22).

Edom is again paired with Moab and Ammon. Although the noted lacunae require restoration, it is likely that the text is following earlier models by grouping Edom with the traditional enemies around Judea and combining the motif with that of the Four Kingdoms (Babylon, Media, Persia, the Kittim). This section may speak of Israel's final battle against the nations and it appears to underscore the eschatological framework of the entire composition. [155] Angel also points out that that the text is not a product of the Qumran community and so represents a tradition that was not restricted to sectarian discourse. In 4Q Eschatological Commentary B (4Q177), the expected occurrences of Edom and Moab are lost, but we can be relatively certain of the identity of these enemies because the fragment quotes Ezekiel and compares Judah to gentile nations:

> […] in the Last Days, for […] to test them and to purify them […] in their zeal and in their hostility […which] is written in the book of the [prophet] Ezekiel, [I have overcome him…" (Psalm 13:5)…] they are the company of the Flattery-Seekers, who […] who seek to destroy […] in their zeal and in their hostility [… which] is written in the book of the [prophet] Ezekiel, ["Because Edom and Moab have said, Behold, the house of] Judah is like all the Gentiles" (Ezekiel 25:8). [This refers to the Last] Days, when [the…] will gather together against [them…] […] with the righteous and the wicked, the fool and the simple[ton…] of the men who have served God […]who have circumcised themselves spiritually in the last generation […] and all that is theirs is unclean [….] (4Q177 f9:2–8).

Lastly, the *Pesher on Genesis* (4Q252) explicitly connects Gen 36:12 to the story of Saul and Agag in 1 Samuel 15 in an apparently positive reading of Saul's actions. The pesher also

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[155] Joseph L. Angel, "New Jerusalem," in *Outside the Bible,* 3152.

puts the dispute with Amalek in the eschaton: "Timna was a concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son; she bore Amalek to him, he whom Saul def[eated.] Just as he said to Moses, 'In the Last Days, you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven'" (4Q252 4:1–3). While Exod 17:14 does depict God instructing Moses to write down the commandment to "utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven," the pesher adds "In the Last Days," clarifying that Amalek's destruction will come at the eschaton. Nickelsburg explains: "The prophets (Moses and David included) wrote about the events that would take place at the end time. The group at Qumran believed that they were living during that crucial period. Thus the prophetic texts contained cryptic references ('mysteries') to contemporary events."[156]Applying the eschatological thinking to the Esau-Edom and Amalek motifs, Johann Maier explains what the association "does": "By locating the Amalekites in the realm of Edom, all military actions in Edomite territories appeared not only [to have been] permitted but even as fulfillment of a positive command: to extirpate the memory of Amalek and to conquer their land."[157]

CONCLUSION:
THE ESAU, EDOM, AND AMALEK MOTIFS AS MARKERS OF IDENTITY
IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND SECOND TEMPLE LITERATURE

My goal in this chapter was to use the Esau-Edom and Amalek motifs to show how political status, construction of the other, and sense of religious identity changed in relation to one another in Judahite and Judean discourse. I began with an overview of how the Esau-Edom motif developed alongside the growing relationship between ancient Judah and Edom as

[156] Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah,* 127.

[157] Maier, "Amalek in the Writings of Josephus," 113.

the two kingdoms fought to survive extreme ecological, political, and military challenges. In their infancy as kingdoms, Judah and Edom were closely related in various cultural and religious expressions, and the two often allied with one another in order to fight common, more powerful enemies. After the destruction of the first temple, however, Edom became an instrument to explain circumstances in Judahite literature. The kingdom was blamed for the devastation that created an existential threat for Judah's survival, and Esau was used as narratological support in that effort. Judahite writers blamed Edom despite the fact that the nation had few options when faced with the much larger and more powerful hegemonic power. After Edom's dissolution, the area was left to develop a unique culture on the fringes of settled society on the southernmost edges of the Levant. Despite obvious differences between Edom and the subsequent culture that survived, Edom's crimes were permanently ascribed to the people who resided in the area.

The development of Second Temple literary discourse that used Esau, Edom, and Amalek as othering mechanisms against the Idumeans was the result of real world antagonisms entering into the mythological and symbolic realm. The real world tensions apparent in the Latter Prophets and later Second Temple texts such as the *Animal Apocalypse* and *Jubilees* were reified and read back into the symbolic history captured in later texts, especially the *War Scroll*. The *War Scroll* schematized the real world animosity and made the Esau-Edom-Jacob-Israel/Judah oppositions ontological. By adding Amalek to the mix, later authors added eternal violence to the relationship. It is impossible to say, however, whether those schematized versions of the relationship were then thrust back onto the lived, historical relationship between the Judeans and the Idumeans. What is possible to say is that the othering techniques that use Esau, Edom, and Amalek to define

Judean identity were developed and used at a time when the Idumeans, the quintessential others, were actively trying to join the Judean state by becoming Jewish toward the end of the second century BCE.

Edomites and Idumeans, while unique, shared more with their neighbors to the north and west than most of the other surrounding cultures, and far more than the foreign, hegemonic powers that ruled them. Nonetheless Judahite and Judean authors attacked them for allegedly being wholly other and wicked, this as a way to define their own culture over the course of centuries that were particularly fraught. As with most othering techniques, the way Judahite and Judean literature used Esau, Edom, and Amalek was more about the Judahites and Judeans themselves than the Edomites or Idumeans, but the latter remained othered in Jewish consciousness in perpetuity as a result of their associations with those three characters.

2

Israel Against Empire:
Esau, Edom, and Amalek as Cyphers for Rome in Rabbinic Literature

I began this dissertation by using the representations of Esau-Edom and Amalek in the Hebrew Bible and in Second Temple literature to highlight the ways that political status, construction of the other, and sense of religious identity altered in relation to one another in Judahite and Judean discourse. I showed that from the Iron Age through to the end of the Second Temple Period authors used the characters to other the Edomites and Idumeans violently so as to define their own identity over and against a culturally similar neighbor they perceived as a threat. I now proceed to show how the rabbis continued to use Esau-Edom and Amalek to negotiate their political and religious identity while enduring Roman rule. For beginning in the second century CE, the rabbis responded to the experience of Roman hegemony by identifying Esau-Edom with Rome, the Christian Roman Empire, and then with Christianity in general, rather than their Edomite and Idumean neighbors. We saw that some late apocalyptic texts covered in the previous chapter began the process of abstracting Edom from the lived history the nation shared with its neighbors in favor of depicting a *symbolic* other, and that the rabbis completed that project. For the rabbis, Esau and Edom no longer represented the ethnically similar other that encroached on Judah's border and threatened Judean identity. Instead, the characters became cyphers for the gentile empire responsible for destroying the second temple, exiling the Jews from their native land, and dominating the Jewish population as no other gentile power had.

The change in how Jews used Esau and Edom to describe a foreign other is momentous. In order to provide context for the shift from using Esau-Edom to describe a racialized other on the edges of empire to describing the most powerful hegemonic power to that point in known history, I spend some time sketching what might otherwise seem like a tangent. The goal of this chapter is to illustrate how the rabbis drastically altered Esau and Edom, but I begin with a broad outline of the literary responses to the successive foreign empires that subjugated the Judahites, Judeans, and then the Jews from the eighth century BCE until the second century CE. A full understanding of Israelite and Judean historiography depends on appreciating Israel's relation to empire, and a framework for understanding Jewish reactions to power is therefore necessary to understand the reception history of Esau-Edom and Amalek. I begin, therefore, by outlining the history of Israel's encounters with empire in order to contextualize appropriately the massive shift the rabbis made from portraying Esau-Edom as a menacing but ultimately marginalized people, to identifying them with the most powerful empire in the known world—the Roman Empire.

I start with the Neo-Assyrian occupation of the Levant in the eighth century BCE and an analysis of the theological reaction to Assyrian domination recorded in the Hebrew Bible. I then continue to trace the evolution of Judahite, Judean, and Jewish responses to gentile hegemony through the successive Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. Once I have established a broad view of how the people of Israel conceived of their situation(s) living under foreign rule for over a millennium, I then focus on how the rabbis drastically altered their received tradition using the Esau-Edom motif in the violent aftermath of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. I show that rather than addressing their Idumean

neighbors as a way to self-identify, the rabbis used Esau-Edom as a part of a larger project intended to pacify the Jewish response to gentile domination. The rabbis labeled Rome as Esau-Edom, identifying the empire as Israel's inimical, yet fraternal other, and in so doing shifting the inherited pattern for ideologically configuring gentile empires. I then look to rabbinic discourse on Amalek to emphasize further how the rabbis pacified received tradition and moved toward an accomodationist stance to gentile hegemony that endured until the Modern Period. Lastly, I examine how rabbinic literature used Esau-Edom and Amalek to define a new, non-violent, rabbinic Jewish identity over and against their violent Roman, and then Christian, oppressors.

What I hope to show in this chapter is that there was a convergence of biblical myths under the rabbis that was the result of the shifting realities of living under successive foreign empires and that this culminated in a unique and particularly violent form of foreign domination. As with the preceding chapter, the topics I explore show once again how political status, construction of the other, and the sense of religious identity changed in relation to one another in Judahite, Judean, and Jewish literary discourse. The way in which Judahites and Judeans had conceived of their subordinate status under successive gentile authorities no longer worked in a rabbinic framework after Bar Kokhba. The rabbis therefore reconsidered the way in which Jews referred to their situation living under gentile domination, and they appropriated and altered Esau-Edom and Amalek in order to do so.

THE SUCCESSION OF GENTILE OCCUPATION IN THE LEVANT

Literary reactions to foreign hegemony in the Hebrew Bible attest to gentile imperial domination in the Levant beginning in the late eighth century BCE, when Judah became a vassal kingdom to the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Judah's submissive status created cognitive dissonance for the native inhabitants who understood their political standing as being directly related to the power of their god. Thus, YHVH suddenly appeared weak or even defeated because his people were overpowered by the Assyrians. The prophet First Isaiah assured his audience that, despite appearances to the contrary, the Israelite deity not only remained strong, but was so powerful that he used the foreign empire as a tool to punish his own people! First Isaiah altered forever the way in which Judahites understood YHVH's interaction with foreign powers, and the relationship between Judah and Assyria established a precedent for how the native inhabitants would relate to gentile domination through the succeeding Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman empires.

Now to outline briefly the history of Israel's encounter with empire from Assyria in the eighth century BCE to Rome in the second century CE and to describe the various literary responses to gentile hegemony depicted in the Jewish literary corpus throughout that time.

The Neo-Assyrian Empire as Instrument of God's Punishment in First Isaiah

Conflict between the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Israel/Judah developed as the former pursued a violent military occupation of Syria-Palestine from the mid and late eighth century BCE until the rise of the Babylonian Empire in the latter half of the seventh

century.[158] The Assyrian military was both dominant and brutal,[159] and the prophet First Isaiah (Isaiah 1–39) responded by depicting the Assyrian king as an unwitting tool of YHVH: "Assyria, rod of my anger, in whose hand, as a staff, is my fury! I send him against an ungodly nation, I charge him against a people that provokes Me. To take its spoil and to seize its booty. And to make it a thing trampled. Like the mire of the streets" (Isa 10:5–6; JPS).[160] Thankfully, however, Isaiah 10:12 explains that YHVH will eventually punish the arrogant, foreign empire when the people are adequately disciplined. According to Justin L. Pannkuk, First Isaiah "establishes a set of relations between YHWH and the Assyrian king that provides the theological framework for making sense of Assyrian aggression."[161] For First Isaiah, YHVH was an omnipotent deity who controlled the terrestrial world. Assyrian power in the late eighth century was an illusion, and YHVH retained ultimate control through the Assyrian king.[162] First Isaiah made living under Assyrian rule compatible with Yahwistic theology, but at a price because, "YHVH becomes responsible for Assyria's

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[158] See Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East: Ca. 3000–323 BC,* 3rd ed., (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 246–88; Leo G. Purdue and Warren Carter, *Israel and Empire: A Postcolonial History of Israel and Early Judaism* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 37-68; Brad E. Kelle, *Ancient Israel at War 853–586 BC* (New York: Osprey, 2007), 34–53.

[159] Kelle describes Assyrian brutality as legendary: "After the fall of a major city, Assyrians were known to burn houses, gouge out citizen's eyes, flay captives alive, pile up severed heads, and impale corpses on stakes around the city." Kelle, *Ancient Israel at* War, 24–25.

[160] All biblical quotations are from the JPS unless otherwise noted.

[161] Justin L. Pannkuk, "King of Kings: God, the Foreign Emperor, and Discourse on Sovereignty in the Hebrew Bible," PhD dissertation, Emory University, 2018, 22. Pannkuk published his dissertation in 2021. See Justin L. Pannkuk, *King of Kings: God and the Foreign Emporer in the Hebrew Bible* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021).

[162] Carol A. Newsom, "God's Other: The Intractable Problem of the Gentile King in Judean and Early Jewish Literature," in *God's Other: The Intractable Problem of the Gentile King in Judean and Early Jewish Literature*, ed. Daniel Harlow et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 40.

actions."[163] Judah had experienced violence and war long before the Neo-Assyrian invasion of the eighth century, but nothing compared to the domination the gentile empire brought to the Levant. The prophet First Isaiah contextualized the Judahite experience in a Yahwistic framework, and thereby created a precedent that other Jewish authors would use to explain subsequent empires that would come to dominate the Levant in the following centuries.

The Babylonian Empire Exercising Divine Sovereignty in Jeremiah

Part of First Isaiah's prophecy proved to be correct. The Neo-Assyrian Empire did eventually end, but the kingdom's fall did not lead to the predicted native sovereignty in the Levant. The Assyrian administration began to fracture, and the Neo-Babylonian Empire allied with the Medes to overthrow the Assyrians in 609, consolidating power over Syria-Israel by 601 under King Nebuchadnezzar II.[164] Judah responded with internal debate about whether to resist or submit to Babylonian authority, which eventually led to mass death, the destruction of the temple, and forced exile.[165] The situation was reminiscent of late eighth-century Neo-Assyrian occupation, but violence under another gentile empire

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[163] Pannkuk, "King of Kings," 46–47. Alexandria Frisch explains: "First presented in the book of Deuteronomy, this theology is predicated on the understanding that God works in history in a straightforward manner of cause and effect for the people with whom he has a covenant, Israel. Namely, if Israel is righteous, then they will reap rewards, but if they sin, they will be cursed." Alexandria Frisch, *The Danielic Discourse on Empire in Second Temple Judaism* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2016), 35.

[164] See Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East,* 284–307; Purdue and Carter, *Israel and Empire*, 69–106; Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.,* trans. David Green (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2003), 47–52.

[165] Lester L. Grabbe ed., *Leading Captivity Captive: 'The Exile' as History and Ideology* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 52–111; Jonathan Stökl and Caroline Waerzeggers eds., *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context* (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2015); Oded Lipschitz and Jospeh Blenkinsopp eds., *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 263–84.

needed further religious justification if Yahwistic theology was to survive without the temple and outside the land. Advocating for submission, the prophet Jeremiah understood the Babylonian monarch to be a provisional sovereign to whom YHVH delegated power, but whose downfall was also predicted.[166] According to Jeremiah, YHVH used the Babylonian Empire to punish Israel because of the people's idolatry and their rejection of God:

> Because you would not listen to My words,I am going to send for all the peoples of the north—declares the LORD—and for My servant, King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, and bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all those nations roundabout. I will exterminate them and make them a desolation, an object of hissing—ruins for all time. (Jer 25:8–9).[167]

Jeremiah, like First Isaiah, explained that YHVH used gentile domination and violence to punish his people, and refers to the foreign king as YHVH's "servant." Jeremiah 27:5–8 underscores the sentiment, explaining that God is the ultimate sovereign who makes Nebuchadnezzar both the king and the mechanism for issuing divine power. "It is I [YHVH] who made the earth, and the men and beasts who are on the earth, by My great might and My outstretched arm; and I give it to whomever I deem proper. I herewith deliver all these lands to My servant, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon." Jeremiah promoted the gentile king as YHVH's earthly, royal agent, and prophesied that those who did not submit would suffer violent consequences, a perspective that, according to Pannkuk, "grants the vanquished space to assert their own agency under imperial domination while at the same time

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[166] It is likely that the Book of Jeremiah went through a complicated editing process at the hands of multiple Deuteronomistic redactors, the history of which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. See Albertz, *Israel in Exile,* 302–345; Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press: 1986), 65–82; Thomas Römer, "Is There a Deuteronomistic Redaction in the Book of Jeremiah?" in *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research*, ed. Albert de Pury, Thomas Römer and Jean-Daniel Macchi (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 399–421.

[167] The Septuagint preserves an earlier form of this text that is less explicit, a difference that shows that the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar as YHVH's servant is part of a growing Jeremiah tradition. See Pannkuk, "King of Kings," 75–83.

absolving the deity 'from the charge of injustice and caprice.'"[168] Jeremiah thus expanded First Isaiah's justification of foreign domination in response to its persistence, in an effort to justify submission and accommodation to the gentile power that followed the Assyrians.

The Persian Empire Exercising Divine Sovereignty in Second Isaiah

Babylonian occupation of the Levant was violent but relatively brief. Nebuchadnezzar's death initiated a revolving door of successors that eventually led General Nabonidus (555–539) to usurp the throne. But while he managed to assume authority, Nabonidus alienated much of the Babylonian aristocracy over the course of his reign.[169] The Achaemenid Persian king Cyrus II (559–530) saw weaknesses and marched on the capital in late 539, which he took without resistance.[170] Cyrus permitted the repatriation of Judahites who chose to return to their native land, and, as the new sovereign, supported efforts to build the second temple.[171] To the exilic prophet Second Isaiah, the anonymous figure preserved in Isaiah 40–55, the events that led to Cyrus' imperial reign amounted to nothing short of a

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[168] Pannkuk, "King of Kings," 94.

[169] Nabonidus alienated the capital's aristocracy through peculiar religious reforms and general absenteeism. Kelle, *Ancient Israel at War*, 85–86; Purdue and Carter, *Israel and Empire,* 71; Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 60–70.

[170] Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East,* 310-311; Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 69–70; John W. Betlyon, "Neo-Babylonian Military Operations Other Than War in Judah and Jerusalem" in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo Babylonian Period,* ed. Oded Lipschitz and Jospeh Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 269–71.

[171] While this is the traditional view of the Persian succession over Babylon, the historical realities of this time period outside the claim that Cyrus conquered Babylon are contested in scholarship. See Albertz, *Israel in Exile*; Lester L. Grabbe, "The Reality of the Return: The Biblical Picture Versus Historical Reconstruction," in Stökl and Waerzeggers, *Exile and Return*, 292–307; H.G.M. Williamson, *Studies in Persian Period History and Historiography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 3–24; Charles E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Kelle, *Ancient Israel at War*, 87.

miracle ordained by YHVH.[172] "Thus said the LORD to Cyrus, His anointed one—whose right hand He has grasped, treading down nations before him, ungirding the loins of kings, opening doors before him and letting no gate stay shut" (Isa 45:1). Like Assyria in First Isaiah and Nebuchadnezzar in Jeremiah, Cyrus is YHVH's tool for enacting divine power in Second Isaiah. The anointing, however, implied that the gentile king had the status of the heir to the Davidic throne as (honorary) native sovereign. Cyrus was rewarded with elevated status, but true power remained YHVH's because this new gentile ruler was installed for the benefit of YHVH's people: "For the sake of My servant Jacob, Israel My chosen one, I call you by name" (Isa 45:4).[173] According to Perdue and Carter, Second Isaiah fundamentally changed the way the Jewish tradition regarded sovereignty by conceiving of it outside of Davidic rule. "The identification of Cyrus II with the messiah reshapes the meaning of the Jewish tradition to point to any deliverer sent by God to redeem the oppressed, elect people."[174] Second Isaiah therefore altered the Yahwistic framework established by First Isaiah and Jeremiah to make Cyrus, a Persian, gentile king, the proper heir to the Davidic line. Cyrus thus became the divinely appointed head of the monarchy that rightfully ruled Jerusalem, a situation that ultimately quashed Judean expectations for a restoration of the Davidic line.[175]

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[172] As with the book of Jeremiah, there is debate on the redaction history of the book of Isaiah that is outside the scope of this dissertation. Albertz, *Israel in Exile,* 376–434.

[173] See also Isa 41:2–3, 25; 44:24–15; 48:14.

[174] Perdue and Carter, *Israel and Empire*, 99.

[175] Pannkuk, "King of Kings," 180; Newsom, "God's Other," 44; Perdue and Carter, *Israel and Empire*, 98–100.

Daniel and the Latent Permanence of Gentile Rule

The Persian Period brought a semblance of hope to the people. Persian kings projected an image of tolerance so as to stave off rebellion, and they created an imperial administration that gave the impression that it was flexible and adaptable to the linguistic, racial, and religious needs of the vast empire.[176] Biblical texts from the period, however, undercut the notion of benevolent Persian hegemony. Ezra-Nehemiah depicted tension between the leaders of the exilic community and the Persian authorities.[177] The prophet Haggai promoted Zerubbabel as the eventual Davidic king to rule after YHVH precipitated Persia's fall, and Zechariah predicted the future restoration of a future sovereign Davidic dynasty.[178] Furthermore, and in spite of Persian propaganda, the empire maintained a powerful army and a system of garrisons throughout the empire to discourage revolt among the local colonies through intimidation.[179] The situation was thus not as Second Isaiah had prophesied, and what is more, it did not appear that gentile rule would end any time soon. The crushing force of the Macedonian king Alexander the Great's army marching through the greater Near East in 333/332 reasonably gave the impression that gentile hegemony in the Levant would last forever, a possibility the Book of Daniel explores.[180]

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[176] Perdue and Carter, *Israel and Empire*, 109–110, 119–21.

[177] Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 45; Perdue and Carter, *Israel and Empire*, 123–26.

[178] Hag 2:20–23; Zech 9:9–10, 12:8–9, 13:1. For a technical discussion of Ezra-Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah, see Lester L. Grabbe, *Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah*, Vol. 1 of *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 70–89.

[179] Betlyon, "Neo-Babylonian Military Operations Other than War," 271–77; Perdue and Carter, *Israel and Empire*, 121–23.

[180] Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East*, 344–45.

The Court Tales in Daniel

The court tales in Daniel chapters 1–6 use Daniel and his peers—Judahite youths serving the foreign court in exile—to assure readers that YHVH was still responsible for gentile authority as the Most High God, despite prolonged gentile rule. Developing from the Neo-Babylonian period into the time of the Hellenistic occupation of Judea, the chapters draw from the power of foreign discourse by adapting the court tale to model a lifestyle for living under foreign rule and as a form of ideological resistance.[181]

The tales maintain that YHVH was the ultimate sovereign over both cosmic and terrestrial reality, despite the fact that gentiles continued to dominate the land of Israel. So Dan 4, for example, depicts King Nebuchadnezzar refusing to acknowledge YHVH's power, and therefore YHVH demonstrates that the king's authority was divinely conferred. Daniel interprets a dream in which the king will be punished "until you come to know that the Most High is sovereign over the realm of man, and He gives it to whom He wishes" (Dan 4:22). Daniel's interpretation comes true, and the king is exiled to live like a wild beast until he acknowledges the glory of the Most High God.[182] According to Carol Newsom, this was yet another way to overcome the reality of being subject to foreign rule while worshipping

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[181] Carol Newsom with Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 9–18; John J. Collins, *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 38; Lawrence M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 19, 21; Tawny L. Holm, *Of Courtiers and Kings: The Biblical Daniel Narratives and Ancient Story-Collections* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013); W. Lee Humphreys, "A Life-Style for Diaspora: A Study of the Tales of Esther and Daniel," *JBL* 92 no. 2 (1973): 211–223; Daniel Smith-Christopher, "Daniel" in vol. 7 of *New Interpreter's Bible,* ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 19–152; Shane Kirkpatrick, *Competing for Honor: A Social-Scientific Reading of Daniel 1–6* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2005); David M. Valeta, "Court or Jester Tales?: Resistance and Social Reality," *Perspectives in Religious* Studies 32 no. 3 (2005): 309–324.

[182] Dan 4:37.

an all-powerful deity.[183] In addition, the fictional setting and the chapter's long development mitigated situational immediacy in order to justify submission to gentile authority for the duration. The ideology of the court tales in Daniel is thus similar to Jeremiah as the king is delegated sovereignty, but without reference to an eventual punishment. The court tales, then, were a reasonable adaptation of the received literary tradition in the Persian and early Hellenistic Periods for those who both needed to justify their continued submission and also to fight subversively against foreign hegemony in some way.

Daniel 2 and 7: Greece as the Fourth Kingdom

Daniel chapters 2 and 7 brought about another evolutionary stage in the understanding of living under gentile rule by relocating the intractable and violent situation under the Greeks to the end times. Wars fought in the Levant by Alexander's succeeding generals, the *Diadochi*, as well as the persecution under the Seleucid Greek king Antiochus IV Epiphanies, demanded an end to Judean suffering—real or imagined.[184] The Danielic authors used the Persian three-kingdoms schema to depict their lived reality as part of an eschatological drama that will be reconciled at the eschaton. The three-kingdoms justified the transfer of power from Assyria to Media and then to Persia by divine mandate, and the authors of Daniel 2 and 7 adapted the motif and fit it into an eschatological, Yahwistic framework.[185]

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[183] Newsom, "God's Other," 48.

[184] Edward M. Anson, *Alexander's Heirs: The Age of the Successors* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2014); Victor Alonso Troncoso and Edward M. Anson eds., *After Alexander: The Time of the Diadochoi (323–281 BC)* (Havertown, PA: Oxbow Books, 2016); Perdue and Carter, *Israel and Empire*, 129–210.

Dan 2 describes another of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams in which he sees a statue made of four metals, each metal representing a different gentile empire. The chapter is difficult to date with certainty, but the dream likely reflects a period after the division of Alexander's kingdom between the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties, it having an older narrative framework. Daniel 2 seems unaware of the specific kind of suffering the Jews endured from 168 to 164 BCE, and therefore a third-century date for the final form of the narrative is probable. Daniel 2 altered the Persian kingdom sequence, replacing Assyria with Babylon and adding Greece, making the four-kingdom succession a "historically incoherent" Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece.[186] Likewise, Dan 2 takes the motif to the eschaton by focusing on the power of the fourth kingdom. "But the fourth kingdom will be as strong as iron; just as iron crushes and shatters everything—and like iron that smashes—so will it crush and smash all these" (Dan 2:40). The fourth kingdom is strong as iron, but it has a fatal flaw because the iron is mixed with clay. The weakness will lead to its fall to and replacement by a divinely ordained kingdom at the eschaton. "And in the time of those kings, the God of Heaven will establish a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, a kingdom that shall not be transferred to another people. It will crush and wipe out all these kingdoms, but shall itself last forever" (Dan 2:44). Daniel 2 thus provides an imagined end to the gentile hegemonic powers in favor of a native, sovereign, and permanent monarchy at the end times.[187]

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[185] David Flusser, "The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 148–175; Joseph Ward Swain, "The Theory of the Four Monarchies: Opposition History Under the Roman Empire," *Classical Philology* 35 no. 1 (1940): 1–21; Newsom, *Daniel*, 80–81, 211; Collins, *Daniel,* 166–70; D. Mendels, "The Five Empires: A Note on a Propagandistic Topos," *AJP* 102 no. 3 (1981): 330–337.

[186] Newsom, *Daniel*, 81.

Like chapter 2, Dan 7 identifies the Judeans as the divinely sovereign kingdom, but does so while contextualizing the events of the Antiochene persecution of the mid second century BCE.[188] Antiochus IV Epiphanes' tyranny overwhelmed the local population, and the Danielic author casts his circumstances in terms similar to what we saw in Dan 2. In place of a statue, however, Dan 7 used four successive "beasts" to mark the progression of empires: a lion with eagle's wings, a bear with tusks, a leopard with wings and four heads, and finally, the most gruesome fourth beast. "After that, as I looked on in the night vision, there was a fourth beast—fearsome, dreadful, and very powerful, with great iron teeth—that devoured and crushed, and stamped the remains with its feet. It was different from all the other beasts which had gone before it; and it had ten horns" (Dan 7:7). In place of the iron and clay mixture in a statue, the Seleucid Greeks are cast as a grotesque and offensive creature that is thankfully destroyed and whose authority is given to the final Jewish Empire, which will exercise dominion for eternity.

In the end, Antiochus IV's persecution justified a move from the terrestrial plane in Dan 2 to the cosmic realm in chapter 7, but both were the result of Hellenistic kings abusing their position.[189] Thus YHVH and his people reached their breaking point, and Dan

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[187] Newsom, *Daniel*, 64.

[188] Newsom, *Daniel*, 211–12, 215–17. Lee Levine describes the persecution, explaining that Antiochus IV Epiphanes "issued a decree that banned circumcision, religious study and religious observance (including the Sabbath and festivals), and that forced the Jews to commit what they considered the most unpardonable sins—worshipping idols and eating forbidden foods. Antiochus proceeded to desecrate the Jews' most holy site by introducing idolatrous worship into the sacred Temple precinct itself." Lee I. Levine, "The Age of Hellenism: Alexander the Great and the Rise and Fall of the Hasmonean Kingdom," in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, D.C.: The Biblical Archeology Society, 1999), 239. See also Perdue and Carter, 184–98 and Anathea E. Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 140–75.

[189] Newsom, *Daniel*, 27. According to Alexandria Frisch: "As a whole, the book of Daniel asserts that empire is ultimately under God's control…In Daniel 1–6 empire is on earth. From the beginning of humanity, the God of heaven imbues empire with the power to function in the earthly realm in order to affect world

2 and 7 predicted the eschatological end to gentile rule over the Levant.

Summary: From Assyrian to Greek Hegemony

I have given a brief overview of the Judean responses to foreign domination of their native land starting with the Neo-Assyrians, followed by the Neo-Babylonians, then the Persian Empire, and finally the Seleucid Greeks. First Isaiah was the first to provide an ideological response to gentile imperialism by accommodating Neo-Assyrian rule and claiming that YHVH used the Assyrians as a tool to enact his larger plan to punish his people for their transgressions. Jeremiah and Second Isaiah continued to accommodate foreign rule under the Babylonians and then the Persians, with Second Isaiah going so far as to declare the Persian king Cyrus to be YHVH's anointed. The Judeans then became impatient as Persian hegemony passed to the Greeks. The court tales of Daniel express such impatience, providing justification for the duration spent in submission and modeling how Judeans could serve another people while also serving the God Most High. Finally, Dan 2 and 7 take the struggle to the eschaton by offering vindication for the people of Israel's plight at the end times when YHVH will redeem his people with eternal sovereignty.

But while Dan 2 and 7 situate the conflict in the heavenly court at the eschaton, the anger directed toward the forces occupying the Levant remained palpable, and the text likely helped fuel anti-imperial sentiment that ultimately led to revolt. The Judeans finally revolted in response to the harsh persecutions of Antiochus IV. The Maccabean Revolt began in 167 and resulted in the Judeans reconquering most of Jerusalem, an act that

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events…In contrast, in Daniel 7–12, the resulting impression is that empires no longer act solely on the world-scene. Instead, the actual interplay between imperial powers takes place in the heavenly arena. Frisch, *Danielic Discourse*, 122.

culminated in the rededication of the temple in December of 164.[190] The Hasmoneans and their army continued to battle the Greeks until 142, when Demetrius II granted the Judeans sovereignty over their native land for the first time since the Iron Age.[191] Judeans were no longer willing to accommodate gentile rule in Judea, and the idea that YHVH worked through foreign empires did not placate those living under Antiochene persecution. And while the Judeans eventually fought for and attained their freedom and sovereignty over the land of Israel, the course of events depicted here set the stage for the worst gentile power in subsequent Jewish literary history—Rome—to take the stage.

The Roman Empire—The Worst Gentile Power

Rome began to play a role in Levantine politics in the early second century BCE. The rising power defeated Hannibal and ended the Second Punic War with the Carthaginians in 202, around the same time that Antiochus III secured Greek Seleucid imperial rule over the Levant by defeating the rival Greek Ptolemaic regime in the Fifth Syrian War.[192] Rome quickly turned its sights on the Macedonian king Philip V, an ally to both Hannibal and Antiochus III. Antiochus attempted to remain neutral at first, but he was soon drawn into the conflict in order to help Philip, and Seleucid troops landed in Greece only to be driven out within the year (192). Rome then marched on Asia Minor and defeated Antiochus and his Seleucid army at Magnesia in 189 BCE.[193] Peace between Rome and the Seleucids was

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[190] 1 Macc 4:36–59; 2 Macc 10:1–8.

[191] 1 Macc 13:35–41.

[192] Jagersma, *A History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba* (London: SCM, 1985), 36.

[193] Grainger, *The Syrian Wars*, 274–5.

declared in 188 under costly terms for Antiochus,[194] but Rome ultimately decided to build its power in Europe rather than invade Syria-Palestine. The Seleucids thus maintained control of the region, but Rome kept an opportunistic eye to the east. Rome fostered a relationship with the Hasmoneans from a distance during the Maccabean Revolt at the expense of the Seleucids, eventually signing a formal treaty with the Jews in 161 at the request of Judah Maccabee, creating a "friendship and alliance" between the two sides.[195] But while Rome came to be involved with the emergent Hasmonean state, the republican military would come to occupy Judea brutally within a century. With Rome, then, Jews were once again tasked with confronting a violent, gentile empire; first as friend and ally, then as genocidal enemy.

It is important to understand how Rome went from being a friend and ally to the Jews to being an oppressive power. In the next section I demonstrate how Judean ideology responded by incorporating Rome into the four kingdoms schema. Rome's partnership with the Idumean Herodian dynasty that rose to the heights of the Judean administrative apparatus in the mid-first century was likely the nucleus for the shift from a focus on fourth kingdom as the representative of the ultimate gentile enemy to Esau-Edom. I close with an overview of the three Jewish revolts that solidified Rome's place in history as the most brutal foreign empire to occupy Judea, in so doing setting the stage for the rabbis to use the

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[194] Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 36–7. "Among other things he had to give up all the territory west of the Taurus, let his second son, later to become Antiochus IV Epiphanes, go to Rome as a hostage, and pay an indemnity of 15,000 talents. This tribute, unprecedented in ancient history, had to be paid in twelve annual installments." Ibid., 37. See also Grainger, *The Syrian Wars*, 274–75.

[195] 1 Macc 8:17. Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 7–9. 1 Maccabees records a Jewish author's first impression of the Romans, who "were very strong and were well-disposed toward all who made an alliance with them, that they pledged friendship to those who came to them, and that they were very strong." 1 Macc 8:1–2.

Esau-Edom motif as the cypher for the Roman Empire.

The Fast Deterioration of Jewish-Roman Diplomatic Relations

The Romans continued to support the Hasmonean state from its founding until 63 BCE. During most of this time, according to Mireille Hadas-Lebel, "Rome was extremely popular with the inhabitants of Judaea and with the Diaspora brethren."[196] The century-long reciprocal friendship between the Judeans and the Romans changed drastically when the brothers Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II competed for the Hasmonean throne following the death of their mother, Salome Alexandra, in 67. Hyrcanus II was the rightful heir and had served as high priest under his mother's authority, but Aristobulus deposed him from 67 to 63 BCE and temporarily usurped the Hasmonean monarchy. Hyrcanus, known for being both weak and lazy, likely would have abdicated had it not been for his advisor, Antipater. Antipater, a Jewish-Idumean aristocrat, convinced Hyrcanus to challenge his brother in an attempt to bolster his own power.[197] Hyrcanus requested support from the Roman general Pompey, who invaded the city. The tactic backfired, however, as the general aggressively entered not only the capital, but also the temple and the Holy of the Holies, an affront to the Jewish population.[198] Hyrcanus II eventually quelled the anger so that the Jews and Romans

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[196] Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome*, 13.

[197] E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 16–20. Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome,* 21–22; Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period, 538 B.C.E.–70 C.E.* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 159. Antipater's father, Antipas, was appointed *strategos* of Idumea by Alexander Jannaeus (103–76) when he conquered the region. Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 100.

[198] Josephus, was adamant about the betrayal: "But there was nothing that affected the nation so much, in the calamities they were then under, as that their holy place, which had been hitherto seen by none, should be laid open to strangers; for Pompey, and those that were about him, went into the temple itself." Josephus, *Jewish War* 1:152. See also Psalms of Solomon 2:1–3.

could renew their alliance, but Pompey's transgression fundamentally altered the relationship. Josephus explains:

> For this misfortune which befell Jerusalem Hyrcanus and Aristobulus were responsible, because of their dissention. For we lost our freedom and became subject to the Romans, and the territory which we had gained by our arms and taken from the Syrians we were compelled to give back to them, and in addition the Romans exacted of us in a short space of time more than ten thousand talents; and the royal power which had formally been bestowed on those who were high priests by birth became the privilege of commoners.[199]

Pompey thus transgressed the sanctity of the temple, excised significant portions of Jewish land, imposed a heavy tax on Jerusalem, and demoted Hyrcanus to high priest rather than bestowing upon him the dual role of Judean king and high priest.[200] A bright spot for Hyrcanus II and Antipater was that Aristobulus was captured and imprisoned in Rome with his sons Alexander and Antigonus, so they could lead Judea unchallenged. But from 63 BCE on, Rome played an adversarial role in Judean politics.

The Rise of the Herodians

Antipater used the turmoil of the mid first century BCE to establish himself as a shrewd politician. *De facto* political power likely went to Antipater following Pompey's invasion, and he positioned his Idumean-Jewish family members in leadership roles throughout Judea.[201] Antipater allied himself and Hyrcanus with Julius Caesar in 48 in the midst of the

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[199] Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 14.77–8. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 21–30. According to Hadas-Lebel, "Pompey's entry into Jerusalem, and his violations of the sacred Temple in 63 B.C.E. heralded an era of great rancour and desire for revenge…The leaders of the oppressed nation nonetheless continued to maintain an official friendship with the nation of invaders for as long as it was possible to do so." Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome*, 38.

[200] Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 98–99. Hasmonean male leaders occupied both the high priesthood and the monarchy from Aristobulus I in 104 until Salome came to power in 76.

second Roman civil war that ended with Caesar defeating Pompey and assuming the role of dictator over Rome. Caesar rewarded Hyrcanus by appointing him High Priest and *ethnarch* (ruler) of the Jews, and Antipater with Roman citizenship, tax exemptions, and, most importantly, the title *epitropos* (procurator) of Judea.[202] Antipater, who was given the real military and political authority, amassed power for himself and his family at a scale that was previously unknown for a Jew of Idumean descent, and he did so within a matter of decades.[203] Antipater appointed his oldest son Phasael *strategos* (commander-in-chief) of Judea and Jerusalem, and his second son Herod *strategos* of the Galilee.[204] Herod immediately gained favor with Rome by capturing and executing Hezekiah the Galilean, the commander of Hasmonean aligned guerilla troops, who had been harassing Roman cities. But while Herod earned the respect of Sextus Caesar, the Roman governor of Syria, he also earned the ire of the Jewish aristocracy, who understood the death penalty to be sole authority of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Sextus Caesar ultimately helped Herod escape any

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[201] Aryeh Kasher and Eliezer Witztum, *King Herod: A Persecuted Persecutor,* trans. Karen Gold (New York: De Gruyter, 2007), 34–39. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 30–38.

[202] Kasher, *King Herod*, 34, 40; Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 38–43; Peter Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 83.

[203] See Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 14.1.3–4; 14.8.5; *War* 1.9.3–5; Jagersma, *A History of Israel,* 99; Levine, *Jerusalem,* 160; Nikos Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 98. Levine explains that Antipater understood the way the Roman political machine worked in a way the Hasmoneans could not grasp: "From then on [the 60s BCE], the legitimacy and authority of a local ruler depended on Rome, whose confirmation and support were a sine qua non for political success…Given the absence of political foresight and the ability to make the required political adjustments, the Hasmonean dynasty was doomed," Levine, *Jerusalem*, 163. Regarding Antipater's Idumean origin, Kokkinos argues that "Idumean" in the Herodian context should be understood as the part of greater Idumea that included the Greek-Phoenician cities of the Shephelah. According to Kokkinos, Herod was likely connected to the city of Ascalon, and was therefore likely more influenced by Hellenization than by their Idumean ethnicity. Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty,* 100–38. See also Benedikt Eckhardt, "'An Idumean, That is, a Half-Jew' Hasmoneans and Herodians Between Ancestry and Merit," in *Jewish Identity and Politics between the Maccabees and Bar Kokhba*, ed. Benedikt Eckhardt (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 91–115; Adam Kolman Marshak, "Rise of the Idumeans: Ethnicity and Politics in Herod's Judea," in *Jewish Identity and Politics Between the Maccabees and Bar Kokhba: Groups, Normativity, and Rituals*, ed. Benedikt Eckhardt (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 117–29.

[204] Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 44; Kasher, *King Herod*, 39–40.

formal charge by the Sanhedrin and appointed him *strategos* of Coele-Syria in 47.[205] Herod's reputation with the larger Jewish population would from that point on be strained, and Herod became increasingly dependent on Rome.

The next few years continued to be politically turbulent in the Levant, but they ended with Herod's rise to power as the Roman client king of Judea. A power struggle in Rome created serious repercussions in Judea when Caesar was assassinated in 44. Herod and Phasael aligned themselves with Rome and extorted significant taxes from the Jewish population in support of Cassius. Herod and Phasael then quickly changed allegiances when Mark Anthony defeated Cassius in 42, and the brothers were able to outmaneuver the Jewish aristocracy to become *tetrarchs* (governors) over the Jewish territory under Hyrcanus, who remained *ethnarch*.[206] A Parthian invasion gave Antigonus II Mattathias, Aristobulus II's second son, the opportunity to attack Hyrcanus and Herod. Aristobulus had been deposed in Rome with his father in 63, but he escaped and returned to Judea in 57, and the invasion allowed him to come to power in Jerusalem in 40 as the Parthians overran the Near East. In response, the Roman senate simultaneously appointed Herod king of Judea and mounted a counter attack, and Herod immediately set out to defeat Antigonus and claim Judea as his. An excerpt from Peter Schäfer's *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World* speaks to the overlapping issues at play regarding Herod's allegiance to Rome combined with his Idumean heritage:

> The struggle for power between the two rivals, Antigonus and Herod, was not simply that of two competing pretenders to the throne, but was also a struggle between the representatives of two different world-views and the political systems

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[205] Kasher, *King Herod*, 41; Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 44–46; Schäfer, *The History of the Jews*, 84.

[206] Schäfer, *The History of the Jews*, 84–5.

> based on these. Antigonus regarded himself as the sole legitimate king, with a customary right (*ethos*) to this kingdom on account of his membership of the Hasmonean family; in his eyes, Herod was, as an Idumean, a mere "commoner" (*idiotēs*) and a "half-Jew" (*hēmiioudaios*) to boot, and thus totally unfit to be king. This politico-religious difference also had a social dimension: Herod evidently recruited his supporters chiefly from the rich land-owning classes, while the Hasmoneans relied for their support mainly on the rural population, who were unable to meet their tax demands. This social opposition also expressed itself territorially, as Antigonus' supporters came from Judaea and the greater part of Galilee, while Herod's followers were, naturally enough, to be found primarily amongst the non-indigenous inhabitants of Idumaea and Samaria.[207]

Herod overcame Judean opposition and defeated Antigonus to assume the role of king of Judea in 37 BCE, formally replacing the Judean Hasmonean dynasty with the Jewish-Idumean Herodian dynasty. Herod actively aligned himself with the Romans as a client king throughout his reign.[208] Herod's deference to Rome garnered trust from the hegemonic power, and it appears that the Romans respected Herod's autonomy, eventually adding to his territory.[209] Herod's closeness to Rome paid off and Jerusalem prospered under Herod's thirty-three-year reign,[210] but his political decisions earned Herod disdain in subsequent rabbinic literature.[211] Additionally, Herod's Idumean heritage planted a seed in Jewish

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[207] Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World,* 86.

[208] Herod built cities, palaces and fortresses, and dedicated temples in Rome's honor. He also visited Rome several times. Levine, *Jerusalem*, 168–69.

[209] Rome restored to Herod all former Hasmonean and named him procurator in Syria. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule* 70; Levine, *Jerusalem*, 168.

[210] Smallwood. *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 70*,* 96. Smallwood also notes Herod's personal decline in the last decade of his life when "his reign was clouded by quarrels and intrigues among members of his family, which drove him to condemn three of his sons to death, by open signs of Jewish discontent at his rule…and by the loss…of Augustus' confidence as a result of an episode which shows the difficulties facing a client king in preserving the delicate balance between protecting his kingdom adequately and keeping within the limits of his authority." Ibid., 96.

[211] See *BT* Bava Batra 3B–4A which explores how Herod, "a usurping, murderous, villainous king could have had the merit of rebuilding the glorious Jerusalem temple." Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "King Herod in Ardashir's Court: The Rabbinic Story of Herod (B. Bava Batra 3b–4a) in Light of Persian Sources," *AJS Review*

consciousness that would eventually help connect Rome to Edom.

As I show below, Jewish literature does not make the explicit connection between Rome and Edom until after the First Jewish Revolt, but Herod's Idumean-Jewish identity is likely the origin for that move.[212] According to Josephus, Antigonus explicitly used Herod's Idumean identity against him in order to argue for his right to the Judean throne: "Antigonus…told Silo and the Roman army that it would be contrary to their own notion of right if they gave kingship to Herod who was a commoner and Idumaean, that is, a half-Jew (ἡμιιουδαΐος), when they ought to offer it to those who were of the (royal) family, as was their custom."[213] And as Benedikt Eckhardt points out, "no other person in antiquity has ever been designated ἡμιιουδαΐος."[214] According to Eckhardt, Antigonus wanted the Romans to adjudicate the conflict for the Judean throne between the last Hasmonean and Herod in his favor by appealing to their respective ancestries, not merit. The problem for Antigonus was that he wanted Herod disqualified for the highest Judean position on the basis of his Idumean roots, a factor that did not concern the Romans, or likely even the

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38 no. 2 (2014): 249–274; Yonatan Feintuch, "External Appearance versus Internal Truth: The Aggadah of Herod in Bavli Bava Batra," *AJS Review* 35 no. 1 (2011): 85–104.

[212] Louis Ginzberg maintained that the initial connection between Edom-Esau and Rome came from Herod, "whose designation 'the Idumean' was applied to his masters, the Romans." Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2003), 252 fn. 19. See Leopold Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* (Berlin: Veit, 1845), 484, and Adolf von Schlatter, *The Church in the New Testament Period* (London: SPCK, 1955), 255–56 who first promoted Herod's influence on the motif of Edom as Rome. See also Louis H. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Jacob," *JQR* 79 nos. 2/3 (1988–1989): 130–133; Ibid., "Some Observations on Rabbinic Reaction to Roman Rule in Third-Century Palestine," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 63 (1992): 47 fn 33. Feldman states, "the equation Esau = Edom = Seir = Rome was probably coined at the time of Herod, who was an Idumean" Ibid. Cf. Moshe D. Herr, "The Roman Rule in the Literature of the Tannaim" [Hebrew] (PhD diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1970), 15–29. Feldman ("Josephus' Portrait of Jacob," 131–32) and Hadas-Lebel (*Jerusalem Against Rome,* 500–502) are cautious about associating Herod with the connection between Rome and Esau-Edom and argue that the association between Herod and Rome is not explicit in rabbinic literature until the second century.

[213] Josephus *Ant.*14.403.

[214] Eckhardt, "'An Idumean, That is, a Half-Jew,'" 93.

Judean populous. Eckhardt continues: "Even in Herod's own days, the notion that there could be 'Half-Jews' or 'Half-Judeans', and that Herod belonged to this obscure group, does not seem to have been common knowledge."[215] But while Antigonus failed to convince the Romans, Herod's Idumean roots remained a factor in how he was perceived in Jewish history, as is evidenced in Josephus' portrayal of the Judean king. And for the purposes of this dissertation, it is likely that the seemingly unrelated issues of imperial power and Jacob's relation to Esau intersect. It would be nearly a century, and following a violent Jewish revolt, until the combination of the two becomes explicit in written form, but it is here that the seed of Rome as Edom and Esau was planted.

The Three Jewish Revolts

The stability Judea experienced under Rome during Herod's lifetime evaporated soon after his death. The region became a Roman province in 6 CE, effectively ending anything resembling Jewish autonomous rule in Judea. Some Herodians maintained authoritative positions under direct Roman rule,[216] and Agrippa I, Herod's Roman backed grandson, was able to reclaim the title King of Judea.[217] But Agrippa's rule was short-lived (41–44 CE), and Judean society soon deteriorated into open hostilities under Roman authorities. A seemingly endless line of Roman procurators from 44 to 66 CE, each one worse than their predecessor, facilitated a culture of corruption and ambivalence to the wellbeing of the

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[215] Eckhardt, "'An Idumean, That is, a Half-Jew,'" 96.

[216] Herod's son, Herod Antipater, remained Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea until his death in 39 CE. Herod's other son, Philip the Tetrarch, maintained his status as the Tetrarch of Batanaea until his death in 34 CE. And Herod's sister, Salome I, remained Toparch of Jabneh until her death in 10 CE.

[217] Levine, *Jerusalem,* 295–302; Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 130–31.

Jewish masses among the Roman leadership. The corruption exacerbated an already fraught social climate, and agitation from Jewish extremists combined with mass migration to Jerusalem created palpable tension in the city.[218]

Antagonistic leadership and corruption finally led to full-scale revolt when the Roman procurator Gessius Florus raided the temple treasury of seventeen talents of silver.[219] Protests ensued, and Florus ordered his soldiers to kill and plunder the Jewish population, which they did indiscriminately.[220] Jerusalem descended into violent chaos, and this initiated the First Jewish revolt.[221] The Roman general Vespasian marched against the Galilee in response to initial Jewish gains, as Zealots, Sicarii, and Idumean Jews encouraged more moderate factions to stand up to the Romans.[222] Jewish groups soon turned their ire toward one another, however, when Vespasian paused his campaign to travel to Rome to be made Roman emperor.[223] No Jewish group or leader received a clear mandate from the people, and many peasants came to see violent insurrection as tempting fate. Vespasian's son, Titus, replaced his father in the spring of 70 and immediately laid siege to Jerusalem while the Jews fought amongst themselves. The attack lasted for five months and ended

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[218] Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 256–7; Levine, *Jerusalem*, 303; Hayim Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine*, *100–400 C.E.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 13; Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 134–5.

[219] Menachem Stern, "The Great Revolt," in *A History of the Jewish People,* ed. H. H. Ben-Sasson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 297; Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 284–5. See also Horbury, *Jewish War under Trajan and Hadrian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 100–163; Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 23–4; Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 138–47.

[220] Levine, *Jerusalem,* 310–11.

[221] The First Jewish War, the Great Revolt, and the Jewish War are all monikers used to refer to the hostilities between 66 and 74 CE.

[222] Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, 294–5.

[223] Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, 313–16.

brutally with the Romans destroying the city and the second temple as well as decimating the local population.[224]

The Jewish Response to Destruction in 4 Ezra

The violence perpetrated against Jerusalem, her temple, and her residents during the First Jewish revolt had an effect on the Jewish psyche that continues to this day, and one of the symbolic ways available for understanding Rome's violent opposition to the Jews was the Esau-Edom typology. Jewish authors worked to explain and justify the destruction in the subsequent generations, but there was an initial period where it was unclear exactly how they would interpret their present situation through the lens of their received tradition. We see in 4 Ezra and Josephus contrasting attempts to use the Esau-Edom typology in their vastly different approaches to the revolt.

Recall that 4 Ezra is a Jewish apocalypse written in the aftermath of the revolt and the destruction of second temple that can be roughly dated to 100 CE.[225] The text was preserved in translation in several Christian canons, but it was originally written in either Hebrew or Aramaic, and the Semitic edition was lost.[226] Hindy Najman explains the basic premise of the book: "*4 Ezra* claims to describe a series of divine and angelic encounters experienced by Ezra. Although it is a text composed after the destruction of the Second

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[224] Josephus claims that over one million Jews were killed and almost 100,000 were enslaved. Josephus, *Jewish War*, 6.9.3. Tacitus claims 600,000 casualties. *Histories* 5.13, 3. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 316–27. For more on Roman brutality, see Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 327–8; Levine, *Jerusalem*, 410; Stern, "The Great Revolt," 301–303.

[225] Hindy Najman, *Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future: An Analysis of 4 Ezra* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 7; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 195–6.

[226] Najman, *Losing the Temple*, 7–9; Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Ezra* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 1–9.

Temple in 70 CE, it claims to [have been] written shortly after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE."[227] Rome was central to the author of 4 Ezra, who used different symbolic identifications for the empire: Babylon, Esau, and the fourth kingdom. Each identity contributes to the picture of how the author viewed his circumstances living under Roman hegemony after 70 CE.

Thus 4 Ezra begins by setting the stage after the destruction of the temple and positioning his seer, the fifth-century Judahite leader Ezra, in Babylon. "In the thirtieth year after the destruction of our city, I, Salathiel, who am also called Ezra, was in Babylon" (4 Ezra 3:1).[228] The fact that 4 Ezra was clearly written after the destruction of the second temple and not the first draws a clear connection between Babylon and Rome, and makes Rome the new Babylon, as Hadas-Lebel explains:

> By evoking Babylon rather than Rome, the acuteness of the suffering recently experienced engendered the illusion of originating in more distant causes. The irrepressible need of consolation in extreme misery provoked recalling a catastrophe symmetrically related and prefiguring that which had just been experienced. Recalling the first exile could only engage hope, because after exile there had been return. At the end of the 1st century and notably in the apocalypses which [are] traditionally prone [to] obscure clarity, it is not surprising therefore to find Rome assuming the features of Babylon.[229]

The author of 4 Ezra connected his circumstances to the most significant event in Israelite history in order to help create meaning and hope. If Judah survived beyond the Babylonian destruction and exile, the Jews of first-century Judea could also survive Roman violence.

After Babylon, the author added Esau to Rome's character profile in 4 Ezra 5:41–

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[227] Najman, *Losing the Temple*, 10.

[228] Translations of 4 Ezra come from Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Ezra*.

[229] Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome*, 463–4 . Cf. Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:3-5; 18:2; 18:21; Sib. Or. 5:143; 5:159; 2 Bar. 11:1; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.15.2; 1 Pet 5:13.

6:10, taking the narrative to the eschaton through an exegesis of Gen 25:24–26:

> When her [Rebekah] time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob.

The author set up the eschatological scene with Ezra asking questions regarding God's plan for the final judgment (4 Ezra 5:41–55). A poem in 6:1–6 follows the questions in which God declares his agency in both creation and the coming judgment (4 Ezra 5:56–6:6). Ezra then asks one last question to see when the coming judgment will take place. "What will be the dividing of the times? Or when will be the end of the first age and the beginning of the age that follows?" (4 Ezra 6:7). God responds by referencing Gen 24:24–26:

> From Abraham to Abraham, because from him were born Jacob and Esau, for Jacob's hand held Esau's heel from the beginning. For Esau is the end of this age, and Jacob is the beginning of the age that follows. For the end of a man is his heel, and the beginning of a man is his hand; between the heel and the hand seek for nothing else, Ezra! (4 Ezra 6:8–10)

Michael Stone explains God's answer to Ezra. "Esau, the kingdom of Rome, is the end of this age and it will be followed by the kingdom of Jacob or Israel which will be the beginning of the next age. It will be followed immediately, just as a heel ('the end of man') is followed by hand, his beginning."[230] The hostilities between Jacob and Esau are central here. Esau/Rome become the eschatological precedent to Jacob/Israel and the eternal, Jewish kingdom that will take over after the divine judgment. The dichotomy and eventual displacement of Edom by Rome in 4 Ezra is supported by Gen 25:23, where God communicates an oracle to Rebekah concerning the two fetuses growing in her womb. "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall

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[230] Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 161.

be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger." The oracle to Rebekah further supports the relinquishing of authority from Esau/Rome to Jacob/Israel in this section. Lastly, God's pronouncement identifies the section with the eschatological sequence in Dan 7 in which the worst kingdom/beast precedes the delegation of sovereignty to Israel and its angel patron. There are, then, many converging points of analogy that make Esau/Rome a useful comparison in this portion of 4 Ezra. The end of this age will be replaced by the beginning of the age to come, the younger shall surpass his elder, and the worst kingdom will be supplanted by the divine kingdom.

Finally 4 Ezra 11:1–12:3 adds one last element of Rome's eschatological identity by drawing on the four kingdoms motif in Daniel even more explicitly than its reference to Esau in 4 Ezra 6. For 4 Ezra 11:1–12:3 describes a vision much like what is found in other apocalypses. "And it came to pass on the second night I had a dream, and behold, there came up from the sea an eagle that had twelve wings and three heads" (4 Ezra 11:1). The eagle evokes the description of the fourth beast in Dan 7:7–8, and 4 Ezra 11:39–40 both confirms that identification and supplements the description of the beast's heinousness:

> Are you not the one that remains of the four beasts which I had made to reign in my world, so that the end of the times might come through them? You, the fourth that has come, have conquered all the beasts that have gone before; and you have held sway over the world with much terror, and over all the earth with grievous oppression; and for so long you have dwelt on the earth with deceit.

Then 4 Ezra 12:10–36 provides the angelic interpretation for a vision of the eagle in which the connection to Daniel is overt:

> He said to me, "This is the interpretation of this vision which you have seen: The eagle which you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel. But it was not explained to him as I now explain it to you. Behold, the days are coming when a kingdom shall arise on earth, and it shall be more terrifying than all the kingdoms that have been before it." (4 Ezra 12:10–13)

Here, 4 Ezra explicitly draws on the four kingdoms motif in Daniel 2 and especially 7, but the fourth kingdom is now Rome rather than the Greek Empire, and the author acknowledges this is a new interpretation by explicitly stating: "But it was not explained to him as I now explain it to you."[231] Additionally, Rome/the fourth beast is specifically identified as an eagle. "Thus this verse sets up the triple equivalation of eagle/fourth empire/Rome."[232] The choice of the eagle to represent the fourth kingdom is particularly interesting for the topic at hand as it was likely chosen as the appropriate symbol for Rome because it was found on the standards of the Roman legions, thus removing any doubt regarding the true identity of the last kingdom.[233] We find in 4 Ezra, then, Rome as Babylon, Rome as Esau, and Rome as the fourth kingdom, and in each case Rome is cast as the kingdom that will be destroyed and replaced through Jewish sovereignty at the eschaton. In short, 4 Ezra shows how Esau-Edom was initially used in reference to Rome soon after the empire destroyed Jerusalem and the second temple. Esau-Edom's role in Jewish discourse against Rome was still being negotiated into the second century and, according to Gerson Cohen, "it is only from the middle of the second century that we can discern the conversion of what may have been but one midrash among many…into a popular and explicit symbolism."[234] Unfortunately for the Jews, Roman violence did not stop after the First

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[231] Cf. Daniel 7:7, 7:19, and 7:23.

[232] Stone, *Fourth Ezra,* 366. Cf. Ladder of Jacob 5:9–15. William Whitney argues that oracle in Ladder of Jacob 5:12–15 refers to Esau-Edom/Rome in a similar way though using "four ascents" and "four busts" rather than four kingdoms. William K. Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 81–2.

[233] See discussion in Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 347–8.

[234] Gerson D. Cohen, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 245.

Jewish revolt, and according to Michael Berger, "in the seventy years between 66 and 135 CE, intertwined religious and political aspirations fused more than once to produce messianic agitation among Jews, leading to three unsuccessful military campaigns against Rome."[235]

The Second and Third Jewish Revolts

The Second Jewish revolt was actually a series of revolts that took place outside of the Levant. These diasporic uprisings lasted from 115 to 117 CE, in the reigns of Trajan (98 to 117) and Hadrian (11 to 138). The revolts are shrouded in mystery because of a dearth of textual evidence compared to both the First Jewish revolt and the Bar Kokhba revolt.[236] What we do know is that the Jewish communities in Alexandria and the Egyptian countryside, Cyrenaica, Cyprus, and Mesopotamia rebelled against their gentile neighbors. Likely fueled by a combination of social, economic, political, and ideological competition between Jews and Greeks that had festered since the third century BCE, and agitated by messianic hope, each community saw initial success against the Roman provinces. The Romans eventually regained control, however, and they punished their Jewish inhabitants harshly.[237]

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[235] Michael S. Berger, "Taming the Beast: Rabbinic Pacification of Second-Century Jewish Nationalism," in *Belief and Bloodshed: Religion and Violence across Time and Tradition*, ed. James K. Wellman, Jr. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 47; Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*, 13–14.

[236] Miriam Pucci Ben Zeev explains that "not even one of these sources raises the issue of the causes underlying the violence of the Jewish upheavals." Miriam Pucci Ben Zeev, *Diaspora Judaism in Turmoil, 116/117 CE: Ancient Sources and Modern Insights* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 123. For an assessment of the available sources, see ibid., 3–119; William Horbury, "The Beginnings of the Jewish Revolt under Trajan," in *Geschichte–Tradition–Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag,* ed. Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr, 1996), 283–304.

The third and final Jewish rebellion was the Bar Kokhba revolt, which lasted from 132 to 135 CE.[238] The first two revolts led to a festering resentment among the Jews, and that anger descended once more into violence when the Roman emperor Hadrian moved to found a new city, Aelia Capitolina, over Jerusalem. Simon Bar Kosiba, dubbed Bar Kokhba, was a messianic leader who brought to a logical and organized conclusion the revolutionary enthusiasm that had permeated Judea since 66.[239] Unlike the various groups vying for power during the First Jewish revolt, Bar Kokhba had popular support and led the Jews to early gains using guerilla warfare.[240] They took heavily fortified Jerusalem, established a functional government, and sought to restore the temple sacrifice.[241] The

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[237] Miriam Pucci Ben Zeev, "The Uprisings in the Jewish Diaspora, 116–17," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism,* ed. Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4.98–99. See also Ben Zeev, *Diaspora Judaism in Turmoil, 116/117 CE*; Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule,* 389–427; Horbury, *Jewish War under Trajan and Hadrian,* 164–277; S. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 24–25; Lawrence H. Schiffman, *From Texts to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, 1991), 171–72; Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 152–53.

[238] The Bar Kokhba revolt is also known as the Second Jewish War, despite actually being the third period of hostility between the Romans and the Jews. See Peter Schäfer, ed., *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Hanan Eshel, "The Bar Kochba Revolt, 132–135," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4.105–127; Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 428–66; Horbury, *Jewish War under Trajan and Hadrian*, 278–428; S. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 25. Jagersma, *A History of Israel*, 154–61.

[239] The name Bar Kokhba (Son of the Star) is a reference to Num 24:17, "a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel," and denotes Bar Kokhba as a messianic figure. Rabbinic sources record his name as Bar-Coziba, "son of the lie." Schiffman, *From Texts to Tradition,* 173. The majority of our knowledge of the Bar Kokhba Revolt comes from a trove of letters discovered in the Judean Desert beginning in 1952. Mostly written on papyrus, the letters are written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, and fill in major gaps regarding the revolt itself as well as the personality of Bar Kokhba as rebel leader, Jewish observance during the war, and the Roman response to the revolt. The collection even contains Bar Kokhba's autograph. Eshel, "The Bar Kochba Revolt," 105–106, see fn 3 for a comprehensive list of the archeological documents. See also Michael Owen Wise, *Language and Literacy in Roman Judaea: A Study of the Bar Kokhba Documents* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

[240] Rabbi Akiva, Bar Kokhba's most famous supporter, declared that "he is the king messiah." S. Cohen explains that Bar Kokhba was also able to garner support from the Jerusalem peasantry: "In the wake of that war, the Romans confiscated a great deal of land, leasing or giving it to their supporters and soldiers. This process created a large number of landless poor in Judea, and this group seems to have provided Bar Kokhba the bulk of his support." S. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 25.

Roman response was delayed, but eventually Hadrian began killing and enslaving Jews in large numbers. He also enacted a program of persecution that outlawed essential Jewish practices and that led to a period of sustained martyrdom.[242] Hadrian routed the rebels and brutally attacked Bar Kohkba's final stronghold at Betar in 135, massacring any remaining rebels and selling vast numbers of captives into slavery.[243] The emperor converted Jerusalem into the Greco-Roman city of Aelia Capitolina and built temples for Jupiter and Olympus on the foundations of YHVH's temple. Eventually, Jews were expelled from Jerusalem entirely, excluded from Jerusalem by imperial decree. The aftermath of the Bar Kokhba Revolt effectively ended any hope that Jews would ever regain autonomous power in the face of gentile domination.

Summary and Conclusions:
The Response to Foreign Rule From the Late Iron Age to the Second Century CE

Entire libraries of monographs, festschrifts, and journal articles have been dedicated to the individual events and issues discussed here. Keeping in mind the amount of ground I covered in this section, I now try to summarize and contextualize the topics discussed in light of the larger argument I am making in this dissertation.

I began with an overview of the Judahite and Judean responses to foreign domination from the Neo-Assyrians in the eighth century BCE to the Seleucid Greeks in the

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[241] Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 443–45.

[242] Circumcision, Shabbat observance, rabbinic ordination, and Torah study were supposedly forbidden under Hadrian. Scolars have challenged the historicity of such claims, and it may be the case that the sources used the Antiochene persecutions of the early and mid-second century as a rhetorical model, pointing to a tendency to see all persecutions in previous experience, much like 4 Ezra's use of the Babylonian destruction as the setting by which to understand the Roman destruction in 70 CE. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, 457; 464; Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans,* 15; M. D. Herr, ''Persecutions and Martyrdom in Hadrian's Days,'' *Scripta* 23 (1972): 82–125.

[243] See p. Ta'an. 24a and Eichah Rabbah 2:5.

second century BCE. In that time, First Isaiah created the Yahwistic framework necessary for Judahites to accommodate foreign rule, and Jeremiah, Second Isaiah, and Daniel's court tales revised the ideology to accommodate the successive gentile empires that occupied the Land. The Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks all fit into an evolving ideological system that explained how an omnipotent God sanctioned and used non-Israelites to rule over (and at times punish) his people. This system worked to explain the lived experience of foreign domination for half a millennium, but Judeans became increasingly impatient under Greek occupation. Next, Dan 2 and 7 projected the imperial conflict onto the eschaton using the four kingdoms motif, which explained that the Greek Empire will eventually be destroyed and replaced by an eternal, divinely mandated and native kingdom. Judeans were no longer willing to justify or accommodate gentile rule, and the idea that YHVH controlled foreign emperors as a means to punish his people no longer worked. Now they insisted that YHVH would redeem Israel, and Dan 2 and 7 explained how that would come to pass. And while Dan 2 and 7 left agency to YHWH, the texts likely fueled a rebellious impulse that had been brewing among militaristic Judeans and that ultimately exploded in response to Antiochus IV Epiphanes's persecutions. The Maccabean Revolt eventually earned Judeans sovereignty over their native land by defeating the Seleucid Greeks, but Jewish autonomy proved to be fleeting. Rome went from ally and friend of the Jews in their military pursuit against the Seleucids to oppressive occupier whose brutality exceeded all those who had come before. Rome's brutality, coupled with their partnership with the Idumean Herodian dynasty, likely created the initial motivation to identify Rome with Esau-Edom. Finally, the three Jewish revolts cemented Rome's reputation as the most brutal empire to occupy Judea. Thus, 4 Ezra was the first to experiment with the Rome-

Esau typology, employing it in light of the Danielic tradition and its eschatology while casting the empire as the fourth kingdom and also experimenting with a Rome-as-Babylon identity.

In the end, this section was about the merging of two seemingly disparate literary traditions. One tradition was shaped by Israel's relation to power from the Iron Age and living under Assyrian hegemony, through the Second Temple period and living under Roman hegemony. During that time, various native authors reacted to foreign occupation, reactions which culminated in the four kingdoms motif in Daniel 2 and 7. The other tradition was Esau-Edom, discussed in the previous chapter in the context of the racialized other and ultimately co-opted here by 4 Ezra to describe Rome. Yet 4 Ezra was only the beginning of the transformation. Continued Roman occupation, the destruction of the second temple, and the prolonged period of unsuccessful revolts set the stage for the rabbis to identify Rome as the new Esau-Edom, a point that will become clearer in the following pages.

ESAU-EDOM AND AMALEK AND THE DE-ESCALATION OF DIRECT VIOLENCE IN RABBINIC LITERATURE

Hadrian ravaged the Jews and their homeland, and the horrors of the aftermath gave the rabbis a mandate to alter Jewish literary tradition to fit the needs of their community for their time. The rabbis responded to the violence they experienced and the rise in Jewish militarism by defining their own non-violent Jewish identity over and against the Romans. Rabbinic Jews identified themselves through Jacob, the learned, pious, and passive son who preferred studying in tents to killing in the field. Rome, in contrast, was the violent Esau, the hunter, warrior, and predator for Rabbinic Jews to set themselves against in order to

create a new, quietist identity. As for Amalek, the rabbis relegated violence against the character to liturgy and a ritual that has survived to this day.

I begin this final section of the chapter by outlining the general de-escalation of direct violence within the Jewish tradition that occurred in rabbinic literature.[244] I then look specifically at how Esau-Edom and Amalek fit into that de-escalation program. I explain how Esau-Edom was no longer connected to the Idumeans and instead became synonymous with Rome, the most violent hegemonic power to occupy the Levant in antiquity. Meanwhile, Amalek was consigned to ritual and liturgy and no longer represented a maligned, contemporary other. Once the rabbinic picture of Esau-Edom and Amalek is clear, I analyze how the rabbis created a specific, rabbinic identity using Esau-Edom and Amalek to promote a different response to gentile hegemony than did their immediate Jewish predecessors. Finally, I explain how medieval rabbis extended the projects of pacifying Esau-Edom and Amalek through to the modern period. This section function as both a conclusion to the first half of the dissertation, and a bridge to the second half. I quickly cover a lot of material in order to provide proper context and background for the following two chapters. Each subsection could be its own dissertation, but thankfully there has already been fruitful work done on each of these matters, and I can therefore lean on previous scholarship in order to carry the reader to the next chapter.

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[244] By direct violence, I mean to refer to Johan Galtung's "triangle of violence" in which direct violence is violence that causes realized harm such as killing, maiming, detention, exiling, etc. Direct violence, according to Galtung, is an *event*, while structural violence is a *process*, and cultural violence is symbolic and an *invariant*. Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27 no. 3 (1990): 294; Ibid., *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 199–201; Johan Galtung, Yakın Ertürk, and Chrissie Steenkamp, "Violence," in *The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195334685.001.0001/acref-9780195334685-e-747. See also discussions in the "Introduction" and chapter four, "Confronting the Violent Legacies of Esau-Edom and Amalek."

The Rabbinic De-escalation of Violence in the Jewish Tradition

The rabbis explicitly responded to how the Jewish community suffered because of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. The *Bavli*, the Babylonian Talmud,[245] describes the destruction of Betar, the last standing fortress held by the Jewish rebels:

> Rabbi Zeira says that Rabbi Abbahu says that Rabbi Yohanan says: These are the eighty thousand officers bearing battle trumpets in their hands, who entered the city of Beitar when the enemy took it and killed men, women, and children until their blood flowed into the Great Sea. Lest you say that the city was close to the sea, know that it was a *mil* away. It is similarly taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Eliezer the Great says: There are two rivers in the Yadayim Valley in that region, one flowing one way and one flowing the other way. And the Sages estimated that in the aftermath of this war these rivers were filled with two parts water to one part blood. Likewise, it was taught in a *baraita*: For seven years the gentiles harvested their vineyards that had been soaked with the blood of Israel without requiring any additional fertilizer (b. Gittin 57a).[246]

The rabbis were haunted by the memory of the violence visited upon the Jews after the revolt. Only a small remnant of native Judeans survived the trauma in exile, and "no Jewish insurrection or military campaign against Rome or another power is recorded for centuries."[247] The Judean Jewish community never recovered. The rabbis understood the successive revolts and their aftermath as instructive for how Jews should engage not only their oppressors, but also their inherited tradition. The rabbis worked to focus Judaism on a new rabbinic piety that moderated political expression, as Hanan Eshel explains:

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[245] There has been much discussion regarding the final redaction of the *Bavli,* but most scholars conclude that the final editing occurred at the end of the fifth century CE. See the discussion in Richard Kalmin, "The Formation and Character of the Babylonian Talmud," in *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, vol. 4 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 840–47.

[246] Unless noted, all translations from the *Bavli* are taken from the William Davidson Talmud, https://www.sefaria.org/texts/Talmud. See also b. Berakhot 61b; b. Sanh. 14a; b. 'Abod. Zar. 18a; Eichah Rabbah 2:5. Robert Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 79; Hadas-Lebel, 190–91, 398–9.

[247] Berger, "Taming the Beast," 47.

> Following the appalling failure of the Bar Kochba Revolt, the Jews made no further attempts to achieve national independence. Within decades, the honorific title nasi, which had been bestowed on Bar Kochba as a military title, acquired a religious meaning. The next notable individual to be identified in this manner was Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi, the editor of the Mishnah. This shift from politics to religion encapsulates the decisive impact of the Bar Kochba Revolt on Jewish history.[248]

The rabbis saw a need to reinterpret the source texts that provided fodder for the violent rhetoric promoted in Second Temple literature.[249] According to Berger, "three failed revolts in relatively rapid succession led these Rabbinic leaders to see that a *different* response, an *alternative* hermeneutic, was required to enable Jews to cope with their current reality."[250] Late Tannaitic and Amoraic rabbis, therefore, "engaged in a deliberate program to dampen or counteract the tendencies for large-scale violence contained in sacred Jewish texts and memory."[251] An extended excerpt from the Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael that interprets Exodus 14–15 highlights the theological transition:

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[248] Eshel, "The Bar Kochba Revolt," 127. Reuven Firestone adds nuance to the discussion: "Not all Jewish leaders or Jews in general followed this trend, and the program of the rabbis was never intended to remove war from Judaism or to transform Judaism into a pacifistic religion. The purpose was, rather, to reduce the danger to the Jewish world that war had come to represent. The overall strategy intended to decrease the likelihood of militant uprisings among Jews. As such, it was not the elimination of war per se, but rather the elimination or at least reduction in the possibility of employing the powerful martial images of the Bible to promote violent movements that could become catastrophic." Reuven Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism: The Fall and Rise of a Controversial Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), x. See also ibid., 67–73. Re: Eshel's characterization of the rabbinic withdrawal from politics, Cf. David Biale *Power & Powerlessness in Jewish History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986).

[249] Regarding rabbinic authority to engage and reinterpret their tradition, see Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 111; see also 15–16, 108–10, 175; Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*, 38–63;161–62; and Beth A. Berkowitz, *Execution and Invention: Death Penalty Discourse in Early Rabbinic and Christian Cultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), especially pp. 6–7.

[250] Berger, "Taming the Beast," 50. Italics his. See also Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 24–25.

[251] Berger, "Taming the Beast," 50. See also Adiel Schremer, *Brothers Estranged: Heresy, Christianity and Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 49–56; Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome*, 453–54, 487.

> *The Lord Will Fight for You.* Not only at this time, but at all times will He fight against your enemies. Rabbi Meir says: *The Lord Will Fight for You*. If even when you stand there silent, the Lord will fight for you, how much more so when you render praise to Him! Rabbi says: *The Lord Will Fight for Ye Shall Hold Your Peace*. Shall God perform miracles and mighty deeds for you and you be standing there silent? The Israelites then said to Moses: Moses, our teacher, what is there for us to do? And he said to them: You should be exalting, glorifying and praising, uttering songs of praise, adoration and glorification to Him in whose hands are the fortunes of wars, just as it is said: "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth" (Ps. 149:6). And it also says: "Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; Thy glory be above all the earth" (ibid., 57:12). And it also says: "O Lord, Thou art my God, I will exalt Thee" (Isa. 25:1). At that moment the Israelites opened their mouths and recited the song: "I will sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exalted." etc. (Ex 15:1). (Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, Beshallah* 3:137–149)[252]

The Mekhilta explains that rather than take up arms for themselves Jews should shower praise on the Holy One who will fight for them.[253] The rabbis put any martial, messianic, or potentially revolutionary ideology in the cosmic realm, which, according to Adiel Schremer, had two effects:

> For, on the one hand, it places Rome's crime on a much higher level than an earthly action against 'us', the Jewish people, thereby strongly intensifying it. On the other hand…the midrash removes the authority to carry out any act of revenge from the hands of those who actually suffer from those enemies—namely, the Jews of the land of Israel, of the author's days—and grants it exclusively to God, in the eschatological future.[254]

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[252] Jacob Z. Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael: A Critical Edition, Based on the Manuscripts and Early Editions, With English Translation, Introduction, and Notes* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2004), 1.143.

[253] Dan 2 and 7 also project conflict onto a different plane in order for the situation to be handled by God. Rather than liturgical, Daniel's move is cosmic, and the drama takes place in the heavens. As such, both Daniel and the Mekhilta can be understood as quietist and attempts to sublimate human agency in regards to revolution and violent resistance.

[254] Schremer, "Eschatology, Violence, and Suicide: An Early Rabbinic Theme and Its Influence in the Middle Ages" in *Apocalypse and Violence*, ed. Abbas Amanat and John J. Collins (New Haven, CT: The Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 2002), 22. See also Hadas-Lebel, who emphasizes: "The sheer magnitude of the national catastrophe the Jews had just suffered provoked two driving obsessions: that of denigrating a cruel and mistrusted enemy and that of convincing the people that divine justice had not failed. These two convictions would converge in consoling the conquered Jews." Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome*, 113. Regarding rabbinic condemnation of messianic calculations, see Ibid., 492–96.

The Judean rebels in the first two centuries CE used their agency to engage in guerrilla warfare in response to foreign domination. The rabbis, in turn, gave violent agency to YHVH. Instead of rebels fighting Rome, rabbis were "shield-bearers" in a proxy war, an intellectual struggle with Torah, while YHVH fought on their behalf.[255] According to Ehud Luz, the shared legacy of the prophets and the rabbis "gave rise, in Jewish tradition, to repulsion toward bloodshed and toward the glorification of political and military power."[256] Robert Eisen outlines the essential aspects of the rabbis' nonviolent theology following the horrors of the first two centuries CE:

> First, the rabbis believed that the second Temple was destroyed and the Jews were forced into exile because of their sins…Second, the only way Jews could repair their relationship with God was through repentance, which was equated with strict observance of Halakhah. Third, if the Jews fulfilled this condition, God would send the messiah, punish the nations that had oppressed Israel, and lead the Jews back to their homeland to regain sovereignty and rebuild the Temple. Finally, in the meantime, patience was needed; Jews should focus their efforts on repairing their relationship with God through the observance of his laws and not to dwell on messianic speculations that might lead to more self-destructive violence.[257]

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[255] b. Bekhorot 36a. Berger explains that the rabbis "converted" heroic biblical figures such as Joshua and David into proto-Rabbis, "figures whose main occupation is Torah study, but who occasionally go out (grudgingly?) to fight the necessary war." Berger, "Taming the Beast," 55. According to Ehud Luz, "the real war is taking place in man's own heart, in the struggle with the evil impulse with the weapon God provided us [i.e. Torah]." Ehud Luz, *Wrestling with an Angel: Power, Morality, and Jewish Identity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 24.

[256] Luz, *Wrestling with an Angel*, 24. See also S. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah,* 1–26; Ibid., "The Destruction: From Scripture to Midrash," *Prooftexts* 2 (1982): 25. Regarding the broad view that the rabbis pacify Jewish tradition, see also Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, 65–110; Bradley Shavit Artson, *Love Peace and Pursue Peace: A Jewish Response to War and Nuclear Annihilation* (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1988); Alan L. Mittleman, *Does Judaism Condone Violence?: Holiness and Ethics in the Jewish Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 154–92; Luz, *Wrestling with an Angel*; and Adiel Schremer, "Eschatology, Violence, and Suicide." Cf. Firestone's description of the "Rabbinic Typology of War," Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism*, 77–98.

[257] Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, 82–83. See also Luz, *Wrestling with an Angel*, 25–26. Eisen's argument is that the overall tenor of rabbinic Judaism is non-violent, but he is careful to qualify his claims: "One has to acknowledge that the rabbis were not pacifists in the strict sense…they permit the waging of war in self-defense. In fact, the right to self-defense is so sacrosanct a principle in rabbinic Judaism that it applies to individuals and nations alike, whether they be Jews or non-Jews. One is always permitted to defend oneself against violence. Still, rabbinic Judaism is broadly nonviolent because the rabbis make every attempt to minimize violence beyond that needed to ward off harm." Eisen, 96.

In general, the rabbis thrust any violent prerogative into the cosmos, thereby taking responsibility away from Jews in the terrestrial realm; direct violence was redefined as a uniquely divine act. Jews should accept their subjugation and focus on repenting for past sins, and rabbis should try to lead the Jewish populous toward piety over the messianic speculation that they believed had led Israel to sustained violence and exile.[258]

The rabbinic effort to decrease direct violence within the Jewish tradition was multifaceted, and the Edom-Esau and Amalek motifs were tools the rabbis wielded to promote a new rabbinic hermeneutic.

I next outline how Esau-Edom and Amalek were used in rabbinic literature both to de-escalate the potential for direct violence in their received tradition on a practical level, and to create a new, rabbinic Jewish identity. Esau-Edom was cemented as the figural representation of Rome so as to explain the violent but complicated nature of the political relationship, and Amalek became a pressure valve used to mitigate lingering feelings of resentment felt toward gentile hegemonic powers.

Esau-Edom in Rabbinic Literature

Idumean Jews played a prominent role in Judean politics beginning soon after their annexation into the Judean state under John Hyrcanus in the late second century BCE. They remained influential among the most fervent anti-Roman Jewish rebels through the First Revolt, but then disappeared from the historical record as a people: killed or assimilated.[259]

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[258] Cf. Dan 9 and Neh 9. Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, 85.

[259] Alexander Zeron, "The Swansong of Edom," *JJS* 31 no. 2 (1980): 193.

The socio-political realities of the Roman-occupied Levant created opportunities to rethink certain motifs, and according to Malachi Haim Hacohen, "The disappearance of historical Edom set the stage for the main drama: Rome as Edom."[260] Edom-Esau thus became a cypher for Rome in rabbinic literature, "an often cited commonplace."[261] Louis Feldman explains that the rabbinic equation of Esau and Rome goes back to Rabbi Akiva in the early second century CE, and that the formative period for the development of Esau-Edom as Rome in rabbinic literature likely took place from the second to fourth centuries CE.[262]

The *Bavli*'s depiction of Betar's destruction, referred to above, positions the events of the first and second centuries in the context of the Jacob and Esau story and explicitly connects both Hadrian and Vespasian to Esau:

> "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau" (Gen 27:22), which the sages expounded as follows: "The voice"; this is the cry stirred up by the emperor Hadrian, who caused the Jewish people to cry out when he killed six hundred thousand on six hundred thousand in Alexandria of Egypt, twice the number of men who left Egypt. "The voice of Jacob"; this is the cry aroused by the emperor Vespasian, who killed four million people in the city of Beitar. And some say: He killed forty million people. "And the hand are the hands of Esau"; this is the wicked kingdom of Rome that destroyed our Temple, burned our Sanctuary, and exiled us from our land (b. Gittin, 57b).

Roman violence reminded Jews of the first destruction, and ultimately Edom's role in it, justifying the connection.[263] Rome could have been represented by "Babylon," as 4 Ezra

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[260] Malachi Haim Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau: Jewish European History between Nation and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 66.

[261] Matthias Morgenstern, "The Image of Edom in *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah,*" *Revue de l'historie des religions* 233 no. 2 (2016): 193–222, 197**.** See also Elie Assis, *Identity in Conflict: The Struggle between Esau and Jacob, Edom and Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 175.

[262] Feldman, "Some Observations on Rabbinic Reaction to Roman Rule," 47. See also G. Cohen, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures,* 245; Bereshit Rabbah 65:21.

[263] Gerson Cohen asks: "Since it was Rome who had brought about the state of affairs reflected in Lamentations, was not Edom patently its Biblical name?" G. Cohen, *Studies*, 246.

suggested, but Edom-Esau provided space to do serious and necessary reflective work, as Ron Naiweld explains:

> A myth, and a powerful one, was needed in order to contain the explosive range of contradictory emotions, interests, experiences, and motivations that life under Roman rule in Palestine involved. No simple idea or rational theory would work. This, the Jacob and Esau story, was chosen for various reasons to be the infrastructure of a myth that would serve the rabbis from then on to talk about and to reflect upon their relationship with Rome.[264]

The situation was chaotic and traumatic, but familiar, and the fraternal nature of the motif combined with the Jewish tradition's well established maligning view of Edom and Esau created discursive power to frame Israel's seemingly endless encounter with Rome. Rome was an ominous force that affected the Jewish community to such an extent and for so long that it was hard to see the struggle between the two people as anything but eternally mandated in Torah. In addition, the idea that their lived experience was preordained was comforting; the struggle between the biblical Jacob and Esau became predictive of contemporary circumstance: Jacob will eventually be victorious.[265] The identification led to sustained circular logic as "all the characteristics of the occupying forces [i.e. Rome] – violence, lust and idolatry—are transferred back to Edom's ancestor as definitive proof of the corruption of his descendants."[266] The vitriol associated with the ancient kingdom was ascribed to Rome, and vice versa, as G. Cohen explains, "The dominant feeling in all of

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[264] Ron Naiweld, "The Use of Rabbinic Traditions about Rome in the Babylonian Talmud," *Revue de l'historie des religions* 233 no. 2 (2016): 279.

[265] Harry Freedman, "Jacob and Esau: Their Struggle in the Second Century," *JBQ* 23 no. 2 (1995): 115. See also Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome*, 497–511.

[266] Freedman, "Jacob and Esau," 115. See also Elie Assis, *Identity in Conflict,* 179 and Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau*, 73. b. B. Bat. 16b describes Esau's excessive depravity, "Rabbi Yohannan says: That wicked [Esau] committed five transgressions on that day [when Abraham died]: He engaged in sexual intercourse with a betrothed maiden, he killed a person, he denied the principle [of God's existence], he denied the resurrection of the dead, and he despised the birthright."

Hebrew literature is summed up in Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai's comment: 'It is an axiom: Esau hates Jacob.'"[267]

With the connection between Rome, Esau, and Edom established, the rabbis augmented the fourth kingdom from Daniel by identifying Rome-Edom-Esau with the final kingdom, a move foreshadowed by 4 Ezra at the end of the first century CE.[268] According to Hadas-Lebel, "The list of the four empires, frequently met in rabbinic sources, places Rome in fourth position, always dubbed with one of its pseudonyms: Edom or kingdom of evil."[269] Bereshit Rabbah 76:6, for example, specifies that the ten horns from the fourth beast in Dan 7:23–27 are Esau's descendants, and that the little horn is the evil kingdom Edom/Rome. Rome became the violent and horrible precursor to YHVH's redemption as the fourth kingdom, and carried the same literary baggage associated with the Seleucid Greeks in the second century BCE. Under the rabbis, however, the relationship with the fourth kingdom was complicated by the fraternal bond established by associating the political relationship

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[267] G. Cohen, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures,* 248. See also Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau,* 69 and Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome*, 502–505. Cf. Carol Bakhos, who argues for caution when making generalized connections between Edom-Esau and Rome and suggests that Esau can also represent an imagined other that is not exclusively Rome, and that even then it is difficult to distinguish between when Esau alludes to Rome, the Christian Roman Empire, or Christianity. Carol Bakhos, *Ishmael on the Border: Rabbinic Portrayals of the First Arab* (Ithaca: SUNY Press, 2006), 54–55, 63–66. See also Bakhos, "Figuring (out) Esau: The Rabbis and Their Others," *JJS* 58 no. 2 (2007).

[268] Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, *Bahodesh* 9:36 explicitly identifies the fourth kingdom with "wicked Rome," and both Bereshit Rabbah 99:2 and Vayikrah Rabbah 13:5 and 29:2 make a connection between Edom-Esau and Rome in reference to the four kingdoms, while later rabbinic discourse takes the association for granted. Rivkah Raviv, "The Talmudic Formulation of the Prophecies of the Four Kingdoms in Daniel," *JSIJ* 5 (2006): 1–20. (Hebrew). See also Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau*, 29; Pesach Schindler, "Esau and Jacob Revisited: Demon Versus *Tzadik*?" *JBQ* 35 no. 2 (2007): 157–158; and Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome*, 511–521. Babylonia remained the first kingdom, Persia and Media were combined for the second kingdom, and Greece was moved to the third kingdom. See also y. Ta'anit. 24a; b. 'Avod. Zar. 2b. In reference to the Mekhilta, Schremer, explains, "'Esau' in rabbinic literature is not the biblical figure but an appellation for Rome[;] we understand that our midrash, when speaking of the future revenge that God will take upon 'the enemy,' refers to the Roman Empire." Schremer, "Eschatology, Violence, and Suicide," 21 Josephus, *J.W.* 6.109–10, *Ant.* 10.210, 276–77; 2 Bar. 36; 4 Ezra 11–12; and Rev 13 all prefigure Rome as the fourth kingdom.

[269] Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome,* 512.

between Rome and the Jews with the Esau-Jacob narrative. As outlined above, the fourth kingdom had represented entities that were wholly other, but associating Rome with both Esau and the fourth kingdom brought the fourth kingdom closer to the self. By making the fourth kingdom part of the family, the rabbis allowed for the possibility that the evil of the fourth kingdom was in some way indigenous to Jewish identity. The fourth kingdom thus became a domestic problem rather than something that was wholly other and which came from outside Judaism.

Christianity became Rome's official state religion in the late fourth century CE, and the religion gained cultural hegemony among gentiles in the Levant by the sixth century. According to Assis, the Edom-Esau motif transitioned to the lived reality of Christian domination: "The appellation of Edom easily accompanied the pagan Roman Empire during their conversion to Christianity, and in time became a euphemism for Christianity in general. The Jews consistently referred to Rome as Edom before, during, and after their conversion to a new religion."[270] Muslim caliphates controlled non-Christian areas in Europe by the medieval period, and Jews understood their situation as living under Esau and Ishmael, where conditions were generally better under Ishmael than Esau.[271]

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[270] Assis, *Identity in Conflict,* 180. While the motif was eventually ascribed to Christianity, the dichotomous relationship that eventually developed, and which is often the focus of scholarship of the period, took time to establish. See Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau*, 82. See also Christine Hayes "The 'Other' in Rabbinic Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte E. Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 258–59; Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*, 17; and Schremer*, Brothers Estranged,* 3–24. Cf. Allan Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); Israel Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[271] Hacohen explains: "Christian Edom emerged against the background of the Crusades, burning of the Talmud, conversion offensives, and the Jews' expulsion from Western Europe in the late Middle Ages." Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau*, 92–104.

Amalek in Rabbinic Literature

As with Esau and Edom, the rabbis worked to take the responsibility for direct violence toward Amalek out of the hands of Jews by giving all responsibility to God who, they said, will take vengeance upon Israel's enemies, including Amalek, at the eschaton. I show next how the rabbis continued to relinquish human agency regarding direct violence to YHVH, in this case by assigning Amalek to the symbolic realm through ritual and liturgy.

Rabbinic literature generally explains that it is not for Jews to fight Amalek because God will exercise his vengeance against all his enemies in the "Age to Come." This understanding of Amalek and the character's use in rabbinic literature is especially prominent in the Mekhilta, mentioned above in reference to Edom. The Mekhilta is an anthology of Tannaitic interpretations of Exodus and one of the earliest sources of rabbinic Midrash, and it contains an entire tractate devoted to Amalek.[272] Interpreting God's pledge that he "will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under Heaven" (Exod 17:14), the midrash states:

> R. Eleazar says: When will the name of these people be blotted out? At the time when idolatry will be eradicated together with its worshipers, and God will be recognized throughout the world as the One, and His kingdom will be established for all eternity. For at that time, "shall the Lord go forth and fight," etc. (Zech 14:3); "And the Lord shall be King," etc. (Zech 14:9) (Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, Amalek* 2:155–160).[273]

Rabbi Eleazar's interpretation connects the divine revenge with God's kingship, an idea

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[272] According to Jacob Lauterbach, the Mekhilta was likely completed and edited in the Land of Israel by the second half of the fourth century CE at the latest. Lauterbach, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, 1.ix, 2.254–289. Regarding dating of the Mekhilta, see discussion in Jay M. Harris, "Midrash Halachah," in *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, vol. 4 of *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 336–7. Harris specifies that the genre of Midrash Halachah was likely completed by the early third century with later interpolations. See also Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, "Rabbinic Literature," in *A Companion to Late Ancient Jews and Judaism: Third Century BCE to Seventh Century CE*, ed. Naomi Koltun-Fromm and Gwynn Kessler (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 93–97.

[273] All English translations of the Mekhilta come from Lauterbach, *Mekhilta De-Rabbi Ishmael.*

expressed later in the interpretation of Rabbi Joshua, also preserved in the Mekhilta. "When the Holy One, blessed be He, will sit upon the throne of His kingdom and His reign will prevail, at that time 'the Lord will have war with Amalek'" (Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, Amalek,* 2:172–174).[274] God will therefore fight and destroy Amalek when he assumes his place on the divine throne at the eschaton. But despite instances of anti-Amalek discourse, Seth Kunin points out that the Amalekites are mentioned fewer times in the *Bavli* than any other nation except for Midian, but that all references are negative.[275] Even in their negativity, however, the rabbis display discomfort with the potential for violence caused by the harsh depictions of Amalek. The effect is that the rabbinic Amalek tradition can be seen as pacifistic in a practical sense because it decreases the potential for direct violence by taking away human agency. There remains, however, a base text from which the rabbis draw that is inherently violent and remains symbolically so in rabbinic interpretation.

One last reference highlights a key difference between the way the rabbis conceived of Amalek and the ways Judahite and Judean authors did, especially with regard to the origin of his evil inclination. B. Sanhedrin 99b shares a hermeneutical reading of the origin of Amalekite violence and their hatred of Israel:

> And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz, son of Esau…Timna sought to convert. She came before Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they did not accept her. She went and became a concubine of Eliphaz, son of Esau, and said: "It is preferable that she [Timna referring to herself] will be a maidservant for this nation, and she will not be a noblewoman for another nation. Amalek emerged from her and afflicted the Jewish people. What is the reason? That they should not have rejected her.

Not only did the rabbis take agency away from Jews with regard to how they should deal

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[274] See also Schremer, "Eschatology, Violence, and Suicide," 23–24.

[275] Kunin, "Israel and the Nations," 24.

with Amalek and expressed discomfort with what they understood to be a potentially immoral understanding of the character, they offered Amalek empathy. Amalek hated Israel for a logical reason; their forefathers rejected his mother when she humbly presented herself for conversion. Amalek's line could have been part of Israel, and the hatred between the two nations never would have happened if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had not rejected someone who wanted to be an Israelite. Thus their progeny suffered the consequences. The story is reminiscent of the Idumean situation in the first century BCE as they sought to join the Judean state by becoming Jewish, but were still violently othered by Judean authors in Jewish apocalyptic texts.

A question remains as to what made Amalek worthy of engagement in rabbinic literature. The rabbis clearly understood Amalek to be character that needed to be defused. But why? With Esau-Edom having the specific function as a cypher for Rome, it appears that Amalek functioned as a stand-in for gentiles more broadly, and ultimately as a sort of an all-purpose pressure release valve to respond to the continued oppression and subjugation of the Jews. A tradition developed under the rabbis that continues today in which Amalek is ritually "destroyed" in liturgy during *Shabbat Zakhor*, the Saturday preceding Purim. Megillah, the tenth tractate of the Mishnah, deals with the laws of Purim, and b. Megillah 2a explains that all Jews must read Esther, and/or hear Esther be read on Purim. B. Megillah 18a clarifies that it is not enough to recite Esther by heart; it has to be read or heard from someone reading the text so that all hearers will remember. The text uses Exod 17:14 to clarify its point: "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this as a reminder in a book and recite it in the hearing of Joshua: I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." According to b. Megillah, we read Esther on Purim because,

"Just as there (Exod 17:14), with regard to Amalek, remembrance is referring specifically to something written in a book, as it is stated, 'in the book,' so too here, the Megillah remembrance it through being written in a book." The Amalek story is therefore used to explain a larger point: it is not enough for one simply to remember for the sake of command. Esther must be read. The text then connects Exodus to the Amalek tradition in Deuteronomy to clarify its point:

> But from where do we know that this remembrance that is stated with regard to Amalek and to the Megilla involves reading it out loud from a book? Perhaps it requires merely looking into the book, reading it silently. It should not enter your mind to say this, as it was taught in a *baraita*: The verse states: "Remember what Amalek did to you" (Deut 25:17) One might have thought that it suffices for one to remember this silently, in his heart. But this cannot be since when it says subsequently: "You shall not forget" (Deut 25:19), it is already referring to forgetting from the heart. How, then, do I uphold the meaning of "remember"? What does this command to remember add to the command not to forget? Therefore, it means that the remembrance must be expressed out loud, with the mouth.

B. Megillah 18a uses the Amalek story from Deut 25 as a proof text to explain further why *megillat* Esther must be read aloud, or heard read aloud, in order for Jews to fulfill the commandment to remember the Esther story during Purim. B. Megillah 30a then further explains that not only does Esther need to be read aloud in accordance with the holiday in order for one to remember it properly, but that a separate ritual is to be performed before Purim:

> The mishna states: On the second Shabbat of Adar, the Shabbat prior to Purim, they read the portion of "Remember [*zakhor*] what Amalek did" (Deut 25:17–19). The portion of *Zakhor* is associated with Purim because according to tradition, Haman was a descendant of Amalek, and so the victory over him and his supporters was a victory against Amalek…the observance of Purim should not precede the remembrance of the destruction of Amalek, which is achieved through reading the portion of *Zakhor.*[276]

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[276] The Mekhilta explains that Haman's continued presence in the world acts as a reminder that God will fight Amalek at the end of days: "R. Nathan says: Haman came but to serve as a reminder for all

B. Megillah 30a thus transfers the violence toward Amalek depicted in Deuteronomy to the textual and liturgical realm through a ritualized reading of Deut 25:17–19, known as *Parashat Zakhor,* in community. It is from b. Megillah that we get the *Halakha* for the Saturday before Purim, when Jews read *Parashat Zakhor*:

> Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey out of Egypt, how he attacked you on the way, when you were faint and weary, and struck down all who lagged behind you; he did not fear God. Therefore when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your enemies on every hand, in the land that the Lord God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; do not forget (Deut 25:17–19).

Jews therefore ritually blot out Amalek every year through the act of reading *Parashat Zakhor*, and the act of remembering through reading fulfills the commandment to kill Amalek in every generation.[277] By reciting *Parashat Zakhor*, and thereby ritually killing Amalek over and over, Jews release pressure built up from being a submissive people and thrust any animus toward hegemonic powers onto Amalek. Rabbi Shalom Carmy poses the question with regard to why Amalek lingers in Jewish consciousness: "why [does] long ago wickedness remains such a central part of our consciousness and presence, albeit a shadowy one, in the halakhic corpus?" His answer is that "the specific acts and motivations of Amalek are symbols of perpetual temptations to violence and betrayal that will continue to infect the lives of nations until they are eradicated."[278] Amalek therefore survives to this day as an abstract symbol for the pain and suffering that Jews have endured under gentile

generations, as it is said: 'And that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed'" (Esth. 9:28). Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*,* Amalek 2:155–160 in Lauderbach, *Mekhilta De-Rabbi Ishmael*, 2.269.

[277] See also Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chayim 685:2. Jews also read a special *haforah* reading of 1 Sam 15:2–34, YHVH's command to King Saul to destroy the Amalekites on *Shabbat Zakhor.*

[278] Shalom Carmy, "The Origin of Nations and the Shadow of Violence: Theological Perspectives on Canaan and Amalek," *Tradition* 39 no. 4 (2006): 78.

hegemony. This abstract role, however, made Amalek available to resurrect in the modern period to justify violence, a subject I discuss in the next chapter.

Jewish Memory and the Esau, Edom, and Amalek Motifs as Markers of Religious Identity in Rabbinic Literature

The recasting of their lived experience using Esau-Edom and Amalek speaks to the rabbis' lack of concern for the concept of linear time. As Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi observes, "the rabbis seem to play with Time as though with an accordion, expanding and collapsing it at will."[279] Rather than recording history, the rabbis explored their received tradition to find meaning in their contemporary circumstances living under Roman hegemony:

> In its ensemble the biblical record seemed capable of illuminating every further historical contingency. No fundamentally new conception of history had to be forged in order to accommodate Rome, nor, for that matter, any of the other world empires that would arise subsequently….The Roman triumph, like that of the earlier empires, would not endure forever.[280]

The rabbis thus altered the familiar biblical experience of destruction and exile to fit their contemporary context. The Jewish experience in the first centuries of the Common Era that brought death and destruction was not simply reminiscent of the catastrophe that had happened before, it was the same thing, and the rabbis used the first destruction as a model for rabbinic behavior.

> In the interval between destruction and redemption the primary Jewish task was to respond finally and fully to the biblical challenge of becoming a holy people. And for them that meant the study and fulfillment of the written and oral law, the establishment of a Jewish society based fully on its precepts and ideals, and, where the future was concerned, trust, patience, and prayer.[281]

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[279] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 17.

[280] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 22.

[281] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 24.

As in Hebrew Bible and Second Temple literature, the rabbis used Esau, Edom, and Amalek to negotiate their changing political status and sense of religious identity through their construction of the other, now in relation to Rome. What we have in rabbinic literature with regard to Esau-Edom, therefore, is a convergence of myths because, after three unsuccessful revolts in the first and second centuries CE, the four kingdoms motif no longer worked for the rabbis in the same way it had for their Judahite and Judean predecessors. From the second century BCE to the second century CE, the four kingdoms had gone from referring to God's agency in bringing down gentile imperialism to justifying Jewish messianic violence against the Romans. The rabbis altered the four kingdoms so that kingship and militarism were exclusively God's domain, and thus returned all agency for overthrowing imperialism to YHVH. The preference for the Edom-Esau/Jacob-Israel typology thus removed the Israelite struggle from the context of imperialism and recast the drama in terms of "peoples," thereby depoliticizing the rhetoric in favor of a religious understanding of the conflict.

Beyond the religious understanding, the move had implications with regard to identity, As Gerhard Langer asserts, "Esau and Rome are constructs of a rabbinic discussion of identity."[282] Second Temple sources used Edom-Esau to other the Idumeans and define (a) Jewish identity, and the rabbis used the same motif to other Rome and define a specifically rabbinic Jewish identity. Rabbinic sources "draw a contrast between the peaceful ways of Israel and the warring ways of Rome"; Rome they define by their

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[282] Gerhard Langer, "'Brother Esau?' Esau in Rabbinic Midrash," in *Encounters of the Children of Abraham from Ancient to Modern Times*, ed. Antti Laato and Pekka Lindqvist (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 80.

militancy, while rabbinic Jews are not.[283] The rabbis positioned rabbinic Judaism over and against the Roman Empire by using Jacob to portray their religion as peaceful in the face of Edom-Esau's inherently violent nature, because, as Ehud Luz explains, "The Jews see warfare, which has played such an essential role in world history, as 'the craft of Esau.'"[284] The rabbis contrasted the violent Esau-Edom to rabbinic Jews, whom they defined by their piety. The Mekhilta, for example, recalls when Israel requested passage through Edom while drawing from the dichotomy:

> "And by your sword will you live." That is why it is written: "And Edom said unto him: 'Thou shalt not pass through me, lest I come out with the sword against thee'" (Num. 20:18).[285] And so also here you interpret: "And they were sore afraid; and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord"—they seized upon the occupation of their fathers, the occupation of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, *Beshallah*, 3:61–65)

Edom naturally clings to their sword, i.e., violence, while Israel defines virtue by committing to prayer instead of violence.[286] The Pesikta D'Rav Kahana and Bereshit Rabbah add repugnance to the violent nature of the motif, explaining that Esau committed three evil acts the day Abraham died: he raped a betrothed woman, committed murder, and took part in a robbery.[287] According to Hadas-Lebel, this characterization is tied specifically to Roman violence and depravity:

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[283] Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, 82; Devarim Rabbah 1:19.

[284] Luz, *Wrestling with an Angel*, 24.

[285] Cf. Gen 27:40.

[286] See also Bereshit Rabbah 67:8, which depicts Esau trying to involve Ishmael's son-in-law in a plot to kill Jacob.

[287] Pesikta D'Rav Kahanna 3:1 and Bereshit Rabbah 63:12.

> These crimes may be recused to three: Idolatry, depravity and murder, the three capital sins traditionally reproached Rome. Because of his identification with Rome, Esau-Edom therefore assumes in the rabbinical exegesis a dimension of impiety and somber wickedness for which the biblical figure offers only slight foundation.[288]

Rome-Esau-Edom was naturally wicked, and the motif symbolizes the characteristics attributed to the Romans. For the rabbis, the depravity of Esau-Edom-Rome defines them as separate from Israel because "Esau is so corrupt that his behaviour demonstrates that he has no interest in remaining a part of Israel. His claim has become worthless."[289] The depraved nation was contrasted to Israel, who lived by Torah, not the sword, and Rome-Esau-Edom became the eternally violent other the rabbis used as a contrast to Israel.[290]

Rabbinic literature positioned the Jews as a corporate body against Rome by using the Edom-Esau motif, and the rabbis also used Rome-Edom-Esau to define Judaism in the individual sense. Schremer argues that the rabbis constructed the concept of *minut,* the rabbinic heretic, "in terms of becoming Roman," which was closely associated with the "theological denial of God."[291] According to Schremer, the trauma of the revolts called into question YHVH's very being and forced the rabbis to consider serious, existential questions about who they were: Who comprises the "us" and the "them"? How should we relate to

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[288] Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome*, 505.

[289] Langer, "Brother Esau," 83–84. Langer provides a detailed list of the negative characteristics attributed to Esau in Bereshit Rabbah 63:12–14. Ibid., 81–83.

[290] "Like their Palestinian counterparts, the Babylonian rabbis viewed Rome as the greatest enemy of Judaism, but it was an abstract enemy and not an actual one; for them Rome was mainly the *image* of a political and ideological power. In other words, it did not represent an actual power…Thanks to the fact that the actual Rome was elsewhere, the Babylonian image of it was free to become the unquestionable and eternal *Other* of rabbinic Judaism, a mirror image of 'Israel.'" Naiweld, "The Use of Rabbinic Traditions," 261.

[291] Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 68. Langer makes a similar argument and concludes: "The Other is the opposite of Goodness, measured by adherence to the Torah, which was also valid and binding for the people, as they too were obligated to overserve the religious and ethical maxims that were imparted unto them by Noah." Langer, "Brother Esau," 94.

"them"? Are the Jews still God's people if God was in fact defeated? And, by extension, are the Jews still a separate nation?[292] The rabbis responded by creating boundaries for individuals in their community, defining outsiders based on their denial of an omnipotent God that retains authority over his people and ultimately the world. The faithful were therefore Jews, while those who questioned YHVH's power were *minim*. These heretics were associated with Rome through the Edom-Esau motif, and Edom and Esau became quintessential *minim.*[293]

The rabbis thus responded to the violence they experienced in the first two centuries of the common era by defining their own non-violent, rabbinic Jewish identity in direct contrast to the Romans. Rabbinic Jews were Jacob, the pious and nonviolent son, Rome was the murderous Esau, and Amalek was a ritual symbol for the violence that rabbinic Jews felt toward their gentile oppressors, but which remained figurative.

Esau-Edom and Amalek in Medieval Judaism

Esau-Edom accompanied pagan Rome's conversion as Jews continued to use them as symbols to refer to the Christian Roman Empire, and then Christianity writ large in the medieval period.[294] Gerson Cohen, in his seminal article "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval

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[292] Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 40.

[293] Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 49.

[294] Under the rabbis, the association between Esau-Edom and Rome-Christianity becomes emblematic. The terse definition of "Esau" in the Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion ends by stating: "The rabbis depict Esau as the epitome of wilderness and lust for power, the name Esau (or Edom) is used as an eponym for Rome and in medieval Hebrew literature for any anti-Jewish regime, Christianity in particular." The Encyclopedia Judaica similarly states, "the term [Edom] became a synonym for Christian Rome and for Christianity in general." "Esau," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion,* ed. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 232; Moshe David Herr,

Thought," explained that the shift from Esau/Edom = Rome to Esau/Edom = Christianity was an easy transition for Jews:

> The official establishment of the Christian Church as the religion of the empire made no discernible impression on the Jews of the fourth century, for by that time the chasm between Judaism and Christianity had grown so deep and wide that the alignment of the machinery of state with the Church was of no greater moment than the succession of one emperor by another. To the Jew, it was a shift from one idolatry to another, one more aggressive and openly hostile, but not a change in kind. Thus it required no effort on the part of Jewish homilists to extend the name of Edom to Christendom. Esau might exchange his eagle for a cross, but he was Esau nonetheless.[295]

Esau-Edom proved to be malleable, and the motif continued to be a useful discursive field on which to further construct rabbinic Jewish identity vis-à-vis their Roman, Christian-Roman, and then Christian hegemonic overlords. The rabbis sought to contrast their pacifism with Roman violence, and Esau-Edom helped medieval Jews defend their status as YHVH's chosen people against Christian claims to their patriarch, Jacob, as Assis explains:

> Now, more than ever before, the Jews were forced to compete against another group for the status of chosen people; this time, the title of true Israelite nation was at stake…the Christians claimed that the Jewish nation had been rejected and therefore referred to them as Esau, whereas they—the younger, chosen religion—embodied Jacob. At the same time, the Jews obviously perceived the Christians as competitors for this status, and accordingly identified them with Edom, who represented an entity closely affiliated with Israel–yet rejected…Once the Roman Empire had converted to Christianity, and the Christians ruled over the Jews in the medieval period, the Christian claim to supremacy over their brother nation was reinforced; the rapid spread and growing strength of Christianity strengthened their conviction in their own beliefs, while Judaism was forced into the theological defensive.[296]

"Edom" in *Encyclopedia Judaica,* ed. Isaac Avishur, Moshe David Herr, and Carl Stephen Ehrlich (Detroit, MI: Macmillan, 2007), 6.158.

[295] G. Cohen, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures,* 249. Cf. Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau,* 79–83. Hacohen argues that Esau does not become a major topos for the Christian Empire until the medieval period rather than in late antiquity.

[296] Assis, *Identity in Conflict*, 180–1. See also G. Cohen, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures*, 251–255. See also Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau*, 83–90 and Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 179–202.

The reality for Jews living under Christian hegemony justified Christendom's claim to chosenness as God's people through Jacob, but rather than relent, Jews doubled down and solidified the Christian identification with Esau-Edom. According to Malachi Haim Hacohen, the cruelty of the Crusades and of blood libels against the Jews "completed Edom's Christianization. They also shifted the major target of Jewish hatred from empire to church."[297] Medieval commentators thus took to the task of interpreting the motif in order to connect Esau-Edom with Christianity and reclaim their status as YHVH's chosen people. They also leaned once again on Edom's inherent cruelty to explain their circumstances and attached the moniker "Esau the Wicked." An extensive analysis of how Jews from the medieval to modern periods adapted and used Esau-Edom is beyond the scope of this chapter, but I will provide three examples of significant rabbinic figures' use of the motif to refer to Christianity: Shlomo Yitzchaki, better known as Rashi (1040–1105), Judah Halevi (1075–1141) and Don Isaac Abrabanel (1437–1508).[298]

Rashi was an eleventh-century French rabbi and commentator on both the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud whose influence on traditional Jewish hermeneutics up to today is impossible to overstate.[299] According to Barry Dov Walfish, "The negative view of Esau is expressed nowhere more forefully than in Rashi's commentary."[300] Walfish explains that Rashi has nearly nothing positive to say about Esau, while Jacob is portrayed as perfect in

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[297] Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau*, 105.

[298] For a thorough analysis of Esau and Edom from the medieval period through the Holocaust, see Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau.*

[299] Rashi remains a centerpiece for traditional Jewish education with children as young as kindergarten learning his interpretations in some Orthodox communities. Additionally, his commentary on the Talmud has been printed in nearly every edition of the *Bavli* since its original publication in the 1520s.

[300] Barry Dov Walfish, "The Denegration of Esau," *TheTorah.com* (November 18, 2020), http://www.the torah.com/article/the-denegration-of-esau.

character throughout his reading of Genesis. Known for his *peshat* or literal reading of the text, Rashi is uncharacteristically creative in denigrating Esau while praising Jacob. Rashi interprets the Genesis text to mean, among other things, that Esau was drawn to idol worship throughout his life,[301] he was wicked by nature as a "defective twin,"[302] and he was a murderer who spurned God.[303] Rashi's thorough-going denigration of Esau leads Walfish to the conclude that Esau is a stand-in for Christianity and Christian hegemony: "The Esau/Edom/Seir = Rome = Christianity/the Church typology governs Rashi's treatment of every mention of these three elements in the Hebrew Bible…Rashi treates these entities as part of the divine economy governing the course of history."[304] According to Rashi, Edom, Esau, Rome, and Christianity are equivalent, wicked and depraved enemies of the Jews.

Judah Halevi was a twelfth-century Jewish philosopher and theologian regarded as one of the best-known medieval Jewish thinkers. Halevi is also celebrated as one of the greatest Hebrew poets in Jewish history, and he used Esau and Edom to refer to Christian Spain throughout his poetry. In a letter to his mentor Moses ibn Ezra written in an ornate rhymed-prose poetic style, Halevi explains that he "ascends from *Se'ir*," Esau's traditional homeland and Halevi's euphemism for Christian Spain. He then goes on to explain that his backward mannerisms are the result of living amongst Edomites: "I have a heavy tongue

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[301] Rashi on Genesis 25:22; 25:27. Cf. Bereshit Rabbah 63:6; 63:10. All English translations of Rashi's commentary come from M. Rosenbaum and A. M. Silbermann, *Pentateuch with Rashi's Commentary Translated into English*, 5 vols. (London: Shapiro, Vallentine & Co., 1929–1934). https://www.sefaria.org/Rashi_on_Genesis?lang=bi.

[302] Rashi on Genesis 25:23–24. Cf. Bereshit Rabbah 63:8.

[303] Rashi on Genesis 25:29; 25:34. Cf. Jer 4:31 and Bereshit Rabbah 63:12.

[304] Walfish, "The Denegration of Esau." Cf. Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Does Rashi's Torah Commentary Respond to Christianity? A Comparison of Rashi with Rashbam and Bekhor Shor," in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 449–72.

and the culture of *Dishan* and *Dishon*, a stammering people with faces bold and more foolishness than the sea can hold."[305] Referencing Esau's genealogy in Gen 36, Halevi refers to Christian hegemony as the culture of *Dishan* and *Dishon*, Seir the Horite's sons and the people that inhabited Edom and Mount Seir.[306] Elsewhere, Halevi openly laments Christian hegemony with reference to Edom in his poem "My Heart is in the East":

> My heart is in the East, and I am in the uttermost West;/
> how can I savor my food, in what find zest?
> How can I fulfill my vows and oaths when Zion is ruled by Edom/
> and I am by the Arabs oppressed?
> Gladly would I abandon all the treasures of Spain/
> if only to see the dust of the ruins most blessed.[307]

In yearning for Zion and mourning the ruins of the temple, he references his powerlessness existing under Edom/ Christian Spain, while admitting there are treasures there, but that those treasures do not have value under such circumstances.

Writing centuries later, but responding to similar experiences under Christian domination, the Jewish philosopher and Bible commentator Don Isaac Abrabanel wrote in reaction to his and his Iberian community's experience of the Spanish Inquisition.[308] Abrabanel interpreted the prophet Obadiah as a part of his address against Christian

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[305] Judah Halevi's Letter to Moses ibn Ezra, quoted from Ann Brener, *Judah Halevi and His Circle of Hebrew Poets in Granada* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2005), 32–33.

[306] Gen 36 places Seir the Horite within Esau's genealogy, but Deut 2:3–5, 12, and 22 explain that God gave Seir to Esau's descendants by violently dispossessing the Horites and settling in their place. Here, Halevi appears to consider Dishan and Dishon as descendants of Esau rather than as those vanquished by him.

[307] Judah Halevi, "My heart is in the East," quoted from Brener, *Judah Halevi and His Circle of Hebrew Poets in Granada*, 139.

[308] Along with works on exegesis, philosophy, and apologetics more specifically, Abarbanel wrote a trilogy on redemption in the wake of the Inquisition in order to address his fellow despondent refugees. The three works are *Ma'ayenei HaYeshua* ("The Wellsprings of Salvation"), *Yeshu'at Meshiho* ("The Salvation of His Anointed"), and *Mashmia' Yeshu'a* ("Proclaimer of Redemption"). In *Mashmia' Yeshu'a,* cited here, Abrabanel specifically addressed Christian oppression by offering hope for a Jewish Messiah and the eventual salvation of the Spanish Jews.

supremacy, thereby implying that the prophet's condemnation of Edom referred to the future end of Christian supremacy:

> And because the whole prophecy of this prophet is about Edom, it is worth clarifying whether the prophecies the prophets foretold of the destruction of Edom, if all were fulfilled in the first destruction, that Nebuchadnezzar after conquering the land of Israel and destroying Jerusalem, conquered the rest of the nations. Were these prophecies said about the same destruction?
>
> And it is fitting that we should also know whether these prophets prophesied for the future to come, whether it was said and will happen on the same land of Edom that is near the land of Israel which David conquered and placed commissioners in, and which Nebuchadnezzar conquered and destroyed, and which the mentioned Hyrcanus conquered, or if it is said of Roman and the Christian lands, now called Edom.[309]

Abrabanel asks, rhetorically, whether Obadiah prophesied the destruction of Edom, which his audience would know happened, and if that same prophesy applies to his contemporary Edom, Christianity. By asking about the connection between Obadiah's prophecies regarding Edom's destruction, Abrabanel suggests the same will happen to his Christian oppressors. Hacohen explains that Abrabanel's Christian Edom represented a crescendo for the motif and its connection to Christian hegemony: "The typology would never again possess the power it had in the immediate aftermath of the Spanish expulsion."[310]

Regarding Amalek, Martin Jaffee explains that, "the crucial turn in rabbinic tradition regarding Amalek is *the absolute denial of the possibility of identifying with certainty any existing nation as the 'seed of Amalek.'*"[311] Yet whether or not the rabbis were as successful

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[309] Don Isaac Abrabanel, "The Ninth Herald (Obadiah)" (Hebrew) in *Mashmia Yeshua* (Ashkelon: Oren Golan, 2014), https://www.sefaria.org/Mashmia_Yeshuah%2C_The_Ninth_Herald_(Obadiah).1?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en. See also ibid., "Sefer Obadiah," in *Perush al Nevi'im u-Khetuvim* (Tel Aviv: Hotsa'at sefarim Abravanel, 1959), 110.

[310] Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau*, 134.

[311] Martin Jaffee, "The Return of Amalek: The Politics of Apocalypse and Contemporary Orthodox Jewry," *Conservative Judaism* 63 no. 1 (2011): 49. Emphasis his. "Eschatologization" is Jaffee's term for how

in the long run as Jaffee claims is unclear. In Maimonides's discussion of *milchamot mitzvah* (wars of obligation), located in his religious law code the *Mishneh Torah,* Rambam defines wars of obligation three ways: the war against the seven nations that occupied the Land of Israel, the war against Amalek, and the war fought against a nation that attacks Israel.[312] These are wars that Jews are religiously required to fight, but, per Maimonides, the seven nations have already been obliterated, and we must continue to "obliterate the memory of Amalek," as Deut 25:19 commands by remembering in our hearts, with our mouths.[313] Amalek's place was therefore solidified in ritual and liturgy through the reading of *Parashat Zakhor* on *Shabbat Zachor.* A problem is that Maimonides added the detail that the memory of the seven nations "has long....perished," but he does not repeat the clause in the following paragraph with regard to Amalek. As will become apparent in the next chapter, the rabbinic refusal to name a contemporary Amalek was a successful for some time, but Maimonides's failture to obliterate Amalek along with the seven nations left a door open to later interpretations that assigned an identity to contemporary Amalekites.

While this final section on medieval rabbinic thought regarding Esau-Edom and Amalek is far from exhaustive, it has shown how the rabbinic project of attaching Esau-Edom to Rome continued as Rome transitioned to Christian Rome and then Christianity. Esau-Edom continued to be a symbol for gentile hegemony and violence that supported Jewish self-identification as Jacob, the chosen, peaceful patriarch. This section has also shown how Amalek became dissociated with contemporary enemies in the medieval period

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the rabbis pacified the Amalek tradition and put the blotting out in God's hands. Jaffee adds an emphasis on the role of the Davidic messiah as the agent in God's plan.

[312] Moses Maimonides*, Mishneh Torah (Yad ha-Hazakah)*, ed. Philip Birnbaum (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1944)*,* Sefer Shoftim, Melachim 5:1; 324.

[313] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Melachim 5:5.

in an effort to pacify that motif as well and keep Amalek relegated to a ritual and liturgical function. The analysis of medieval understandings of Esau-Edom and Amalek now provide a basis for the next chapter, in which I l show how Jewish extremists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries militate against the rabbinic project of pacifying the motifs.

CONCLUSION

My goal for this chapter was to continue to explore how political status, construction of the other, and the sense of religious identity changed in relation to one another in Jewish literary discourse. I have shown how the rabbis drastically altered the Esau, Edom, and Amalek traditions that they received from the Second Temple period as part of a larger effort to pacify the Jewish literary tradition and to identify themselves over against Rome's violent nature. I began by outlining the theological responses to the military occupation of the Levant by the Neo-Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and excerpts from Second Temple and rabbinic literature depict an evolution in how Judeans and Jews engaged with foreign power, starting in the Late Iron Age and leading to a violent climax under the Romans in the second century CE. Following the violence of the first and second centuries CE that ended with the destruction of the temple, the immense loss of human life, and the forced exile of Jews from Judea, the rabbis altered Esau and Edom to identify them with the Romans rather than their ethnically similar neighbors, the Idumeans. The rabbis augmented the four kingdoms with Esau-Edom as a part of a larger project to pacify the Jewish response to gentile domination that had led to direct violence in the form of three unsuccessful revolts. Amalek supported the project of pacifying inherited tradition and through ritual helped the rabbis move toward

an accomodationist stance toward gentile hegemony and Roman rule. I then examined how rabbinic literature used Esau-Edom and Amalek to redefine a specific, rabbinic Jewish identity that was non-violent and in direct opposition to the Romans oppressors. Finally, I showed how Medieval rabbis extended Esau-Edom towards representations of the Christian Roman Empire and then Christianity in medieval Judaism, and attempted to make any association between Amalek and any contemporaries moot.

Israel's long and difficult encounter with a revolving door of gentile empires and the subsequent convergence of biblical myths under the rabbis led to a drastic alteration in the Esau-Edom motif. It is a modification that shows that Jewish historiography is unintelligible without an understanding of Israel's encounter with gentle hegemony. Additionally, the issues I outlined in the previous chapter regarding the way Judean and Jewish authors violently othered their Edomite and Idumean neighbors using Esau and Edom come into focus when understood as a process contemporary to Israel's encounter with empire.

In the next chapter, I move to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I show that while the rabbinic conception of potentially dangerous biblical motifs and a pacified Jewish identity sustained Jewish conceptions of both for centuries, modern Jews were compelled to return Esau-Edom and Amalek to their roles as mechanisms for othering in a way that led to direct violence.

3

Esau and Amalek in Contemporary Orthodox Jewish Ideology and Extremist Discourse

I now make what may seem like a drastic shift to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in order to illustrate how Esau-Edom and Amalek have been used in contemporary Orthodox Judaism generally, and in extremist "Kahanist" rhetoric specifically. My goal is to highlight the fungible nature of the motifs and to show how the characters have been used to promote both passivity and violence throughout Judahite, Judean, and Jewish history. I also emphasize the inherent danger of the Esau-Edom and Amalek motifs and how the characters can be used specifically to encourage direct violence.

I begin with an overview of how Orthodox Jewish exegetes from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries interpreted Esau and Edom for their contemporary circumstances. I then do the same with regard to Amalek in order to contextualize the development of Esau-Edom and Amalek up to the late twentieth and early twenty -first centuries. I conclude with an extended treatment of the ultra-nationalist rabbi Meir Kahane, who used Esau and Amalek as elements of his propaganda campaign to promote his brand of extremist, anti-Arab ideology now known as "Kahanism." As with the previous two chapters, the Esau-Edom and Amalek motifs function as test cases to emphasize the ways that political status, construction of the other, and sense of religious identity changed in relation to one another in Jewish discourse. Here, reactions to the Holocaust and the creation of a sovereign Jewish state work side by side both to justify the identification of Esau and Amalek with Palestinians and their allies, and to enact anti-Arab rhetoric and violence in the State of Israel.

ESAU-EDOM AND AMALEK IN CONTEMPORARY ORTHODOX JUDAISM

I begin with a brief and general overview of Orthodox Jewish discourse on Esau-Edom and Amalek leading up to the twenty-first century. I focus on Orthodox discourse for two reasons: First, the heart of this chapter is on Kahanist ideology, which is based on the iconoclastic, Orthodox rabbi Meir Kahane, whose audience identifies overwhelmingly as Orthodox. And second, understanding how Orthodoxy has dealt with Esau-Edom and Amalek will position the reader for the next chapter, where I examine how some non-Orthodox Jewish communities have engaged the biblical figures.

Esau-Edom in Orthodox Discourse

The link between Christianity and Esau-Edom diminished somewhat with, among other things, the Christian Reformation, the long decline of the Holy Roman Empire, and Jewish emancipation. Modest improvements in Jewish-Christian relations tempered the identification, but remnants of the connection remain, and Jews still commonly associate Edom-Esau with Rome and Christianity, depending on the circumstance. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, both Catholics and Protestant Christians had ample reason for self-reflection on their role in perpetuating violent antisemitism. A result was the initiation of Christian-Jewish dialogue, but the sudden change in heart caused suspicion among Jews, and a specific response from the Orthodox Jewish world. In reaction to the Second Vatican Council, Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik (1903–1993) rejected the notion of theological exchange or reconciliation. Soloveitchik, a Modern Orthodox philosopher whose profound influence I discuss below, understood as natural and good the continued separation of Jacob and Esau, Judaism and Christianity, asserting, “it is easier and better for Esau to live

on Mt. Seir, and for Jacob and his Sons to be in the Land of Israel."[314] In his article, "Confrontation," perhaps his most famous treatise opposing interreligious dialogue, Soloveitchik again drew on Esau to make his point. Referencing the trepidation Jacob expressed before his long-awaited reunion with Esau in Gen 32, Soloveitchik equated the situation to how Jews should regard the outside world:

> Our approach to and relationship with the outside world has always been of ambivalent character, intrinsically antithetic, bordering at times on the paradoxical. We relate ourselves to and at the same time withdraw from, we come close to and simultaneously retreat from the world of Esau. When the process of coming nearer and nearer is almost consummated, we immediately begin to retreat quickly into seclusion. We cooperate with the members of other faith communities in all fields of constructive human endeavor, but, simultaneously with our integration into the general social framework, we engage in a movement of recoil and retrace our steps. In a word, we belong to the human society and, at the same time, we feel as strangers and outsiders.[315]

Jewish anxiety toward the non-Jewish, especially Christian, world was a good thing for the Jews. Indeed, it is indigenous to the way Jews have always existed in the world. The renowned Ultra-Orthodox halakhic authority Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895–1986) similarly rejected calls by Catholic leaders for dialogue, stating "one must acknowledge that hatred of the Jews by all nations is great, even in states that treat Jews well…the halakhah is known that Esau hates Jacob…just as halakhah never changes, so also Esau's hatred of Jacob never changes, that even those who behave well have great hate within themselves."[316] And lastly, the Israeli Bible scholar and Orthodox Jewish educator Nehama

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[314] "Jacob and Esau," *Divre Hashqafa*, trans. (from the Yiddish) by Moshe Crone (Jerusalem: Zionist World Association, 1992), 27. See also Malachi Haim Hacohen, "Jacob & Esau Today: The End of a Two Millennia Paradigm?" in *Encouraging Openness: Essays for Joseph Agassi on the Occasion of his 90th Birthday,* ed. Nimrod Bar-Am and Stefano Gattei (Berlin: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 171.

[315] Joseph D. Soloveitchik, "Confrontation," *Tradition* 6 no. 2 (1964): 26.

[316] *Igrot Moshe* (Hebrew) (Benei Beraq: Moshe Feinstein, 1985): *Ḥoshen u-Mishpat*: 2:77. See also

Leibowitz (1905–1997) addressed Esau as a historical figure in her commentaries on the weekly Torah portion.[317] Leibowitz explicitly connected Esau with Rome and Rome's successors throughout history in her analysis of *Parashat Vayishlah* (Gen 32:4–36:43):

> Many parallels in Jewish history have been found by our commentators to the encounter between Esau and Jacob. Just as Jacob was taken as a symbolic name for the Jewish people, so Esau was said to represent Rome, the power that destroyed the Temple and scattered the remnants of Israel.[318]

For Leibowitz, this is "the archetypal pattern of Israel's diaspora existence,"[319] one that has shaped all of Jewish existence since the Roman occupation of Palestine, in which Jacob, the "puny one," is persistently confronted by "the mighty Esau."[320] Leibowitz then outlines two streams of thought in modern Judaism; her own, and what she terms the optimistic view, represented by the German Orthodox rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888). Hirsch was hopeful with regard to Jewish-Christian relations in the nineteenth century, and leaned heavily on the reconciliation scene between Jacob and Esau in Gen 33.[321] According to Leibowitz's contextualization of Hirsch, Jacob and Esau's reconciliation reflected

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Hacohen, "Jacob & Esau Today," 171.

[317] Regarding Leibowitz's work and influence, see Alan T. Levenson, "Contextualizing a Master: Nehama Leibowitz, History and Exegesis," *Journal of Jewish Education* 77 (2011): 42–67; and Leah Abramowitz, *Tales of Nehama: Impressions of the Life and Teachings of Nehama Leibowitz* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing, 2003).

[318] Nehama Leibowitz, *New Studies in Bereshit,* trans. Aryeh Newman (Jerusalem: The World Zionist Organisation, 2010), 372.

[319] Leibowitz, *New Studies in Bereshit,* 373.

[320] Leibowitz, *New Studies in Bereshit*, 373.

[321] Hirsch's optimism was not unique; many Jewish thinkers, from Halevi and Maimonides to Mendelssohn and Rosenzweig saw Jewish-Christian reconciliation as desirable and indeed essential to the messianic epoch. There is a long tradition in Jewish thought which sees Christianity (and Islam) as 'paving the way' for the Messiah. Hirsh, among others, is drawing on this tradition. This is arguably a dominant tradition in Jewish thought, one that those who read history backwards (from the perspective of the Holocaust) distort and overlook.

"overtones of nineteenth-century emancipation and liberalism"[322] that echoed the lived experience of his European Jewish contemporaries. Hirsch erred, however, by failing to see that period as unique. Leibowitz cited Hirsch's reading of the text, "when the strong, i.e. Esau falls on the neck of the weak, of Jacob, and casts his sword away, then we know that humanity and justice have prevailed," and responded by evoking the Holocaust: "We shall not quarrel with Hirsch who didn't know what we know today about the 'sword' turning into holocaust and not love."[323] Hirsch should not be faulted for his ignorance, but, given the realities of twentieth-century antisemitism, Leibowitz preferred Benno Jacob, who read Esau's position in the reconciliation scene as "suspect":

> Indeed the patriarch himself does not believe its sincerity and immediately afterwards declines Esau's offer to escort him. Jacob went his own way, alone. Esau turned to Seir. Jacob's home was elsewhere in the land of Canaan, but the day would come when Esau, and there are many types of Esaus, would come to Jacob to Mount Zion.[324]

For Benno Jacob and Leibowitz, the conclusion of Gen 33 in which Esau offers to escort Jacob and Jacob declines suggests that Jews should interpret periods of peace between Jews and Christians with skepticism. Esau's nature is fundamentally hateful toward Jacob, and Jews should therefore always regard history's Esaus/Christians with suspicion.[325]

Esau-Edom as the Christian other remained salient among the Orthodox Jewish

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[322] Leibowitz, *New Studies in Bereshit*, 375.

[323] Leibowitz, *New Studies in Bereshit*, 376.

[324] Leibowitz, *New Studies in Bereshit*, 376.

[325] Salo Baron described this worldview as the "lachrymose theory of Jewish history." Baron explained that it is a distortion made in Zionist historiography in light of the Holocaust that Jewish history is defined by persecution and suffering. The reality, Baron argued, was that Jews "had fewer duties and more rights than the great bulk of the population—the enormous mass of peasants, the great majority of whom were little more than appurtenances of the soil on which they were born." Salo W. Baron, "Ghetto and Emancipation," *The Menorah Journal* 14 no. 6 (1928): 515–526.

intellectual elite through the twentieth century. These leaders saw the separation between Jews and gentiles as important and natural, and they and others continued to use Esau and Edom as othering mechanisms to enforce that separation. The Christian world would remain Edom, despite attempts made by Christian leaders to apologize or atone for the violence enacted against Jews by Christians throughout history.

Amalek in Orthodox Discourse

The rabbis were essentially successful at relegating Amalek to a separate realm in which he is dealt with on the cosmic plane rather than the terrestrial one, but Amalek remains an ever-present part of contemporary Jewish culture, especially in Orthodox spaces, as the former Chancellor of Yeshiva University Rabbi Norman Lamm explained:

> The Torah's injunctions against the people of Amalek and the seven Canaanite nations are enshrined in the Halakhah and, although they have not been put into practice since the Biblical period, they do present today's believers with thorny moral problems that call for understanding and, thus, apologetics.[326]

Lamm outlined the crux in any contemporary discourse regarding Amalek: that destroying Amalek remains a part of *halakhah*, despite the pacification of the tradition and the moral quandaries that arise from the potentiality of killing Amalekites. A key question is whether or not Amalek continues to exist today, with the great majority agreeing that he does not. Shalom Carmy explains: "No classical rabbinic sources define the contemporary status of the Canaanites and Amalekites."[327] In the end, much of the Orthodox understanding of

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[326] Norman Lamm, "Amalek and the Seven Nations: A Case of Law vs. Morality," in *War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition,* ed. Lawrence Schiffman and Joel B. Wolowelsky (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2007), 201.

[327] Shalom Carmy, "The Origin of Nations and the Shadow of Violence: Theological Perspectives on Canaan and Amalek," *Tradition* 39 no. 4 (2006): 65.

Amalek comes from the lacuna in Maimonides' discussion of the *milchamot mitzvah*, the wars of obligation, referenced in the previous chapter. Maimonides explained that the seven nations have "long been perished," and therefore Jews no longer need to worry about any obligatory war against them. The problem with Amalek is that Maimonides does not repeat the clause, explaining that Amalek too has "long been perished." Carmy explains that the omission meant that, according to Maimonides, Amalek and the seven nations are different and, "if we could identify a contemporary Amalekite (which we can't) we would be obligated to pursue fulfillment of the commandment."[328] While Carmy emphasizes that we cannot identify a contemporary Amalekite, the Soloveitchik rabbinic dynasty took a different approach to Maimonides. Rabbi Chaim Halevi Soloveitchik (1853–1918) argued that there were two kinds of Amalek: the genetic and the figurative. The genetic Amalek is gone, but the figurative Amalek, comprised of people who act like Amalek, remains. Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik's son, Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik (1879–1941), maintained his father's position, explaining that Amalek was any nation that sought to destroy the Jewish people. Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik's son, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, encountered above, relied on Maimonides to conclude: "It would appear from Maimonides' statements that Amalek is still in existence, while the Seven Nations have descended into the abyss of oblivion."[329] Amalek therefore continues to live on "from generation to generation," with the most

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[328] Carmy, "The Origin of Nations and the Shadow of Violence," 66.

[329] Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Kol Dodi Dofek: It is the Voice of my Beloved that Knocketh," trans. Lawrence Kaplan in *Theological and Halakhic Reflections on the Holocaust,* ed. Bernard H. Rosenberg and Fred Heuman (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1992), 116. This essay was originally delivered as a public address at Yeshiva University in New York City on Yom Ha-Atzma'ut, Israel's Independence Day, 1956; Lamm, "Amalek and the Seven Nations," 215.

obvious example being the Nazis.[330]

It is impossible to overstate the significant impact that the Soloveitchik family—and especially Joseph Soloveitchik—exerted over Jewish Orthodoxy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Joseph Soloveitchik, affectionately known as "the Rav," was the *Rosh Yeshiva* at the rabbinical school of Yeshiva University from 1941 to 1993, where he ordained thousands of Modern Orthodox rabbis, many of whom continue to occupy pulpits today. But while the Rav remains a seminal figure and a paradigmatic Jew within Modern Orthodoxy, contemporary *halakhic* discourse heavily criticizes his family's interpretation of Amalek.[331] Lamm explains that the harsh biblical obligations, "as filtered through the prism of the Jewish tradition," become pacified.[332] With regard to Maimonides specifically, Lamm points out that while there is room to interpret the *Mishneh Torah* as implying that Amalek has living descendants, the text also outlines the rules of engagement for war. The rules apply to war with Amalek and mandate that Israel must offer the opportunity for peace and the enemy's surrender, and only then may the Israelites commence with obliterating Amalek.[333] Martin Jaffee explains the caveat's significance: "Not only is there no warrant for genocidal violence against Amalek of any other nation in historical time; more importantly, if Amalek or any of the Canaanite nations sues for peace, *even in the messianic scenario,* the genocidal commandment is automatically abrogated."[334] But outside of *halakhic* authorities

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[330] Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Kol Dodi Dofek," 98.

[331] Yeshiva University's website explains: "Rabbi Yosef Dov [Joseph Soloveitchik] was the most influential figure associated with the spread of Torah in America." https://www.yu.edu/riets/about/mission-history/historic-roshei/halevi-soloveitchik.

[332] Lamm, "Amalek and the Seven Nations," 211.

[333] Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, "Melachim uMilchamot," 6:4.

such as Maimonides, early rabbinic literature, and even the Torah itself, there is a moral imperative to alter the tradition when it is, in Lamm's words, "counter-productive."[335] Lamm outlines a long tradition in which latter rabbinic authorities alter *halakhah*, and he advocates for doing so with regard to Amalek:

> The moral reasoning for which we attempt to circumvent a Biblical mandate must itself issue from or be compatible with Torah and *mitzvot,* a reasoning based upon a profound belief that the Torah is the source and confirmation of moral excellence, and that—to quote an oft repeated teaching of the Rav [Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik]— the thirteenth *Ani Ma'amin* (of Maimonides' twelve Articles of Faith) is the belief that Torah is viable and applicable to each individual generation. Hence…the "new" standard we seek to implement and which apparently conflicts with previously recognized Torah law, has roots in the Torah and is "new" only in the sense that it has only recently emerged into our own moral awareness and gained traction in our consciousness. It is not, therefore, a matter of judging the Torah from the vantage of our newly acquired "superior" morality. It is not a genuinely novel, historic moral conception that we pit against the Biblical moral tradition, but it is the evolving contemporary consciousness that has encouraged us to rediscover what was always there in the inner folds of the Biblical texts and halakhic traditions…We are not free to arrogate to ourselves the right to invent new ethical or moral doctrines in opposition to Torah, but we are free, indeed compelled, to use our creative moral and halakhic reasoning to reveal the latent moral judgments of the Torah that may contradict with we have previously accepted as the only doctrine in Torah.[336]

Lamm concludes that Torah values such as what is found in Exod 20:13— "You shall not murder"—and Deut 24:16—"Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death"—override any *halakhic* requirement to kill Amalek today. In the end, Lamm summarized the general, pacifistic trend in contemporary Judaism and the majority view within Orthodoxy: "The considerable leeway given to civilian bystanders, the preference

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[334] Martin Jaffee, "The Return of Amalek: The Politics of Apocalypse and Contemporary Orthodox Jewry," *Conservative Judaism* 63 no. 1 (2011): 53.

[335] Lamm, "Amalek and the Seven Nations," 207.

[336] Lamm, "Amalek and the Seven Nations," 226–7.

for peace over hostilities, and the postponement to the eschatological times of the fulfillment of the Biblical commands—all these point to a remarkably humane attitude. One might say that only the most radical pacifist is entitled to complain about the classical Jewish views of warfare."[337]

Summary and Conclusions: Esau and Amalek in Contemporary Orthodox Discourse

The pacifist trend in rabbinic Judaism continues to this day, but major Orthodox theologians, in the wake of the Holocaust and in the early life of the modern State of Israel, began using Amalek and Esau to designate other contemporary enemies beyond the Nazis. In a series of letters between Nehama Leibowitz and the Israeli philosopher Hugo Bergman, Leibowitz defended her assertion that Jews should be cautious of contemporaries playing the part of an Esau by alluding to Israel's precarious geo-political situation: "I do not think that if we remind ourselves that our position has been and is still today that of a sheep among seventy wolves (and I do not know what the creation of the State has done to change this), we are thereby sowing the seeds of hatred."[338] Leibowitz is subtle and gracious in her response to Bergman, but by regarding Arabs as "wolves" who now act as Esau, she "projected onto them two millennia of mostly Christian persecution."[339] Far less subtle than Leibowitz was Joseph Soloveitchik's explicit comparison of Arabs with Amalek. As a concluding point to the argument outlined above and which he shared in a speech at Yeshiva University, Soloveitchik equated Arab violence toward Israel with Amalek:

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[337] Lamm, "Amalek and the Seven Nations," 233.

[338] The exchange of letters from December, 1957, was originally published in Aviad Hacohen, "Does Esau Hate Jacob?" (Hebrew), *Meimad* (1998): 16–19. See also Abramowitz, *Tales of Nehama,* 275–79.

[339] Hacohen, "Jacob & Esau Today," 173.

> Divine providence is testing us once again via the crisis that has overtaken the land of Israel…The designs of the Arabs are directed not just against the very existence of the *Yishuv* in the land of Israel. They wish to destroy, heaven forbid, the entire community, "both men and women, infant and suckling, ox and sheep" (1 Samuel 15:3). At a Mizrachi convention I cited the view expressed by my father and master [R. Moses Soloveitchik] of blessed memory, that the proclamation, "The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exodus 17:16) does not only translate into the communal exercise of waging obligatory war against a specific race, but includes as well the obligation to rise up as a community against any people or group that, filled with maniacal hatred, directs its enmity against Keneset Israel…In the 1930s and 1940s the Nazis, with Hitler at their head, filled this role. They were the Amalekites, the standard-bearers of insane hatred and enmity during the era just past. Today their place has been taken over by the mobs of Nasser and the Mufti.[340]

While the pacifist impulse of rabbinic Judaism continues under *halakhic* authorities such as Norman Lamm et al., Soloveitchik's popularity helped to maintain a violent undercurrent that draws from Esau-Edom and Amalek in order to designate other perceived enemies.[341] Joel Kaminsky notes the psychological function of using Amalek in such a way:

> Fundamentally, the idea of Amalek is an attempt to make some theological sense of recurring historical evils. While such theologies are potentially dangerous, they also serve a purpose by helping communities survive and explain troubling historical events. In Judaism, the theological idea that massive historical evils perpetrated by individuals and groups who harbor an irrational hatred of Jews and Judaism are part of a larger cosmic pattern has helped the community make sense of tragedies and thus continue to survive.[342]

While their intent was to warn rather than agitate, thereby easing the psychological tension

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[340] Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Kol Dodi Dofek," 97–98.

[341] Soloveitchik's influence in reading Arabs into the Amalekite narrative is apparent in some of even the most seemingly benign sectors of religious Judaism. For example, in Blu Greenberg's *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household*, the author ends her instructions on Purim with an explanation of the connection between Purim and remembering: "Finally, Purim is about remembering. We are told, with one half of our brain, to remember; with the other, to blot out the name of the villain forever and ever. Remember the Amalekites, remember that evil Haman, remember Hitler. In the midst of my laughter at this funny costume, or that Purim joke, I remember our enemies, past and present. The names change, but not the character or intent. Haman, Antiochus, Hitler, Arafat—all [are] bent on destroying my people. Blu Greenberg, *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 396–7.

[342] Joel S. Kaminsky, *Yet I loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 116.

caused by sustained violent antisemitism, it will become clear that both Leibowitz and Soloveitchik's use of the motifs predicted how Jewish people in subsequent generations would manipulate Esau-Edom and Amalek to justify direct violence.

ESAU AND AMALEK IN KAHANIST NATIONALISM

I now move from mainstream Orthodox Jewish discourse on Esau-Edom and Amalek to the most extreme application of the biblical motifs. While Leibowitz and Soloveitchik used Esau-Edom and Amalek to warn against the potentials of Arab violence against Jews in the State of Israel, Jewish ultra-nationalists known as "Kahanists" engage Esau and Amalek to justify outright racism and terroristic violence against Arabs and Jews who support them. As I show, Kahanists draw from Esau and Amalek and the violent baggage associated with the figures to supplement their propaganda, citing biblical precedent and divine command in order both to identify Palestinians with the biblical Amalek and to justify acts of violence against them.

Meir Kahane (1932–1990) was an American-born, Orthodox rabbi who became "the best-known Jewish racist throughout the world."[343] Kahane rose to prominence after he established the Jewish Defense League (JDL) in Brooklyn, New York in 1968. He then immigrated to Israel in 1971, where he formed the Jewish ultra-nationalist political party

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[343] Yair Kotler, *Heil Kahane* (New York: Adama Books, 1986), 9. For biographical overviews of Kahane's career, personal life, and ideology, see Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Robert I. Friedman, *Rabbi Meir Kahane: From FBI Informant to Knesset Member* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1990); Daniel S. Breslauer, *The False Prophet: Meir Kahane: Ideologue, Hero, Thinker* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986); Kotler, *Heil Kahane*; Raphael Mergui and Shilippe Simonnot, *Israel's Ayatollahs: Meir Kahane and the Far Right in Israel* (London: Saqi Books, 1987); Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 78–80; Yoram Peri, "Kahane, Meir 1932–1990," in *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism,* ed. Patrick L. Mason. 2nd ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2013). With regard to the trajectory of Kahane's thought life, see Shaul Magid, *Meir Kahane: The Public Life and Political Thought of an American Jewish Radical* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021).

Kach. Kahane was raised in a radical, Orthodox, right wing Zionist home. Kahane's father, Rabbi Charles Kahane, was a close friend of the Revisionist Zionist ideological leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky, and Kahane was himself involved in the militant Betar youth movement.[344] For the Kahanes, Jewish survival following the Holocaust was explicitly connected to the establishment of the Jewish state, understood in maximalist terms and at the exclusion of any Arab inhabitants of the land, including the Transjordan. Kahane attended the Orthodox Mir Yeshiva in Flatbush, Brooklyn and began his career as a pulpit rabbi.[345] It was then that he began formally synthesizing his Jewish nationalism with his religious outlook, developing "Kahanism" as an ideology. Shaul Magid explains that for Kahane, religion, Zionism, and Jewish survival were linked:

> First, religion became inextricably intertwined with Jewish nationalism; and second, religion became the tool of critique against leftist Israeli secularism that Kahane believed was destroying the state and corrupting the Jewish people…What was produced was not a religious Zionism but rather a territorial Zionism of conquest with a religious mandate.[346]

Kahane would eventually immigrate to Israel and focus on promoting his specific form of territorial Zionism there, but the disparate parts of his ideology first coalesced with his

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[344] Jabotinsky would stay at the Kahane home when he visited the US and Meir Kahane was a soloist at the memorial service for Hanna Markovna Halpern, Ze'ev Jabotinsky's widow. Friedman, *The False Prophet,* 21–44; Shaul Magid, "Kahane Won: How the Radical Rabbi's Ideas and Disciples Took Over Israeli Politics, and Why It's Dangerous," *Tablet Magazine,* March 3, 2019, https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/israel-middle-east/articles/kahane-won; Magid, *Meir Kahane,* 127. Regarding the militant nature of Revisionist Zionism, see Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 25–27; Eran Kaplan, *The Jewish Radical Right: Revisionist Zionism and its Ideological Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005); and Rafael Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America: The Rise and Impact of the Jabotinsky Movement in the United States, 1926–1948* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002).

[345] According to Kahane's wife, Libby, Kahane accepted a rabbinic position at the Howard Beach Jewish Center, a Conservative synagogue, under the condition that they resign from the Conservative movement's United Synagogues of America and adopt Modern Orthodox practices such as a strict kosher kitchen and a *mechitza*, the barrier found in Orthodox synagogues that separates male and female seating. But the congregation soon fired him for excessive religious zeal. Libby Kahane, *Rabbi Meir Kahane: His Life and Thought*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Urim, 2008), 42; Mergui and Simonnot, *Israel's Ayatollahs,* 15.

[346] Magid, "Kahane Won."

formation of the JDL in the US.[347]

As Alexander Feldman explains: "The Jewish Defense League (JDL) and its offshoots in the United States advocate a militant Jewish nationalism characterized by racism and violence against the perceived enemies of the Jewish people."[348] The JDL's initial goal was to protect the Jewish community from antisemitism through intimidation and violence, and "Kahane taught his followers that all non-Jews, especially African Americans and Arabs, are potential threats to the American Jewish community."[349] The JDL used violence as a vehicle for intimidation and recognition, which included bombings, kidnappings, and attempted hijackings, and according to Feldman, "anyone that the JDL believed was or could be a threat to Jews was threatened, including mainstream Jewish organizations, which denounced the JDL and its tactics."[350] According to Kahane, "Jewish violence to protect Jewish interests is *never* bad,"[351] even if that violence was directed toward other Jews. Such violence was intended to: 1) change the Jewish image and teach anti-Semites that Jewish blood is not cheap; 2) protect Jewish property, persons, and lives by letting the Jew-hater know that he is in danger of losing his; 3) destroy the Jewish neuroses and fears that

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[347] Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 51–56.

[348] Alexander M. Feldman, "Jewish Defense League," in *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*, ed. Patrick L. Mason. 2nd ed. (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2013). See also Janet L. Dolgin, *Jewish Identity and the JDL* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977); Friedman, *The False Prophet*, 83–128. Regarding Kahane's racism specifically, see Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 237–40.

[349] Feldman, "Jewish Defense League." Regarding the JDL's foundation in anti-black racism specifically, see Friedman, *The False Prophet*, 84–86 and Leon Wieseltier, "The Demons of the Jews: The rise of Meir Kahane is a boon to Jew haters and Arab haters alike," *The New Republic,* November 11, 1985, 24–25. Regarding Kahane's racism generally, and his use of the "grammar of racism," see Magid, *Meir Kahane,* 75-106.

[350] Feldman, "Jewish Defense League." See also Friedman, *The False Prophet*, 108–115; Mergui and Simonnot, *Israel's Ayatollahs,* 16–20; Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 234–7.

[351] Kahane, *The Story of the Jewish Defense League,* 142. Emphasis his.

encourage antisemitism and a lack of Jewish pride; and 4) Teach the Jew that the pain of every Jew is his own and that requires an obligation to other Jews over and above non-Jews. Yossi Klein Halevi, an American-Israeli journalist and former JDL member, explains that the JDL and their use of violence "brought a certain status to Jews," despite accusations that the JDL was the Jewish Ku Klux Klan.[352] Halevi goes into further detail, describing the JDL's appeal in America:

> The JDL gathered those peripheral Jews who believed that American Jewry's success had been earned on their backs: the urban poor abandoned by neighbors fleeing to suburbia, Orthodox Jews ignored by the liberal Jewish establishment, Holocaust survivors and their children bitter over the abandonment of European Jewry in the 1940s.[353]

The JDL appealed to the young, frustrated, and hostile Jews who felt cast aside by the Jewish establishment that had become affluent in the twentieth century and who had left them behind to fend for themselves. The JDL gave these young Jews agency to fight against other minority groups that they blamed for antisemitic violence.

Kahane began prioritizing Israel after he immigrated there in 1971, and the JDL's influence waned after he formally resigned as the group's leader in 1974 as the organization faced criminal indictments for arms smuggling and possessing explosives. In Israel, Kahane formed the *Kach* ("Thus!") political party, which promoted an explicitly anti-Arab Zionism and agitated the public in ways similar to the JDL.[354] For Kahane, Zionism

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[352] Yossi Klein Halevi, *Memoirs of a Jewish Extremist: An American Story* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1995), 111.

[353] Halevi. *Memoirs of a Jewish Extremist*, 109.

[354] The name "Kach" was taken from the motto of the Menachem Begin-commanded Irgun Tzavi Leumi Revisionist Zionist paramilitary organization that operated in Mandatory Palestine from 1931 to 1948 and used terrorism against Arabs and the British. Irgun's symbol was a hand holding a rifle over the map of Palestine and the Transjordan, with the phrase "*Rak Kach*" ("Only Thus"). Nur Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians: The Politics of Expansion* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 144.

was incompatible with democracy because Jews had a divine mandate to control the land as they wished as God's chosen people. Instead, Kahane's vision for Zionism was about Jewish exclusivity, dominance, and power.[355] Kahane's political message was clear and concise with regard to the Palestinians: "They Must Go."[356] *Kach's* platform was based on the idea that Arabs must emigrate because there was no such thing as a "good Arab," and it would therefore be impossible for two states to exist in the Land of Israel. In response to the assassination of eleven Israeli Olympic athletes in Munich in 1972, Kahane issued a clear statement proclaiming: "There is only one solution to Arab terror—Jewish counter-terror."[357] According to Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, Kahane and his associates drew mainly from the immigrant population in Israel coming from America and the Soviet Union, who began forming small Kahanist terror cells that resembled Salafi jihad cells in the early to mid 2000s.[358] The *Kach*-affiliated terror cell TNT (Terror *Neged* Terror —Terror Against

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[355] For an in-depth analysis of Kahane's Zionism and its evolution throughout his career, see Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 125–58.

[356] Kahane promoted taking land from Arabs by force and wanted to maintain strict quotas on the number of Arabs residing in Israel that would require periodic expulsions of Arabs, even those loyal to the Jewish state. Kahane also wanted to make sexual relations between Jews and Arabs a capital crime and advocated for a complete separation between Jews and Arabs in schools and other public places. Lastly, Kahane advocated for vigilantism against Arabs, promoting violence in retaliation for attacks against Jews. See Meir Kahane, *They Must Go* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1981); Gerald Cromer, *The Debate About Kahanism in Israeli Society 1894–1988* (New York: Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, 1988); Gerald Cromer, "The Creation of Others: A Case Study of Meir Kahane and his Opponents," in *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity,* ed. Laurence Silberstein and Robert Cohn (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 284–7; Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right,* 224–7, 231–3; Mergui and Simonnot, *Israel's Ayatollahs,* 20–22; Robert Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 155–7. Masalha regards Kahane's program toward Arabs as an "ethnic cleansing solution." Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 144.

[357] Mergui and Simonnot, *Israel's Ayatollahs*, 21; Pedahzur and Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 80–81.

[358] Pedahzur and Perliger explain that a key factor in both Kahanist terror cells and in Salafi jihad cells was the recruitment of immigrants who failed to assimilate to their new countries and who felt alienated from the values of the majority culture. Pedahzur and Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 75–7; see also Aviezer Ravitzky, "Roots of Kahanism: Consciousness and Political Reality," *The Jerusalem Quarterly* 39

Terror) was founded in 1974 by young American immigrants who met as children while attending Camp Jedel, a JDL paramilitary summer camp in the Catskill Mountains. The TNT's goal was to take revenge on Arabs in the name of Kahanism, and the semi-autonomous terror cell increased their violence in response to the Camp David Accords.[359] Through TNT, Kahane supported direct violence, including bombing attacks on West Bank Arab mayors in 1980;[360] the killing of two Arabs in the Old City of Jerusalem in by the American born Israeli soldier Alan Harry Goodman in 1982;[361] the killing of two teachers and a student at the Islamic University of Hebron in 1983;[362] and on March 15, 1984, three TNT members opened fire on an Arab bus with a semiautomatic rifle, injuring six Palestinians.[363]

Despite, or perhaps because of, Kahane's close affiliation with extra-judicial violence, *Kach* earned one seat in Israel's eleventh Knesset in 1984, receiving 25,907

(1986): 101; Ehud Sprinzak, "Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism II: Ideology and Politics," *Patterns and Prejudice* 19 no. 4 (1985): 8–9. According to Sprinzak, Kahane wanted to model TNT groups on terrorist cells supported by Arab governments who maintained plausible deniability for violence while providing material support for terrorist activities.

[359] According to Pedahzur and Perliger, the Camp David Accords were a watershed moment for Kahane and his movement that turned Kahanism from a subculture to a counterculture opposed to Menachem Begin, a person whom they had once viewed admirably. Pedahzur and Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 74–5. See also Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 80–87.

[360] David K. Shipler, "Israeli Officers Charged in Bombings," *The New York Times,* May 25, 1984, https://www.nytimes.com/1984/05/25/world/israeli-officers-charged-in-bombings.html.

[361] Goodman was a follower of Kahane's. "Soldier Gets Life Term in Dome of Rock Death," *The New York Times*, April 8, 1983, https://www.nytimes.com/1983/04/08/world/soldier-gets-life-term-in-dome-of-rock-death.html; "Temple Mount Shooters Release Rekindles Memories," *JWeekly,* November 7, 1997, https://www.jweekly.com/1997/11/07/temple-mount-shooter-s-release-rekindles-memories/.

[362] Richard Bernstein, "3 Slain as Gunmen Attack Hebron Islamic College," *The New York Times*, July 27,, 1983, https://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/27/world/3-slain-as-gunmen-attack-hebron-islamic-college.html; Mergui and Simonnot, *Israel's Ayatollahs,* 21-2; 51.

[363] Pedahzur and Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel,* 89–90.

votes.[364] Israeli political commentators believed that Kahane's election was an anomaly, and his new position in government would calm his rhetoric. His newfound parliamentary immunity, however, further emboldened him and stated his intent to "drive the country crazy" in his first press conference as an elected official, which he did.[365] After putting forth multiple explicitly anti-Arab proposals, *Kach* was ultimately barred from participating in the 1988 elections due to its racist and anti-democratic platform.[366] Kahanism as an ideology, however, would continue to thrive in Israel, despite Kahane's formal exclusion from Israeli politics and his eventual assassination.[367]

Kahane explicitly rejected the pacification of the Jewish tradition under the rabbis in favor of what he understood to be a more authentic, biblical understanding of violence, proclaiming: "A Jewish fist in the face of an astonished Gentile world that had not seen it for

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[364] Sprinzak points out that *Kach* saw a dramatic increase in support in the 1984 election, up from 4,396 votes in 1977, and 5,128 votes in 1981. Leon Wieseltier pointed to the upward trend in Kahane's popularity among young Israelis, with one poll of 600 Israeli high schools students expressing support at 42 per cent, with 11 promising votes for *Kach*. A later poll would show *Kach* earning 11 seats if an election were held in 1985. Ehud Sprinzak, "Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism I: Origins and Development," *Patterns of Prejudice* 19 no. 3 (1985): 20; Wieseltier, "The Demons of the Jews," 15. Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 152; Mergui and Simonnot, *Israel's Ayatollahs*, 22.

[365] Cromer, *The Debate About Kahanism,* 1.

[366] For a detailed account of Kahane's ban from Israeli politics with a focus on the legal ramifications, see part two, "Application: Democracy on the Defensive—Israel's reaction to the Kahanist Phenomenon," in Raphael Cohen-Almagor, *The Boundaries of Liberty and Tolerance* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 1994), 149–254. In support of the ban, Israeli President Chaim Herzog asserted that Kahane's "racism, discrimination and the negation of civil rights opposes the principles of the Torah of Israel and has no place in a Jewish state…and stands in complete contradiction to basic principles and highest human values of Judaism and Zionism as expressed in the Torah of Israel and the Declaration of Independence." Gerald Cromer, "Negotiating the Meaning of the Holocaust: An Observation on the Debate about Kahanism in Israeli Society," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 2 no. 2 (1987): 292.

[367] Aviezer Ravitzky summarizes Kahanism according to content and style. Content: demand for the denial of Israeli Arabs' civil rights, calls for the removal of Arabs from "Greater Israel," encouragement of violence against Arabs, a demand for separation between Jews and non-Jews in residential areas, educational institutions, beaches, the demand for the prohibition of sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews, the negation of a democratic regime in a Jewish state, the rejection of secular and liberal Jews as partners in dialogue; and style: abuse and revilement, provocation of Arabs, fomenting of nationalist, communal and religious hatreds, and exploitation of the helpless families of terror victims. Ravitzky, "Roots of Kahanism," 91.

two millennia, this is Kidush Hashem [the sanctification of the name of God]."[368] Magid suggests that Kahane's project was antirabbinic in two ways:

> First, he advocates a return to the biblical model of conquest as he understands it…Second, while part of the rabbinic project is arguably to reread the Bible through its own (exilic/diaspora) lenses, Kahane proposes the reverse…The Bible is turned into the lens through which the rabbis can now be revised and purified from foreign influence. Kahane sees himself championing a resurgence of biblical ideas of conquest, revenge, and purification–ideas that the rabbis of exilic times denuded, softened, and contextualized.[369]

Kahane manipulated Jewish tradition in order to shape a new Jewish ethos that embraced Jewish violence in order to achieve Jewish liberation through revenge and the physical humiliation of gentiles.[370] Magid explains that Kahane's ethics of violence consists of three units: violence as management, violence as politics, and violence as subject-formation.[371] In what follows, I use Magid's framework to illuminate how Kahane integrated Esau and Amalek into his ideology in order to support his calls for direct violence.[372]

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[368] Meir Kahane, "Hillul Hashem," an unpublished essay available for *Kach* members. Ehud Sprinzak, "Violence and Catastrophe in the Theology of Rabbi Meir Kahane: The Ideologization of Mimetic Desire," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3 no. 3 (1991): 50. According to Wieseltier, Kahane openly equated his ideology to "true" Judaism, stating "Kahanism is Judaism." Wieseltier, "The Demons of the Jews," 18.

[369] Shaul Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 180. Magid concludes: "Kahane is essentially neobiblical, and in many ways an antirabbinic thinker and perhaps his ties to Orthodoxy and normative Judaism prevent him from making that overt." Ibid., 188.

[370] Sprinzak, "Violence and Catastrophe in the Theology of Rabbi Meir Kahane," 51.

[371] According to Magid, "The first relates to anti-Semitism, the second to the American Jewish Establishment, and the third to reconstructing the Jewish subject after centuries of emasculation through abjection" Magid, "Anti-Semitism as Colonialism," *Journal of Jewish Ethics* 1 no. 2 (2015): 203.

[372] Despite Kahane's influence on contemporary Jewish extremism and the large amount of scholarly work on him during his lifetime and just after his assassination, there has been little scholarship done on him or his ideology since his death, outside of the biographical work of his wife, Libby. An exception is Shaul Magid's groundbreaking work, on which I depend throughout this section. Along with the articles already cited, see also Magid, *American Post-Judaism: Identity and Renewal in a Postethnic Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); "Is Meir Kahane Winning?: Reflections on Benjamin Netanyahu, the Hilltop Youth, and AIPAC," *Tikkun Magazine*, March 24, 2016, https://www.tikkun.org/is-meir-kahane-winning-reflections-on-benjamin-netanyahu-the-hilltop-youth-and-aipac; "Louis Farrakhan, Meir Kahane, and the Politics of Purity," *Tikkun Magazine*, March 23, 2018, https://www.tikkun.org/louis-farrakhan-meir-kahane-

Violence as Management: Kahane's Response to Antisemitism

According to Magid, Kahane's understanding of antisemitism was that it was ontological: "For Kahane, anti-Semitism was part of what it meant to be a gentile and living with anti-Semitism was part of what it meant to be a Jew."[373] Antisemitism was, for Kahane, sui generis compared to other forms of racism, and he saw any attempt to convince people of the errors of antisemitism as wholly irrational. He framed such irrationality using a familiar idiom:

> For our own sakes, let one thing be clear and let us not attempt to deceive ourselves. People, in the very best of times, do not very much like other people. People, in the very best of times, are jealous and envious and seek to build their own self-esteem by deprecating others. People, in the very best of times, are ethnically self-centered and tend to narrow the circle of truth as much as possible.
>
> And, above all, let us understand that people, in the very best of times, do not like Jews and that people in America, today, do not like Jews. They do not like them because they are too clever or too rigid, too aggressive or too clannish, too grasping or too much interested in supporting Israel. It is not a thing that is logical.... For ages we have sought to diagnose the condition in the hope of finding a cure and we have failed. In the end, we are left with the resigned words of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai: "It is natural law that Esau hates Jacob…"
>
> The Jew in America is not liked.[374]

Kahane's anthropology was inherently negative, and he here implemented Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai's famous axiom that Esau hates Jacob for his own use. Kahane consistently focused on how Jews fit into his negative view of humans and what he understood to be the logical antisemitism that ensued. The motif of Esau and Jacob was thus an obvious way for

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and-the-politics-of-purity; and "Shlomo Carlebach and Meir Kahane: The Difference and Symmetry Between Romantic and Materialist Politics," *American Jewish History* 100 no. 4 (2016): 461–484. See also Libby Kahane, *Rabbi Meir Kahane: His Life and Thought,* 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Urim, 2008–2015).

[373] Magid, "Anti-Semitism as Colonialism," 208. Magid summarizes Kahane's overall outlook using Esau: "Kahane's world could easily be simplified as 'Esau hates Jacob.'" Magid, *Meir Kahane,* 201. See also Cromer, "Negotiating the Meaning of the Holocaust," 290. Cromer quotes Kahane, "As long as one gentile lives opposite one Jew, the possibility of a Holocaust remains."

[374] Kahane, *Never Again!: A Program for Jewish Survival* (New York: Pyramid Books, 1971), 103. See also Cromer, "Negotiating the Meaning of the Holocaust," 290–1.

Kahane to frame his understanding of the eternality of antisemitism.[375]

The only logical response to such perpetual antisemitism from biblical times to today was through direct violence, as Magid explains: "According to Kahane, the Jews always have the same three choices: either (1) use violence to their benefit, (2) die by the sword, or (3) disappear through assimilation."[376] Each choice had a historical precedent as Israelites chose violence in the biblical narrative, medieval and modern Jews chose to die by the sword (a choice that culminated in the Holocaust), and contemporary Jews in America have chosen to disappear by assimilating into American society. "Kahane's 'ethics of violence' is thus an attempt to reconstitute the biblical psyche by reconstituting the Jewish subject emasculated by centuries of ghetto life."[377] Kahane advocated for direct violence and explicitly militated against the rabbinic precedent of pacification of direct violence that he understood to be responsible for the horrors of the Holocaust. Rather than the divine realm, Kahane saw direct, Jewish violence as a way to regulate Esau's natural antisemitism in the here and now using fear as the means to control it.[378]

Esau and Edom therefore functioned as two of Kahane's tools in a larger toolkit of violence. Kahane saw direct violence committed by Jews against gentile others as a way to manage the inevitable, natural, and violent antisemitism expressed my non-Jews toward Jews. Depicting non-Jews as Esau and Edom helped Kahane express his view that gentile violence was ontological and could only be controlled, not stopped, through direct violence.

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[375] Magid uses Afro-Pessimism as a corollary for how Kahane understood antisemitism and suggests viewing Kahane as a Judeo-Pessimist. Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 85–87, 93–96.

[376] Magid, "Anti-Semitism as Colonialism," 209.

[377] Magid, "Anti-Semitism as Colonialism," 209.

[378] Magid, "Anti-Semitism as Colonialism," 215.

Violence as Politics: Kahane's Response to the American Jewish Establishment

Antisemitism was Kahane's greatest antagonist, and Arabs were his greatest enemy, but his passion for fighting against Jew-hatred and Palestinians was nearly matched by his passion for fighting the liberal American Jew.[379] According to Halevi: "No Jewish leader spoke as incessantly of love for the Jewish peoples as Kahane did, and none so despised his fellow Jews."[380] Kahane was harsh in his criticism of what he saw as the violent hypocrisy of the "American Jewish Establishment" (AJE). According to Kahane, the AJE committed to a variety of global human rights issues, but ignored the suffering of Soviet and Syrian Jews, and was more concerned with ending the Vietnam War than ending Arab terror in the State of Israel. Magid explains that for Kahane, Jewish liberalism acted as an accomplice to passive antisemitism, and that the American Jewish Establishment (AJE) "creates, or perpetuates, anti-Semitism, allowing the Jews to do the work of the anti-Semites."[381] Kahane went so far as to proclaim: "The worst anti-Semites are the Jewish kind; few Jew-haters can reach the pinnacle of the self-hating Jewish one. Indeed, it is the supreme irony that the Left, which is the deadly enemy of the Jew, should be tied, as an albatross, to his neck to destroy him."[382] According to Kahane, the fact that Jews in America supported a liberal, Democratic platform that promoted inclusivity rather than Jewish exclusivity, would eventually lead to the death of Judaism as a whole.

Kahane's hatred for liberal Jews was visceral, and for Kahane, the worst thing the

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[379] See Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 15–52.

[380] Halevi, *Memoirs of a Jewish Extremist*, quoted in Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 1.

[381] Magid, "Anti-Semitism as Colonialism," 220.

[382] Kahane, *Never Again!*, 84.

AJE did was promote what he understood to be a loss of Jewish identity in favor of what he sarcastically called "the Melt," that is, assimilation:

> He [the American Jew] put his trust in the Melting Pot, that great and wondrous myth that the Jew elevated to an article of faith…
>
> Melt! This was the new Categorical Imperative. Melt! This was the way to assimilate properly and with honor, with none of the gnawing pangs of conscience that accompanied the European form of escape from Jewish conversion. Melt! Was there a happier concept for one whose goal in life was to make it? Melting meant the blurring of distinctions. Melting was the great equalitarian credo of the frantic American Jew.
>
> "Hear O Israel, America is our G-d; America is the land of One."[383]

By evoking the Shema, the centerpiece of the daily morning and evening prayer services and the closest thing to an affirmation of faith available in the Jewish tradition, Kahane sarcastically positioned assimilation as the ultimate goal for American Jews and the AJE. It is with "the Melt" that Kahane once again drew on the Esau motif to underline his point:

> One cannot take a man into the New World without ridding him of the Old World inferiority, and the first-generation son of the laboring zeyde carried his albatross around his circumcised neck. It consisted of his embarrassment with his "antiquated" faith, his fear of what the gentile might think of his medieval and so-very-strange differences, his distaste for anything that might link him to a foreign, too-Jewish past. And so the hater of Jewish fanaticism became a fanatic in his effort to escape.
>
> He took Jewish substance and traded it for a bagels-and-lox Judaism…He took a synagogue inhabited by Heaven and substituted for it a Jewish center run by a caterer. In his self-inferiority and vague sense of shame he cast away the tradition of a meaningful, disciplined Jacob and became an American Esau—selling his magnificent birthright for the lentils of the American good life.
>
> The hatred and contempt manifested by the anti-Semite is an attempt to degrade the Jew. It is an effort to instill within him a feeling of inferiority. In the case of the American Jew, it succeeded too often.[384]

Kahane sees the progressive American Jew as a collective sellout that values assimilation over tradition; a literal Esau, someone willing to betray his birthright in order to fit into a

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[383] Kahane, *Never Again!*, 57–58.

[384] Kahane, *Never Again!,* 56–57.

world that rejects him. By becoming American, the AJE actively and intentionally disregarded the beauty of Judaism's ancient traditions in favor of a vapid, superficial religion as a way to assimilate. Kahane transferred his loathing of the progressive American Jew onto secular and leftist Jews when he immigrated to Israel, where he referred to them as "Hellenists" and "Hebrew-speaking goyyim."[385]

Kahane thus saw the AJE's political expression as an opportunity to other them violently because of what he perceived as Jewish self-hatred and sabotage. For Kahane, it was anti-Jewish to support liberal politics in any way, and the only authentic Jewish political expression should be in support of right-wing policies and politicians because they allow Jews to promote Jewish exclusivity through their politics.

Violence as Subject-Formation: Kahane's Reconstruction of the Jewish Subject

According to Kahane, the American Jewish Establishment was not only antisemitic, it also perpetuated a stereotypical image of the neurotic and weak American Jew. According to Magid, Kahane believed the AJE promoted a false image of the passive Jew that was counter to Jewish tradition; an image cultivated by gentiles, not the rabbis. In response, Kahane advocated for proper Jewish identity formation based on the use of violence as identity affirmation. The image of the passive Jew was, to Kahane, "an idol that must be smashed by the 'real' Jew."[386] For Kahane, Abraham and Moses exemplified the "real" Jews when Abraham breaks his father's idols for the sake of monotheism in Midrash,[387] and when

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[385] Ravitzky, "Roots of Kahanism," 93, 98–99; see also Cromer, "Negotiating the Meaning of the Holocaust," 291–2.

[386] Magid, "Anti-Semitism as Colonialism," 221.

Moses killed the Egyptian for beating his Hebrew kinsman.[388] The latter was an image Kahane used to stir up crowds of Jewish supporters:

> [Kahane:] Never again will Jews watch silently while other Jews die. Never again!
> [Crowd:] Never a-gain! Never a-gain! Never a-*gain*!
> [Kahane:] Tonight we have a different Jew, a fighting Jew! But this fighting Jew drives the respectables (sic), the Nice Irvings, up their wood paneled offices. 'Violence is unJewish (sic)! The Bible says so!' In the Bible we find the story of a man named Moses, who saw an Egyptian beating a Jew. And what did Moses do? Set up a committee to investigate the root causes of Egyptian anti-Semitism? The Bible says, 'And he smote the Egyptian.'"[389]

The "real" Jew was a radical that exhibited *Barzel*, iron, which "implies a toughness in dealing with those who would harm or destroy the Jew" and his honor.[390] But while Kahane argued that violence was inherent to Judaism, he used Esau, ironically, to acknowledge that the violence necessary for modern combat comes from outside Judaism:

> Jewish honor cannot be sullied. It must be defended from insult and degradation, for Jewish honor symbolizes the Jewish people. A successful attack upon the first must presage an assault on the second.
>
> And Barzel means more than this. It means understanding the many lessons of Jewish history, lessons bought with Jewish blood. They are lessons of Jabotinsky, the lessons of the Jewish underground in Palestine, the lessons of Jewish partisans in Eastern Europe, the lessons of the State of Israel. They are lessons that underline the principle of Jewish survival: When one deals with Esau he must be prepared to use the weapons of Esau. More important, he must be proficient in their use. In short, in the defense of Jewish rights, property, and lives, the Jew must learn the art of Barzel, the art of physical self-defense. It is better to know how and not have to fight, than to have to fight and not know how.[391]

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[387] Bereshit Rabbah 38:13.

[388] Exodus 2:11–15.

[389] Halevi, *Memoirs of a Jewish Extremist*, 95. See also Kahane, *Never Again!*, 136 and Kahane's interview in *Playboy Magazine*ˆ 70. According to Magid, Kahane referred to Moses killing the Egyptian as the first Jewish act. Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 212 n. 29.

[390] Kahane, *Never Again!*, 131. Kahane adapted the concept of *Barzel* from the Revisionist Zionist ideology of Jabotinsky, who explained that *Barzel Yisrael* meant that Jews no longer needed to bow to oppressors and would instead respond to gentile violence in kind. Sprinzak, "Violence and Catastrophe in the Theology of Rabbi Meir Kahane," 55; Sprinzak, "Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism II: 7–8. With regard to Kahane's "radical" Judaism, see Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 53–74.

Moses exemplified the "real" Jew, the one that uses violence to advocate for self-determination and power, but even the "real" Jew must draw from Esau in order to learn violence. True, meaning iconoclastic and violent, Judaism lived on in tradition through the aggressive Zionism of Betar and the paramilitary organization the Irgun, as well as in the resistance to the Nazi Holocaust, but Kahane emphasized that Jews would need to learn modern violence from Esau in order to stand up to Esau. Barzel was at the Jewish core, but the AJE had expropriated the violence necessary to express such toughness:

> In the wake of a sudden upsurge of Jewish self-help, physical retaliation against neighborhood anti-Jewish hoodlums and attacks against Soviet oppressors, Jewish leadership had banded together and decreed: Violence is intolerable. Violence is un-Jewish. Force is the province of Esau–if not the devil. A Jew must not stain his moral code of honor by the use of violence.[392]

Kahane understood the pacification of the Jewish tradition not as the work of the rabbis, but instead as the work of the American Jewish Establishment. For Kahane, it is, in reality, fundamentally un-Jewish to be passive, and he mockingly invoked Esau again to refer to the hyperbole he understood the AJE to use in order to maintain a non-violent image. But while Kahane's use of Esau was indeed concerning, it was with Amalek that he successfully encouraged major ideological shifts within Judaism, as well as some of the most gruesome terrorist attacks in Jewish history.

Amalek in Kahanist Ideology and Direct Violence

According to Clive Jones: "Kahanism consciously adopted a metahistorical approach which applied the term *amalekh* to describe all enemies, past, present, and future of the Jewish

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[391] Kahane, *Never Again!*, 132. See also Kahane, *The Story of the Jewish Defense League*, 143.

[392] Kahane, *Never Again!*, 135.

people…the term was applied by Kahane to include all enemies of the Jewish people in general, and the Palestinians in particular."[393] Kahane's final book, *Or HaRa'ayon: The Jewish Idea*, was explicitly theological in a way that his previous works were not, and drew extensively on Amalek to make the argument that violent revenge was a theological concept indigenous to Judaism.[394] In a section titled "Revenge brings the Redemption,"[395] Kahane used Amalek to explain just how that works, i.e., how revenge in God's name will bring redemption to the Jewish people.[396] Kahane begins his treatise on revenge with the familiar fourth kingdom before moving on to Amalek:

> Hashem is not just a "G-d of vengeance," a "zealous and avenging G-d," at present. The complete redemption, as well, will come about through G-d's rising in His fury to avenge the profanation of his name and the spilt blood of His servants. As *Yalkut Shimoni* teaches, "Woe to the fourth kingdom, on which G-d will reak (sic) vengeance by himself.[397]

Kahane referred to the *Yalkut Shimoni,* a late medieval aggadic compilation on the Hebrew Bible, to connect the fourth kingdom to his contemporary circumstances. Kahane appears at first to advocate for the rabbis' form of pacification and their understanding of the four kingdoms motif by giving violent agency to God, who "will reak (sic) vengeance by himself."

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[393] Clive Jones, "Ideo-Theology and the Jewish State: From Conflict to Conciliation?" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26 no. 1 (1999): 16.

[394] Meir Kahane, *Or HaRa'ayon: The Jewish Idea,* trans. Raphael Blumberg (Jerusalem: Institute for the Publication of the Writings of Rabbi Meir Kahane, 2012). For an extended analysis of *The Jewish Idea*, see Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 159–90. Magid describes the book's underlying ideology as "militant post-Zionist apocalypticism."

[395] Kahane, *The Jewish Idea*, 290–294.

[396] Magid points out how important the concept of revenge is to Kahane in *The Jewish Idea,* explaining that "the final twelve chapters, comprising more than two hundred pages, are devoted to messianic themes and revenge plays a role in almost every one." Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 184. While Kahane uses the language of revenge, it is perhaps more aptly described as "redirected aggression," that is "the targeting of an innocent bystander in response to one's own pain and injury." David P. Barash and Judith E. Lipton, *Payback: Why We Retaliate, Redirect Aggression, and Take Revenge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.

[397] Kahane, *Or HaRa'ayon*, 290.

In reality, however, Kahane used the combination of Amalek and the four kingdoms to promote direct violence against gentiles:

> Surely G-d's name is profaned by what the nations have done to Israel…and for this they deserve punishment. Yet when they *openly and explicitly* speak out against G-d and heap insults upon Him, they deserve *sevenfold* punishment, for this constitutes brazen, insolent profanation of G-d's name. It is open war against G-d.
>
> This is the key to understanding why G-d was more angry at Amalek than at any other nation. Other nations going out to war against Israel profane G-d's name indirectly, for by fighting G-d's people, they make it clear that they are unafraid of G-d, and such a profanation cannot be atoned. Yet their deed cannot equal that of nations which start with an open declaration (like Goliath) against G-d. This was the awful sin of Amalek, regarding which it is said (*Ex.* 17:16), "The hand is on G-d's throne. The L-ord shall be at war with Amalek for all generations."[398]

Adam Afterman and Gedaliah Afterman explain that Kahane's violent theology is based on the idea that the people of Israel, the Jews, "are a collective mythical being ontologically rooted in divinity."[399] Together and under an Amalekite framework, God and the Jews have fought mythical enemies from the beginning as a collective, and that perpetual struggle makes them one entity. Amalek was uniquely hostile toward Israel and God, which justifies God's eternal violence toward Amalek and the equation of Jews with God. But while Amalek was uniquely hostile toward Israel and their God, Amalek is not a unique figure in Kahane's theology. For Kahane, anyone who is hostile toward Jews can be Amalek:

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[398] Kahane, *Or HaRa'ayon*, 291. Emphasis Kahane's.

[399] Adam Afterman and Gedaliah Afterman, "Meir Kahane and Contemporary Jewish Theology of Revenge" in *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 98 no. 2 (2015): 203. See also Cromer, "The Creation of the Other," 286; Pedahzur and Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel,* 74; Ravitzky, "Roots of Kahanism," 93–95; Sprinzak, "Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism II," 3–4; Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 150–58.

> Amalek's sin is the waging of brazen warfare against G-d, as they did when Israel left Egypt. *Yet when any other nation, as well, curses and fights G-d, Amalek's sin clings to them and they become like Amalek.* Thus, although Amalek, the nation, did not destroy Jerusalem, our sages say that Jerusalem's destruction constituted Amalek attacking G-d's throne. This teaches that whoever attacks G-d's throne is called Amalek. We must understand and remember this principle for our own times.[400]

Kahane thus used Amalek as Israel's eternal antagonist in order to cloak any perceived enemy throughout Jewish history and to reflect one common, mythical struggle against an ontological other that consistently profanes God's name by attacking Jews. His rhetoric distinguishes between the real Amalek and the perceived ones by suggesting they "become *like* Amalek," but the fact that Amalek's sins "cling to them" makes them functionally the same and wholly other from Jews. In the end, Jews and gentiles are so fundamentally different that they "constitute two completely separate species,"[401] he says, with Arabs functioning as the gentile *par excellence*.

Afterman and Afterman explain further that Kahane's divine transitive property dictates that Amalekite violence requires a violent response. Jews are "obligated to use all means possible to take revenge against their mutual enemies and to rehabilitate their mutual pride and status," because Jewish pride and status are the same as God's.[402] Finally, according to Kahane, the establishment of the State of Israel mandated that Jews must use their sovereign power to bring redemption for both God and the Jews through violence against Amalek:

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[400] Kahane, *Or HaRa'ayon,* 293. Emphasis Kahane's.

[401] Cromer, "The Creation of Others," 284.

[402] Afterman and Afterman, "Meir Kahane and Contemporary Jewish Theology of Revenge," 203.

> G-d established a principle that as long as Israel possess a sovereign government with the power to blot out Amalek's memory, it is a mitzvah and duty for them to do so…
>
> Only after the Temple was destroyed and Israel were exiled from their land and their state, and no loner had the chance to blot out Amalek's memory, did G-d say that henceforth, He would Himself blot out any Amalek that dared to confront Him [We must understand that today, with G-d kindly having restored out land and sovereignty, we must once more share with Him in blotting out Amalek if its existence is clear to us.]
>
> It follows that the redemption will come in the wake of G-d's desire to take His revenge, thereby sanctifying His great and awesome name.[403]

For Kahane, the way to initiate the redemptive process was for Jews to use the apparatus of the state, take up arms against the gentiles, and commit violence against non-Jews as a way to usher in the eschaton and glorify God.[404] Kahane promoted this same concept throughout his career, originally depicting the dichotomy as *hillul hashem* (desecration of the name of God) and *kidush hashem* (the sanctification of the name of God). He explained: "If the Diaspora, with its humiliations, defeats, persecutions, second class status of a minority…means hillil hashem, then a sovereign Jewish State which provides the Jew home, majority status, land of his own, a military of his own and a victory over the defeated Gentile in the battlefield —*is exactly the opposite,* Kidush Hashem."[405] Kahane's violent theology was unique, as Ehud Sprinzak explained: "There is clearly a cosmic element in Kahane's theology of violence, an insatiable drive for revenge which goes beyond time and space and becomes metahistorical. Not a single Jew before Rabbi Meir Kahane had

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[403] Kahane, *Or HaRa'ayon*, 293–4. Square brackets his.

[404] Afterman and Afterman, "Meir Kahane and Contemporary Jewish Theology of Revenge," 200–201. See also Sprinzak, "Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism II," 4–5 and Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 217–20.

[405] Kahane, "Hillul Hashem," in Sprinzak, "Violence and Catastrophe in the Theology of Rabbi Meir Kahane," 49. See also Jones, "Ideo-Theology and the Jewish State," 15–6.

systematically resorted to this language and imagery."[406]

Beyond Amalek, Kahane also referred to Arabs as "vermin," "dogs," "foxes,"[407] and at perhaps his most extreme, as a cancer:

> The Arabs are cancer, cancer, cancer in the midst of us…I am telling you what each of you thinks deep in his heart: there is only one solution, no other, no partial solutions: the Arabs out! Out!...Do not ask me how…Let me become defense minister for two months and you will not have a single cockroach around here! I promise you a *clean* Eretz Yisrael! Give me the power to take care of them! [standing ovation][408]

But while Kahane took his rhetoric to the extreme, his anti-Arab sentiment has a precedent in Soloveitchik and Leibowitz's constructions of the Arab other outlined above because, like Leibowitz and Soloveitchik, Kahane sees conflict with Palestinians as merely the latest manifestation of violent Jew-hatred. Learned and respected Jews like Soloveitchik and Leibowitz thus set a precedent in which Arabs were yet another Amalek comparable to the Nazis, or were representative of the eternal struggle between Jacob and Esau, God and Amalek. Kahane followed established precedent, even with regard to references to Nazis. In a flier distributed on Holocaust Remembrance Day in 1987, Kahane stated:

> The Nazis of Bit-Zeit, leave our country
> There will not be a second holocaust!
> Hundreds of Jews were slaughtered by Arabs in Israel before even one Jew was destroyed in Nazi Germany. Today they continue to run wild with the clear aim of carrying out a new holocaust of the Jewish people. We will not allow the new Nazis to repeat the Holocaust. We come today, on Holocaust Remembrance Day, to Bit-Zeit University, the center of incitement of the new Nazis in order to tell them
> Nazis leave our country.[409]

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[406] Sprinzak, "Violence and Catastrophe in the Theology of Rabbi Meir Kahane," 63.

[407] Ravitzky, "Roots of Kahanism," 96.

[408] Orit Shohat, "Don't Ask Me How," *Ha'aretz Magazine,* May 31, 1985, 5; Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 239.

[409] Cromer, *The Debate About Kahanism in Israeli Society*, 35.

Kahane's politics were focused on convincing Arabs to leave the State of Israel, but his use of Amalekite and Nazi imagery was clear incitement to violence; a call for the eradication of an eternal enemy as a prerequisite to Jewish redemption, and his followers heeded that call. An Egyptian-American named El Sayyid Nosair assassinated Kahane after a speech at the Marriott East Side Hotel in Manhattan on November 5, 1990, but Kahanism's legacy continued to influence and incite direct violence.[410]

Baruch Goldstein and the Cave of the Patriarchs Massacre

Baruch Goldstein was an American-Israeli physician and member of the Jewish Defense League and *Kach*, as well as one of Kahane's devoted students.[411] On February 25, 1994, Goldstein murdered twenty-nine Palestinians and injured over one hundred with an assault rifle as they prayed during Ramadan, which overlapped that day with Purim.[412] According to the political scientist and expert on contemporary Middle Eastern history Ian Lustick, "By mowing down Arabs he [Goldstein] believed wanted to kill Jews, Goldstein was re-enacting part of the Purim story."[413]

The attack took place at the Ibrahimi Mosque, located inside the *Machpela* cave, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, in Hebron. Goldstein dressed as an IDF soldier and carried an IDF-issued Galil automatic assault rifle. The mosque was full, with as many as eight hundred

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[410] Kahane's funeral was one of the largest in Israeli history, attended by almost 150,000. Kahane was eulogized by well-respected rabbis such as Shlomo Carlebach, Moshe Tendler, a professor of medical ethics at Yeshiva University, and the Sephardic chief rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 192–3.

[411] Goldstein spoke at Kahane's funeral. Afterman and Afterman, "Meir Kahane and Contemporary Jewish Theology of Revenge," 210.

[412] Pedahzur and Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 69–70.

[413] Ian S. Lustic, *For the Land and the Lord: Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994), x. See also Jones, "Ideo-Theology and the Jewish State," 17–18.

worshippers attending prayers.[414] The attack went on for nearly ten minutes and the mosque's security guard, Mohammad Suleiman Abu Saleh, reported that Goldstein was trying to kill as many people as possible, describing the gruesome scene with bodies and blood everywhere.[415] Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin condemned the attack, calling it a "loathsome, criminal act of murder,"[416] and the Israeli government opened an official inquiry to investigate the massacre.[417] But while many criticized Goldstein's actions, a sizeable contingent of Jewish extremists celebrated the attack and Goldstein's murderous actions. Kahanists released a statement within hours of the violence, declaring that they "mourn the death of the martyr Baruch Goldstein, who died this morning in Hebron in the sanctification of God's name."[418] Jews gathered en masse to honor Goldstein after his funeral, with the New York Times reporting: "Dozens hugged and kissed the tombstone. Some kneeled to kiss the grave itself, including one young man who cried out: 'Hero of Israel! Hero of Israel! There should be more like him.' 'Like Touching the Saint.'"[419] Goldstein was interred in Kiryat Arba, an Israeli settlement in Hebron and Kahanist

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[414] George J Church and Lisa Beyer, "When Fury Rules," *Time,* March 7, 1994; and "Jewish Settler Kills 30 at Holy Site," *BBC News,* February 25, 1994, https://web.archive.org/web/20170706170942/http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/february/25/newsid_4167000/4167929.stm.

[415] Church and Beyer, "When Fury Rules"; and "Jewish Settler Kills 30 at Holy Site," BBC News.

[416] Church and Beyer, "When Fury Rules"; "Jewish Settler Kills 30 at Holy Site," BBC News.

[417] Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Commission of Inquiry – Massacre at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron," June 26, 1994, https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/aboutisrael/state/law/pages/commission%20of%20inquiry-%20massacre%20at%20the%20tomb%20of%20the.aspx.

[418] Pedahzur and Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, 71.

[419] Clyde Haberman, "Hundreds of Jews Gather to Honor Hebron Killer," *New York Times,* April 1, 1994, https://www.nytimes.com/1994/04/01/world/hundreds-of-jews-gather-to-honor-hebron-killer.html?pagewanted=1.

stronghold, across the street from Kahane Park.[420] His grave, embossed with the inscription, "a martyr murdered in sanctifying God's name…gave his soul for the people of Israel," soon became a shrine and pilgrimage site for militant Jews, and prominent Kahanists continue to praise Goldstein publicly to this day.[421]

The Permeation of Kahanism in Contemporary Judaism and Mainstream Israeli Society

Upon Kahane's election to the Knesset, the Hebrew weekly magazine *Koteret Roshit* declared: "It is possible that the day will come when we will say to our grandchildren that it all began in 1984."[422] It was a warning against the rise of Jewish fascism among the Israeli public, and a prediction that has unfortunately come to fruition. Kahane's violent legacy lived on through Goldstein, and Kahanism has had a lasting and galvanizing influence on a specific sector of the Orthodox Jewish world. Magid argues convincingly throughout his monograph on Kahane that "many of his basic precepts have been embraced among present-day American Jewry."[423] Fomented by two Intifadas, suicide bombings, Israeli and Arab support for the PLO, wars against Hezbollah and Hamas in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, and extended periods of economic uncertainty, a critical mass of Israeli society has

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[420] The inscription on the sign at the entrance to the park reads in Hebrew: "Tourist park – Named after the saint Rabbi Meir Kahane, May God Avenge His Blood – Lover of Israel – Great in Torah – Hero of action – Murdered for sanctifying the holy name – 18th of Cheshvan 5751."

[421] "Israel Removes Shrine to Mosque Murderer," *CNN,* December 29, 1999, https://web.archive.org/web/20051114140828/http://archives.cnn.com/1999/WORLD/meast/12/29/israel.goldstein/index.html.

[422] "Kahane, Maki, Miari: the Victory," *Koteret Roshit* (Hebrew), July 25, 1984, 8.

[423] Magid, *Meir Kahane,* 8.

become especially welcoming of Kahane's hateful rhetoric.[424] Sprinzak credits Kahane's lasting success to his skills wielding propaganda like classical fascists: "What made Kahane so resemble the propaganda masters of classical fascism was his incredible demagoguery and linguistic opportunism."[425] According to Sprinzak, Kahane was able "speak to different publics in the same language," that is, he was able to promote his brand of hatred to any audience, whether in the yeshiva or in the market, and he used Esau and Amalek as a part of his larger propagandistic efforts. But while Kahane was a master of propaganda, he was not a particularly deep theologian or scholar. Learned, accomplished, and respected rabbis, however, began following Kahane's lead, bolstering his brand of Arab hatred beginning in the early 1880s by providing religious authority for his ideology.[426]

Among them was Rabbi Yisrael Hess, the campus rabbi at Bar Ilan University,who in 1980 wrote "Genocide: A Commandment of the Torah" for *Bat Kol,* Bar Ilan's student magazine. There, he projected the Israeli/Palestinian conflict onto the war between Israel and Amalek and argued that Palestinian Arabs are direct descendants:

> Against this holy war God declares a counter jihad...In order to emphasize that this is the background for the annihilation and that this is what the war is all about, that it is not merely a conflict between two peoples [Jews and Palestinians]...God does not rest content that we destroy Amalek "blot out the memory of Amalek" he also mobilizes personally for this war...because, as has been said, he has a personal interest in the matter, it is a prime goal for us as well.[427]

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[424] Sprinzak, "Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism II," 11. See also Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 195–201.

[425] Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 240.

[426] Relaying his experience of being recruited into the JDL as a youth, Wieseltier said: "Though he called himself a rabbi, he did not seem very learned. We did not care. His appeal was not to our minds." Wieseltier, "The Demons of the Jews," 24.

[427] Yisrael Hess, "Genocide: A Commandment of the Torah" in *Bat Kol*, the student publication of Bar Ilan University, February 26, 1980. See also Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 123; Jaffee, "The Return of Amalek," 61; Friedman, *The False Prophet*, 280; Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 129–31.

The article provoked uproar that led to a campus scandal at Bar Ilan and ended with Rabbi Hess being fired, but the anti-Arab sentiment continued to develop in rabbinic circles. In 1984, Rabbi Moshe Segal equated Palestinians in the Occupied Territories with Amalek in an attempt to defend Jewish settlement ideology in the West Bank: "One should have mercy on all creatures…but the treatment of Amalek—is different. The treatment of those who would steal our land—is different."[428] Segal then further justified Jews confiscating Palestinian land by quoting Num 33:

> You must drive out all the inhabitants of the land as you advance…and settle there, for to you have I given the land to possess it…But if you will not drive out the inhabitants of the land as you advance, any whom you let remain shall be as barbed hooks in your eyes, and as thorns in your sides. They shall continually dispute your possession of the land in which you dwell. And what I meant to do to them, I will do to you.[429]

In 1989, after a terrorist attack committed by thirty yeshiva students against Palestinians in the Occupied Territories that ended with the shooting death of a thirteen-year-old girl, Rabbi Yitzhak Ginsberg defended the students, arguing that "it should be recognized that Jewish blood and a goy's blood are not the same. The people of Israel must rise and declare in public that a Jew and a goy are not, God forbid, the same. Any trial that assumes that Jews and goyim are equal is a travesty of justice."[430] Then, in September 1994, Ginsberg published a pamphlet entitled "Baruch haGever." Translated literally as "blessed is the man," The title was a double entendre referencing both Jer 17:7 ("Blessed is the man who

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[428] Friedman, *The False Prophet*, 259–60; Pedahzur and Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel,* 84–6; Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel's Radical Right*, 269–70.

[429] Friedman, *The False Prophet*, 260.

[430] Friedman, *The False Prophet*, 259.

trusts in the Lord, Whose trust is the Lord alone") and Baruch Goldstein.[431] The pamphlet provided theological justification for Goldstein's terrorist attack and outlined five *mitzvot* that Goldstein fulfilled through his violent attack: revenge, removal of evil, *Kiddush Ha'shem*, deliverance of souls, and war.[432]

Steven Jacobs points out a key difference between Jewish discourse on Esau and Amalek before the twentieth century and Kahane et al. is that Jews had little to no recourse to act out violence against perceived others until the creation of the State of Israel: "The vagaries of history being what they were and are, until the present moment, Jews continued to find themselves vulnerable, with little to no opportunity to put into practice this most unusual and demanding of obligations in response to what was done to them by their hated enemies."[433] Now, with the backing of a Jewish nation-state, rabbinic proclamations against the Palestinians using Esau and Amalek carry different weight than when Leibowitz and Soloveitchik began altering the motif in the mid-twentieth century. And while Kahane was able to find lasting theological support in the religious community, his most successful legacy has been in the realm of Israeli political ideology. Kahane's political success is most apparent in the evolution of views by members of Likud, the

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[431] The pamphlet's subtitle, "Five General Commandments that are Intrinsic Perspectives in the Act of Saint Rabbi Baruch Goldstein," removed any remaining ambiguity.

[432] Raphael Cohen-Almagor, "Boundaries of Freedom of Expression before and after Prime Minster Rabin's Assassination," in *Liberal Democracy and the Limits of Tolerance: Essays in Honor and Memory of Yitzhak Rabin,* ed. Raphael Cohen-Almagor (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 87. See also Don Seeman, "Violence, Ethics, and Divine Honor in Modern Jewish Thought," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 73 no. 4 (2005): 1017–1028; Don Seeman, "God's Honor, Violence, and the State," in *Ploughshares into Swords? Reflections on Religion and Violence: Essays from the Institute for Theological Inquiry*, ed. Robert W. Jenson and Eugene Korn (Efrat, Israel: The Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation, 2014); and Tessa Satherley, "'The Simple Jew': The 'Price Tag' Phenomenon, Vigilantism, and Rabbi Ginsburgh's Political Kabbalah," *Melilah* 10 (2013): 57–91. For a more comprehensive list of those calling Arabs the "Amalekites of Today," see Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians*, 127–33.

[433] Steven Leonard Jacobs, "Rethinking Amalek in This 21st Century," *Religions* 8 (2017): 7. See also Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, 104–105.

largest and most powerful right-wing political party in Israel today, and the party of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. When Kahane and *Kach* were banned from participating in the 1988 election, Likud head Yitzhak Shamir explicitly rejected Kahane, stating: "The Kahane phenomenon is negative, detrimental and dangerous."[434] And Israeli M.K. Michael Eitan, also representing Likud, gave a speech to the Knesset Rules Committee in which he explicitly compared *Kach*'s platform to the Nuremburg Laws of 1935.[435] Today, however, Likud openly embraces Kahanism. During the Israeli national election in late March 2021, the hardline Religious Zionist Party, who united with the explicitly Kahanist *Otzma Yehudit* (Jewish Power) party through a deal brokered by Netanyahu himself, received more than 194,000 votes.[436] The result was that the Religious Zionists received six seats in the Knesset, with one going to the former *Kach* youth coordinator Itamar Ben-Gvir.[437] Ben-Gvir is the first Kahanist to serve in the Knesset since *Kach* was banned in 1988, and in his first speech as an MK in late April, Ben-Gvir openly praised Kahane for his political influence, as well as his Kahanist colleagues who had been barred from participating in Israeli politics by the Israeli High Court due to their incitement of racial

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[434] Mergui and Simonnot, *Israel's Ayatollahs*, 23.

[435] Cromer, "Negotiating the Meaning of the Holocaust," 292.

[436] Jeremy Sharon, "The Smotrich Phenomenon—How Religious Zionist Party got 194,000 Votes," *Jerusalem Post*, March 24, 2021, https://www.jpost.com/israel-elections/the-smotrich-phenomenon-how-religious-zionist-party-got-194000-votes-663065; Gil Hoffman, "Israel Elections: Netanyahu Pushes Kahanist into Knesset," *Jerusalem Post*, February 3, 2021, https://www.jpost.com/israel-elections/israel-elections-netanyahu-pushes-kahanist-into-knesset-657724.

[437] Judy Maltz, "The Lawyer for Jewish Terrorists Who Started Out by Stealing Rabin's Car Emblem," *Haaretz,* January 4, 2016, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-jewish-terrorism-s-star-lawyer-1.5383915; Gershon Baskin, "Who is Itamar Ben-Gvir, the loyal student of Meir Kahane?" *Jerusalem Post,* February 17, 2021, https://www.jpost.com/opinion/who-is-itamar-ben-gvir-the-loyal-student-of-meir-kahane-opinion-659310.

hatred.[438] In addition to Israeli politics, Kahanists have also continued to find success establishing far-right NGOs in Israel such as Lehava, an anti-miscegenation non-profit. Started by another Kahane protégé, Ben Zion Gopstein, Lehava boasts 10,000 members that operate as patrols to "defend" Jewish women from Arabs and run a hotline for people to report Jews in interfaith relationships.[439] On April 22, 2021, Lehava organized an anti-Arab pogrom in which hundreds of Jewish Israelis marched to Damascus Gate and then to the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah chanting "Death to Arabs." Group text messages among the organizers, whose administrators include Ben-Gvir, expressed violent intent: "We're burning Arabs today, the Molotov cocktails are already in the trunk."[440]

Kahanist ideology has thus seeped into the Israeli mainstream. Kahanism has gone from being considered extreme and obscure to being a feature of contemporary religious Zionist politics and society, a terrifying evolution dependent on Esau and Amalek.[441] Moshe Feiglin, former Likud activist and Knesset member from 2013 to 2015 said: "The Arabs engage in typical Amalek behavior. I can't prove this genetically, but this is the behavior of Amalek." Benzi Lieberman, director of the Israel Lands Authority, said: "The Palestinians are Amalek! We will destroy them. We won't kill them all. But we will destroy their ability

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[438] Jeremy Sharon, "Ben-Gvir praises Kahane, hilltop settlers in maiden Knesset speech," *Jerusalem Post*, April 26, 2021, https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/ben-gvir-praises-kahane-hilltop-settlers-in-maiden-knesset-speech-666392?_ga=2.233649305.64198716.1.

[439] Yardena Schwartz, "Israel's Alt-Right is Now Mainstream—Are Lawmakers Doing Enough to Stop It?" *Newsweek,* March 7, 2018, https://www.newsweek.com/2018/03/16/israel-alt-right-mainstream-lawmakers-stop-it-832386.html.

[440] Nir Hasson, "Dozens Wounded in Far-right, anti-Arab Jerusalem Protest," *Haaretz*, April 22, 2021, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-we-re-burning-arabs-today-jewish-supremacists-gear-up-for-jerusalem-march-1.9737755?lts=1619605944191.

[441] Magid argues that today's Kahanism has evolved away from Kahane himself into "a homegrown Israeli Kahanism, or neo-Kahanism," a radical variant of Kahane's ideology less dependent on a post-Holocaust, American social context and which integrates the ideologies of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and his son Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook. Magid, *Meir Kahane,* 6; 147–150, 195–198.

to think as a nation. We will destroy Palestinian nationalism."[442] In addition to the expressions of national political figures, the phrase "צדק כהנא", "Kahane was right," can be found sprawled in graffiti on buildings throughout Israel today. In a video shared on Twitter by *Haaretz* journalist Noa Landau, a Jewish extremist who marched in the anti-Arab protest on April 22, mentioned above, wore a "צדק כהנא" pin while explaining in Hebrew: "I don't tell them (Arabs) may your village burn down, I say you will leave the village, and then we will live there."[443] Unfortunately, her sentiment has become popular among Israelis. According to a Pew Research Center poll, "Nearly half of Israeli Jews say Arabs should be expelled or transferred from Israel, including roughly one-in-five Jewish adults who *strongly* agree with this position."[444]

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS: ESAU-EDOM AND AMALEK AND THEIR LEGACIES IN KAHANIST VIOLENCE

As with previous chapters, so in this one the Esau-Edom and Amalek motifs functioned here as test cases to emphasize the ways that political status, construction of the other, and sense of religious identity changed in relation to one another in Jewish discourse. Following the rabbinic period, medieval commentators continued to engage Esau-Edom and Amalek in ways that kept ultimate agency in the divine realm. The tragedies of the first and second centuries CE remained salient for understanding the Jewish experience under Christian

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[442] Jeffrey Goldberg, "Among the Settlers: Will they destroy Israel?" *The New Yorker*, May 24, 2004, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/05/31/among-the-settlers.

[443] Noa Landau, Twitter post, April 22, 2021, 5:21 PM, https://twitter.com/noa_landau/status/1385343015535927304.

[444] Travis Mitchell, "Israel's Religiously Divided Society," *Pew Research Center*, March 8, 2016, https://www.pewforum.org/2016/03/08/israels-religiously-divided-society/.

hegemony, and without the power to fight back, Jewish religious authorities maintained a comparatively pacifistic ethos for centuries. The Jewish position vis-à-vis the gentile other, especially Arabs, began to change following the Holocaust and the creation of a sovereign Jewish state in the Levant. Meir Kahane was able to galvanize a critical mass of followers with his hateful rhetoric, which drew explicitly on Jewish tradition broadly and Esau and Amalek specifically to justify open racism and encourage terroristic violence toward Palestinians. Esau and Amalek have thus reached their most violent expression under Kahanism. Left unchecked, the motifs' violent legacies combined with their adaptability prime racist actors to use Esau and Amalek to justify horrible violence in the name of God. But while Kahanist use of the biblical figures has helped to justify violence, we have seen in chapter one and in such renowned Jewish thinkers as Leibowitz and Soloveitchik that such usage is not unique to Kahanism. There is, therefore, clear danger that is inherent to Esau-Edom and Amalek because of how easily they can be used to promote direct violence, including some of the most gruesome terrorist attacks in Israel's history.

In the following and final chapter of this dissertation, I look to the subfield of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding for analytical tools to examine Esau-Edom and Amalek and understand better why the figures have been so compelling and adaptable to violent ends throughout Jewish history. I also look to Jewish precedents for finding solidarity with the non-Jewish other, contra Kahane, in twentieth-century Jewish intellectualism. Lastly, I use postcolonial, liberationist, and decolonial forms of Judaism in order to offer an alternative to the negative and violent readings of Esau-Edom and Amalek outlined above.

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Confronting the Violent Legacies of Esau-Edom and Amalek: Jewish Cultural Violence and forming Multidirectional Memory

The preceding chapter outlined how the radical, iconoclastic rabbi Meir Kahane and his extremist Kahanist followers used Esau-Edom and Amalek to other Palestinians and their progressive Jewish allies in violent ways. Kahane leveraged the Jewish tradition in ways that helped him promote Jewish supremacy by using Esau-Edom and Amalek to depict the other as an ontological threat that required violent confrontation. The chapter highlighted how political status, construction of the other, and religious identity changed in relation to one another following the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel.

I now turn to the levels of analysis and response to the violent rhetoric that Kahane promoted. With regard to analysis, I first look at how Kahane's depiction of Esau-Edom and Amalek function within the context of traditional Jewish historiography and memory. I then draw from the academic subfield of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding (RCP) to show how those conceptions of historiography and memory support and engrain Jewish cultural violence in the case of Esau-Edom and Amalek. Next, I turn to my proposed response to the cultural violence that has been historically attached to the biblical characters. I begin the second section by outlining the goal for my response, to form and sustain "multidirectional memory" among Jews. I continue to use RCP scholarship to guide my pursuit of multidirectional memory, supplemented with decolonial theory, to outline how Jewish exegetes can function as "critical caretakers" by using Jewish tradition and history as mechanisms to support nonviolent solidary with others. Finally, I suggest a decolonial

direction for reading Esau and Amalek that Jewish critical caretakers can use to promote solidarity and multidirectional memory rather than violent exclusion.

Kahane and his surviving ilk understand Jewish survival and cultural success to be an exclusive, zero-sum game. Luckily, however, Kahanists do not have exclusive rights to interpret and leverage the Jewish tradition. I therefore contrast Kahane and his Jewish supremacist ideology with an inclusive, liberationist reading of the Jewish tradition generally, and Esau-Edom and Amalek specifically. I argue that contemporary Jewish political status and religious identity can and should be actively shaped to help construct a relationship with the other that promotes mutual respect, solidarity, and liberation. There are many ways to read and understand the violence inherent in the Jewish tradition outside of the dichotomy I outline in this dissertation, but my hope is that the decolonial analysis and reading offered here will provide another method for Jewish peacebuilders.

ANALYSIS: JEWISH HISTORIOGRAPHY AND CULTURAL VIOLENCE

The first two chapters of this dissertation showed that it is not anathema to the Jewish tradition to use characters such as Esau, Edom, and Amalek to promote violence against perceived others. Kahane's methods and rhetoric led to a perception of the other that culminated in the most gruesome terrorist attack since the creation of the State of Israel, but his interpretations were not outside the bounds of Judaism. I begin this chapter with a description of how historiography and memory have functioned in the Jewish tradition to show how Kahanist rhetoric benefits from the way Jews have traditionally conceived of their history as a whole.

Jewish Memory and Historiography

In *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory,* discussed briefly in chapter 2, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi explained that Jews have historically been disinterested in historiography. Instead, Jews traditionally perceive history through the lens of a communal conception of memory informed by biblical motifs that create and sustain something of a religious time loop rather than a history experienced and recorded through linear time. The rabbis understood their contemporary history to have little value compared to biblical events, and that understanding of historiography became more deeply engrained in the medieval period:

> It is important to realize that there is…no real desire to find novelty in passing events. Quite the contrary, there is a pronounced tendency to subsume even major new events to familiar archetypes, for even the most terrible events are somehow less terrifying when viewed within old patterns rather than in their bewildering specificity. Thus the latest oppressor is Haman, and the court-Jew who tries to avoid disaster is Mordecai. Christendom is "Edom" or "Esau," and Islam is "Ishmael"…The essential contours of the relations between Jews and gentiles have been delineated long ago in rabbinic aggadah, and there is little or no interest in the history of contemporary gentile relations.[445]

Using familiar biblical motifs as reference points, Yerushalmi explained that rather than a uniquely evolving set of circumstances and events that necessitated systematic investigation, Jews have traditionally understood lived experiences as reiterations of the biblical narratives. All events are to be understood and managed as they were in the past. The traditional Jewish understanding of history is further entrenched in the Jewish liturgical cycle, as holidays and their accompanying histories are read and re-experienced every year. Combined with the ritualized weekly public reading of Torah in synagogue life,

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[445] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 36.

religious Jews are constantly primed to relive their past in their present because "those events are *experienced* cyclically, repetitively, and to that extent at least, atemporally."[446] According to Yerushalmi, it is only in the modern period that we find an interest in Jewish historiography separate from a biblical-based collective memory, and even then there remains much skepticism in a Jewish historiographical project: "In effect, it is not modern Jewish historiography that has shaped modern Jewish conceptions of the past. Literature and ideology have been far more decisive."[447] Despite the establishment of the fields of Jewish Studies and Jewish History, Jews continue to cling to their communal memory, which is inherently tied to tradition and the reinterpretation of biblical events.

Yerushalmi points out the potential problems and dangers for a culture that perceives its history this way while participating in a global society:

> As a result of emancipation in the diaspora and national sovereignty in Israel Jews have fully re-entered the mainstream of history, and yet their perception of how they got there and where they are is most often more mythical than real. Myth and memory condition action. There are myths that are life-sustaining and deserve to be reinterpreted for our age. There are some that lead astray and must be redefined. Others are dangerous and must be exposed.[448]

Viewing one's own history through the lens of biblical myth can help to create and sustain a violent culture, as the previous chapters of this dissertation have highlighted with regard to Esau-Edom and Amalek. Coupled with a bad-faith and violent actor such as Kahane, it is not entirely surprising that contemporary Israeli society is uniquely prepared for an interpretation of history that promotes such horrible violence toward Palestinians and

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[446] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 96.

[447] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 96.

[448] Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 99–100.

those who support their liberation. With a clearer picture of how historiography has traditionally functioned within Judaism, at least according to Yerushalmi's explanation,[449] I now draw more explicitly from RCP to describe how this phenomenon functions as a part of a larger Jewish religious culture.

Jewish Cultural Violence

In his characterization of Jewish myth and history, Yerushalmi seemed to anticipate a foundational argument articulated by R. Scott Appleby in his book *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, in which he acknowledges that religions can be sources for both radical peace and atrocious violence:

> If religions have legitimated certain acts of violence, they have also attempted to limit the frequency and scope of those acts. This ambivalent attitude reflects the utility of violence as an instrument of self-defense and enforcement of religious norms on the one hand but also acknowledges its potential for uncontrollable destructiveness on the other. In most religions one finds a deep tension between the use and the sublimation of violence and a valorization of "holy martyrs" who sacrificed their lives that others might live.[450]

Religions provide the basis for both peaceful and violent interpretations of texts and traditions, and religious actors must choose between the two. By emphasizing and reinterpreting characters such as Esau, Edom, and Amalek to other Palestinians and progressive Jews, Kahanists actively choose violence. Their discourse contributes to what

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[449] Yerushalmi's description of how historiography has traditionally functioned for Jews throughout history was, and has continued to be, lauded in Jewish Studies as "one of the most important works of historical synthesis and interpretation in twentieth-century Jewish scholarship." There are, however, reasonable criticisms of Yerushalmi's work, namely, that he contrasts "history" and "memory" too starkly and that the relationships between the two are more complicated than he assumes. See David N. Meyers and Amos Funkelstein, "Remembering 'Zakhor': A Super-Commentary [with Response]," *History and Memory* 4 no. 2 (1992): 129–148.

[450] R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 10–11. See also ibid., 28–30. With regard to violent othering and contemporary scholarly analysis of it, see Sam Keen, *Faces of the Enemy: Reflections of the Hostile Imagination* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1986).

Johan Galtung describes as "cultural violence," i.e., "those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence."[451] Cultural violence helps convince people within the culture that violence makes sense and is either justified or necessary for those who commit it. It ultimately helps religious actors such as Kahanists validate their violent religious expressions as natural aspects of Judaism. According to Galtung, peacebuilders can respond to violence within a society by analyzing the direct-structural-cultural violence triangle.[452] Direct violence is physical harm or the threat of physical harm—killing, maiming, and limiting human needs.[453] In the case of Israel/Palestine, direct violence consists of terrorism and government policies such as Goldstein's terrorist attack on Palestinian worshippers on the West Bank, the persistent incursions by the Israeli Defense Forces into Gaza, and the Israeli/Egyptian blockade of Gaza. Structural violence, on the other hand, is "violence that does not manifest itself physically or visibly ('to the naked eye')."[454] Structural violence manifests itself within the organizational framework of a society in

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[451] Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research* 27 no. 3 (1990): 291. See also David P. Barash and Judith E. Lipton, *Payback: Why We Retaliate, Redirect Aggression, and Take Revenge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). According to Barash and Lipton: "One of the most pernicious effects of certain cultural practices is to keep ancient grudges alive, and, in the process, to legitimize violence toward others—with those "others" not necessarily limited to the initial perpetrators. Rumination happens, and not just to individuals. Indeed, it does not merely "happen" passively; rather, it is frequently urged upon whole populations, by unscrupulous individuals, and by cultural and religious traditions." Ibid., 100–101.

[452] Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 2.

[453] Johan Galtung, Yakın Ertürk, and Chrissie Steenkamp, "Violence," in *The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195334685.001.0001/acref-9780195334685-e-747.

[454] Jason A. Springs, "Structural and Cultural Violence in Religion and Peacebuilding," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding,* ed. Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 152.

which inequality and exclusion are interlocked as a part of the official and organizational apparatuses of said society. Structural violence happens despite a system's pretext of equality, justice, and democracy.[455] With regard to Israel/Palestine, structural violence is observable in the difference between how Israeli Jews, Arab citizens of Israel, and Palestinians living in Israeli occupied territories without citizenship are treated in Israeli society and under Israeli law. Within the direct-structural-cultural violence triangle, cultural violence provides ideological resources that justify direct and structural violence.

Specifically with regard to Israel/Palestine, the Jewish concept of chosenness constitutes a form of cultural violence.[456] Contemporary uses of Esau and Edom enforce well-established understandings of Jews as the chosen people because they position Palestinians in direct contrast to Jacob-Israel, the rightful heir to the chosen line and the rightful occupier of the land. In addition, Kahane contributed to extant cultural violence within Judaism by leveraging the feeling expressed by Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai: "It is an axiom: Esau hates Jacob." It is not only that Jews have rights to the land over Palestinians because of the Esau/Jacob, Edom/Israel dichotomies, but also that Palestinians are inherently malevolent toward Jews because anti-semitism is ontological.[457] By continually connecting Palestinians and progressive Jews to Esau, the rhetorical weight of all Roman and Christian hegemonic violence is referenced in order to make any subsequent direct and

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[455] Springs, "Structural and Cultural Violence," 155.

[456] Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means*, 7.

[457] Shaul Magid characterizes Kahane's view that antisemitism is ontological as "Judeo-pessimism." That is, antisemitism is "a sui generis and ontological hatred of the Jews that outweighs other forms of racism." Shaul Magid, *Meir Kahane: The Public Life and Political Thought of an American Jewish Radical* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021), 87. See also ibid., 85–87, 93–96.

structural violence "look, even feel, right—or at least not wrong."[458] If Palestinians are Esau-Edom rather than people who have inhabited land valued by multiple faith communities at no fault of their own, then it becomes acceptable to see them as wholly other and justifiable (and right) to commit direct violence against them.

Amalek contributes to Jewish cultural violence as well because, even outside of Kahanism, the figure remains a salient element in Jewish praxis. Rabbi Ezra Seligsohn, Associate Rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale ("The Bayit"), explained the continued emphasis placed on Amalek and *Shabbat Zakhor* in Orthodox communities.[459] According to Seligsohn, Orthodox Jews attend services for *Shabbat Zakhor* and emphasize the rituals surrounding the day in a way they typically reserve for the High Holidays and *Bar Mitzvahs*. Communities will often schedule extra readings of *Parashat Zakhor* in order to accommodate those who may come to services late on *Shabbat Zakhor*, and even do an extra reading during *Mincha*, the afternoon prayer, just in case.[460] By explicitly connecting Amalek with Palestinians, Kahane helped leverage the cultural violence inherent in the tradition toward direct violence by referencing a familiar custom.

Cultural violence, as a heuristic, highlights how and why Kahane was successful in promoting Judaism as an inherently violent tradition. Kahane's representation of Palestinians as either Esau-Edom or Amalek objectifies and dehumanizes the other and

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[458] Galtung, "Cultural Violence," 291–2.

[459] Rabbi Ezra Seligsohn, telephone conversation, February 11, 2021.

[460] Seligsohn shared a story of his experience at Yeshivat Har Etzion, an Orthodox yeshiva located in the West Bank settlement of Alon Shvut. He and some friends slept through the morning services on *Shabbat Zakhor* and missed the main reading of *Parashat Zakhor*. When a teacher found out that a number of yeshiva students had missed the reading, they organized a minyan to ensure that everyone at the yeshiva observed the mitzvah.

primes religious actors to enact direct violence because "When the Other is not only dehumanized but has been successfully converted into an 'it', deprived of humanhood, the stage is set for any type of direct violence, which is then blamed on the victim."[461] By cherry-picking the set interpretations and practices corresponding to Esau-Edom and Amalek within the Jewish tradition, Kahane was able to use and weaponize existing Jewish frameworks, cultural elements, and traditional understandings of history to progress from structural to direct violence in a way that made it seem necessary, at least to him and his followers. I will now continue to draw from RCP scholarship in order to respond to Kahane's cultural violence and his use of Esau-Edom and Amalek as mechanisms for violently othering Palestinians and progressive Jews with the goal of forming multidirectional memory through Jewish critical caretaking.

RESPONSE: MULTIDIRECTIONAL MEMORY AND JEWISH CRITICAL CARETAKING

The havoc that the Esau-Edom and Amalek motifs have wreaked throughout Jewish history lends support to Erich Auerbach's conclusion that the Bible's claim to truth is totalitarian:

> The world of the Scripture stories is not satisfied with claiming to be a historically true reality—it insists that it is the only real world, is destined for autocracy. All other scenes, issues, and ordinances have no right to appear independently of it, and it is promised that all of them, the history of all mankind, will be given their due place within its frame, will be subordinated to it. The Scripture stories do not, like Homer's, court our favor, they do not flatter us that they may please us and enchant us—they seek to subject us, and if we refuse to be subjected we are rebels.[462]

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[461] Galtung, "Cultural Violence," 298.

[462] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 14–15.

Below I offer a rebellious, decolonial reading of Esau-Edom and Amalek that I hope will help to combat the cultural violence that the biblical characters help to perpetuate. I continue to draw from RCP scholarship with an emphasis on Jewish ethics supplemented with decolonial Jewish thought to inform a non-violent Jewish response to Kahanism that promotes peace and solidarity rather than violence and division. I begin by presenting the goal for the sort of Jewish peacebuilding work that I imagine: to inspire multidirectional memory and a shared sense of solidarity among Jews and their others. I then move to a description of what guides my reading and how Jewish peacebuilders can promote such an understanding of solidarity as "critical caretakers" using decolonial Jewish thought. Next, I discuss the ways Womanist Theology has dealt with problematic texts and might therefore serve as a model for how Jewish critical caretakers can use biblical interpretation as a part of their peacebuilding toolkit. Finally, I offer rebellious readings of the Esau and Amalek texts.

The Goal—Multidirectional Memory

Kahane leveraged traditional Jewish understandings of memory to promote a form of competitive memory that pitted Jews against their others and that justified the use of Esau-Edom and Amalek to depict Palestinians as a pervasive threat. According to Michael Rothberg, competitive memory is an understanding of both memory and identity in which competing narratives of communal destruction cannot coexist in the public sphere and commentators partake in "a zero-sum struggle for preeminence."[463] People who view their

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[463] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 3.

history in competitive terms "understand the articulation of the past in collective memory as a struggle for recognition in which there can only be winners and losers."[464] Rothberg's central claim is that Jews, along with other oppressed groups, partake in "an ugly contest of comparative victimization"[465] because one group must always be recognized as the most oppressed for their oppressed identity to be authentic. Kahane's entire ideological system was based on competitive memory in which Jews have been uniquely persecuted throughout time, a history that culminated in the Holocaust.[466] According to Kahane, no other people can empathize with such a history, and every non-Jew is culpable for Jewish suffering. Modern comparisons with Esau-Edom and Amalek are thus appropriate and necessary for Kahanist understanding of the true nature of Jewish history and identity as an eternally oppressed people that must constantly defend itself against annihilation.

Rothberg rejects the logic of competitive memory and argues that memory actually works in the public sphere "productively through negotiations, cross-referencing, and borrowing" between memory traditions.[467] The public sphere is, in reality, "a malleable discursive space in which groups do not simply articulate established positions but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others; both the subjects and

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[464] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 3.

[465] Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 7.

[466] Kahane and surviving Kahanists undergird their extremism with fear mongering that depends on a pervasive Jewish concern for physical and cultural survival. Jack Wertheimer pointed out in the mid 1990s, however, that far less extreme survivalist approaches to Judaism became common in mainstream American Jewish society after the Holocaust, and those approaches became ubiquitous after 1967. Jack Wertheimer, "Jewish Organizational Life in the United States Since 1945," *The American Jewish Yearbook* 95 (1995): 3–98.

[467] Michael Rothberg, "Multidirectional Memory," *Témoigner: Entre histoire et mémoire* 119 (2014): 176.

spaces of the public are open to continual reconstruction."[468] Memory, and especially the memory of suffering that informs identity, benefits from shared discourse on said suffering. The Holocaust and other violent tragedies of history, such as slavery and colonialism, are all better understood and articulated individually when analyzed as a part of a collective: "Groups do not simply articulate established positions but come into being through dialogical acts of remembrance that take place on a shared, but uneven terrain. The shared terrain of multidirectional memory creates possibilities for unexpected forms of solidarity."[469] The reality of a shared public sphere and a diverse and globalized society means that Jewish history has not developed in a vacuum and Jewish memory coexists alongside, and is dependent on, memory shared with non-Jews.

Kahane exploited extant Jewish notions of historiography in order to violently other perceived enemies by using what Shaul Magid describes as a "grammar of racism."[470] There exists, however, Jewish precedent for Rothberg's multidirectional memory, namely, a

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[468] Rothberg, "Multidirectional Memory," 5.

[469] Rothberg, "Multidirectional Memory," 176. There is a similar concept within Genocide Studies referred to as the "universe of obligation." According to sociologist and genocide scholar Helen Fein, people can learn to commit horrible violence if they are able to redefine the Other as outside the universe of moral obligation. The goal for peacebuilders, therefore, is to create or strengthen said universe of moral obligation between those who have or could perceive the Other as outside those bounds. See Helen Fein, *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective* (London: Sage Publications, 1990); Ibid., *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, eds., *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990); Susan Benesch, "Vile Crime or Inalienable Right: Defining Incitement to Genocide," *Virginia Journal of International Law* 48 no. 3 (2008): 486–528. Cf., A. Dirk Moses, "Toward a Theory of Critical Genocide Studies," in the Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence, April 2008, http://www.massviolence.org/Article?id_article=189.

[470] According to Magid, Kahane used a "grammar of racism" to other non-Jews violently, especially African Americans and Arabs. According to Magid, Kahane "did not believe the Jews had any obligation whosoever to blacks or anyone else." Magid, *Meir Kahane,* 96. With regard to Magid's larger "grammar of racism" framework, see ibid., 75–106.

Jewish tradition that sees Jewish liberation as a collective struggle with all oppressed peoples.

I now take a brief look at a handful of Jewish intellectuals who described Judaism and their Jewish experience in terms that promote both multidirectional memory and a shared sense of solidarity among oppressed peoples.

Solidarity with the Other in Twentieth-Century Jewish Intellectualism

The French philosopher and Talmud scholar Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) was raised in a traditional, Lithuanian Jewish family and studied philosophy at the University of Strasbourg and then at the University of Freiburg. Levinas was captured during the German invasion of France and spent the rest of World War II in a labor camp. The SS murdered Levinas' Lithuanian family, and his wife and daughter barely survived, hidden in a monastery outside of Paris. Responding to his own experiences of war combined with his past work with Martin Heidegger, a Nazi philosopher with whom Levinas worked in Freiburg, much of Levinas' work can be understood as an attempt to separate the good from the evil within Western philosophical thought. Levinas explained that there is an eternal obligation by the self to that other that goes beyond altruism and is instead inherent to being experienced through the face-to-face encounter with the other:

> The idea of infinity, the infinitely more contained in the less, is concretely produced in the form of a relation to the face. And the idea of infinity alone maintains the exteriority of the other with respect to the same, despite its relation. Thus a structure analogous to the ontological argument is here produced: the exteriority of a being is inscribed in its essence. But what is produced here is not a reasoning, but the epiphany that occurs as a face. The metaphysical desire for the absolutely other which animates intellectualism (or the radical empiricism that confides in the teaching of exteriority) deploys its *energy* in the vision of the face, or the idea of

> infinity. The idea of infinity exceeds my powers; it does not come from our a priori depths–it is consequently experience par excellence.[471]

The face of the other creates an epiphanic response that is definitional for the human experience. It is through the face of the other that humans can become open to and experience the Transcendent.[472] The other "*obliges* me by his essence qua infinity."[473] According to Levinas, the experience of the other through the face of the other leads to a sense of universal humanity and a shared sense of solidarity, or in Levinas' words, fraternity: "The very status of the human implies fraternity and the idea of the human race…Society must be a fraternal community to be commensurate with the straightforwardness, the primary proximity, in which the face presents itself to my welcome."[474]

Like Levinas, the Polish-English journalist and literary critic Isaac Deutscher (1907–1967) responded to the extreme violence of WWII by advocating for a shared sense of humanity and solidarity with the other. In an essay entitled "Who is a Jew,"[475] Deutscher discussed how his identity committed him to other oppressed peoples: "Religion? I am an atheist. Jewish nationalism? I am an internationalist. In neither sense am I, therefore, a Jew. I am, however, a Jew by force of my unconditional solidarity with the persecuted and

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[471] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1992), 196.

[472] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 199.

[473] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 207. Emphasis his.

[474] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 214.

[475] Isaac Deutscher, "The Non-Jewish Jew," in Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays.* (London: Verso, 2017), 25–41.

exterminated."[476] Deutscher's experience confronting the rise of Nazism in Poland shaped a Jewish identity that was in solidarity with those who experience similar forms of subjugation. Raised in an Orthodox family outside of Cracow, Deutscher openly rebelled against Jewish conceptions of God at an early age. He remained, however, intimately bound to Judaism, explaining: "The Jewish heretic who transcends Jewry belongs to the Jewish tradition."[477] "Heretics" such as Spinoza, Heine, Lassalle, as well as Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky, and Sigmund Freud, "all went beyond the boundaries of Judaism." These heretical Jews provided frameworks for how to be Jewish in an emancipated world because they "believed in the ultimate solidarity of man; and this was implicit in their attitudes towards Jewry."[478] Despite the abject cruelty shown to Jews, Deutscher concluded "the belief in the ultimate solidarity of mankind is itself one of the conditions necessary for the preservation of humanity and for the cleansing of our civilization of the dregs of barbarity that are still present in it and still poison it."[479] Deutscher lamented the competitive position that some of his contemporaries took that resulted in the rise of Jewish nationalism. Rather than nationalism, Deutscher hoped that Jews would rediscover "the moral and political heritage that the genius of the Jews who have gone beyond Jewry has left us—the message of universal human emancipation."[480]

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[476] Isaac Deutscher, "Who is Jewish?" in Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays,* 51.

[477] Isaac Deutscher, "The Non-Jewish Jew," in Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays,* 26.

[478] Isaac Deutscher, "The Non-Jewish Jew, " in Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*, 36.

[479] Isaac Deutscher, "The Non-Jewish Jew, " in Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays,* 38.

[480] Isaac Deutscher, "The Non-Jewish Jew, " in Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays*, 41.

The political philosopher, Holocaust survivor, and fellow contemporary to Martin Heidegger,[481] Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) held a position similar to Deutscher and depicted a dichotomy with regard to the role that Jews can play vis-à-vis the other: the "*parvenu*" and the "conscious pariah." The Jewish *parvenu* attempts to assimilate to dominant gentile hegemony by taking on the characteristics of the *goyim* in the pursuit of self-protection, an assimilation that leads to nationalism at the exclusion of the other. In contrast, the conscious pariah is a Jew that recognizes their liminal place in both the identity and history of the west and responds in solidarity with other others. This conscious pariah is an emancipated Jew who "must awake[n] to an awareness of his position and, conscious of it, become a rebel against it—the champion of an oppressed people. His fight for freedom is part and parcel of that which all the down-trodden of Europe must needs wage to achieve national and social liberation."[482] For both Deutscher and Arendt, Jews must recognize their positionality as an oppressed people in the wake of WWII in order to advocate for the other as part of a larger program of universal human emancipation and social liberation.

Responding to different cultural circumstances, Albert Memmi (1920–2020), the French-Tunisian essayist, wrote extensively about the place of Jews among the colonized peoples of North Africa, and came to similar conclusions as those outlined above.[483] Memmi

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[481] Levinas and Heidegger studied under Edmund Husserl at the same time while at the University of Freiburg, and Levinas looked up to Heidegger as a mentor. Arendt studied under Heidegger at the University of Marburg, at which time they engaged in a brief affair.

[482] Hannah Arendt, "The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition," *Jewish Social Studies* 6 no. 2 (1944): 108. See also Benjamin Steinhardt Case, "Decolonizing Jewishness: On Jewish Liberation in the 21st Century," *Tikkun* 33 nos. 1–2 (2018): 49–51.

became convinced that despite Jews' access to power and proximity to Christian hegemony as non-Muslims under French colonialism, Jews should actively identify with the powerless rather than the powerful. Memmi outlined the Jewish relationship to colonial power in *The Colonizer and the Colonized,* where he explained that Jews are never able to assimilate fully into the larger power structures of the world. Despite Jewish desire to be accepted among the colonial elite, and colonial promises that they will be accepted among said elite, Jews always occupy a liminal space in which they are considered perpetual candidates for assimilation to white, Christian hegemony, but never actually allowed to attain such status. Rather than gaining real power, Jews help do the work of colonialism by assisting in the tyranny of Muslims while gaining a precious few privileges over their non-white, non-Christian counterparts. In the end, Memmi concluded that his position as a Jew in colonized North Africa placed him alongside the colonized rather than the colonizer. Or, as Memmi put it, "I suppose I am an incurable barbarian!"[484]

Lastly, Santiago Slabodsky picks up Memmi's self-identification as an "incurable barbarian" as the framing motif for his book, *Decolonial Judaism: Triumphal Failures of Barbaric Thinking.*[485] Slabodsky argues that for the majority of the modern period and during the rise of Western hegemony, Jews, along with Muslims, African, Latinx, and Native peoples, were considered barbarians. It was only during the twentieth century that (some) Jews were able to shed their identity as "non-Westerners" and become "civilized," while the

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[483] Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1965); *Decolonization and the Decolonized,* trans. Roberto Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); *The Liberation of the Jew*, trans. Judy Hyun (New York: The Viking Press, 1966); *Jews and Arabs,* trans. Eleanor Levieux (Chicago, IL: J. Philip O'Hara, 1975).

[484] Albert Memmi, *The Pillar of Salt,* trans. Edouard Roditti (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992), 165.

[485] Santiago Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism: Triumphal Failures of Barbaric Thinking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

majority of barbarians remained classified as such. According to Slabodsky, however, the shared identity as barbarians remains poignant, and can form "the basis for a potential epistemological alliance."[486] And while it is useful to promote and sustain an epistemological alliance through Jewish intellectualism, it is also important to put this epistemology into action in order to promote solidarity on the ground.

To that end, I turn now to the concept of Jewish "critical caretaking" as a mode for using these conceptions of fraternity, universal human emancipation, and social liberation with the other in contemporary Jewish peacebuilding.

The Guide(s)—Jewish Critical Caretaking and Decolonial Judaism

Cultural violence is a powerful and pervasive societal mechanism that employs complex and deep-seated cultural motifs (such as Esau-Edom and Amalek) to justify oppression by making their association with the intractable other seem natural and necessary for those who commit violence. Jewish intellectuals such as Levinas, Deutscher, Arendt, Memmi, and Slabodsky are helpful in articulating the epistemic need to view society as something that requires universal solidarity with the other. Peacebuilders must then take this intellectual labor a step further to make such an outlook work on a practical level and to combat cultural violence. The work required to encourage positive peace is arduous,[487] but Atalia Omer explains it is possible and necessary for Jewish peacebuilders to create a just society for Jews and non-Jews alike by putting the thinking outlined above into practice. In her

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[486] Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism*, 13.

[487] See Johan Galtung, "Peace, Negative and Positive," in *The Oxford International Encyclopedia of Peace,* ed. Nigel J. Young (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

book *Days of Awe: Reimagining Jewishness in Solidarity with Palestinians,*[488] Omer outlines how Jews can act as "critical caretakers" by making the moral choice to reorient the tradition toward a shared sense of solidarity, and ultimately liberation. According to Omer, critical caretaking "is highly relational: Jewish meanings, texts, and practices are interrogated and reframed by directly examining their implications for Palestinians."[489] Omer suggests that Jewish critics can and should engage their tradition in an effort to reclaim alternative ways of being Jewish that are non-violent and that work in solidarity with others. A Jewish caretaker should therefore "attend to discursive and epistemological violence" in order to produce "transformative collective identities."[490] By engaging the tradition toward solidarity and non-violence, the critical caretaker is able to unravel cultural violence and move those who have been categorized as *ungrievable* to being *grievable*.[491] Omer explains that critical caretaking requires a high level of religious and cultural literacy so that the Jewish critic can implement "a hermeneutical process of rescripting."[492] The process reveals what has been deemed natural because of structural and cultural violence to be unnatural and violent. Jewish organizations such as Jewish Voice

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[488] Atalia Omer, *Days of Awe: Reimagining Jewishness in Solidarity with Palestinians* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

[489] Omer, *Days of Awe*, 104.

[490] Omer, *Days of Awe*, 248. An historical example of this happening is the solidarity found among the Israeli Black Panthers and Palestinians in the 1970s. For example, Kockavi Shemesh, an Israeli Black Panther, proclaimed: "We must reach a situation in which we will fight together with the fucking Arabs against the establishment. We are the only ones who can constitute a bridge of peace with the Arabs in the context of a struggle with the establishment." According to Michael Fischbach, Israeli Panthers understood Mizrachi and Sephardic Jews culturally to be part of the same people as Palestinians, with only religion separating them. Michael Fischbach, *Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019)*,* 136. Magid, *Meir Kahane,* 101–106.

[491] Omer, *Days of Awe*, 254.

[492] Omer, *Days of Awe*, 64.

for Peace (JVP), IfNotNow, and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ), as well as alternative Jewish communities such as Tzedek Chicago, have implemented such hermeneutical processes in order to advance solidarity with marginalized communities. With an emphasis on reframing Jewish ritual and values, these organizations and communities have used tradition and religious innovation as forms of protest to move beyond individual movements to reshape Jewish values.[493] This work, which Omer refers to as the "prophetic pastiche," enables Jews to draw from the wide offerings of the tradition in order to disrupt the sort of ontological and epistemological claims to Judaism that find their most violent manifestations in Kahanism.[494]

Judith Butler's definition of religion is helpful for understanding the malleability of religious traditions that is implied in Omer's understanding of Jewish critical caretaking. According to Butler, religions are "not simply a set of beliefs or a set of dogmatic views, but a matrix for subject formation whose final form is not determined in advance; a discursive matrix for the articulation and disputation of values, and a field of contestation."[495] In other words, religions are active hermeneutical processes, regardless of whether a practitioner is explicit about their interpretations. Similarly and with regard to Jewish theology specifically, Michael Satlow explains: "Judaism is not a tangible living thing that inexorably

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[493] Jewish organizations have reinterpreted holidays such a *Tu BiShvat, Hanukkah, Sukkot,* and especially *Pesach* (Passover), rituals such as the Mourner's Kaddish and *Kabbalat Shabbat,* and concepts such as *Tzelem Elohim* (God's image), *Tzedek* (righteousness), *Rachamim* (compassion), and *Kehilah* (community) to help frame protest.

[494] Omer, *Days of Awe*, 245. Kahane also reworked Jewish rituals in a similar way, but for his sinister ends. One of Kahane's particularly effective uses of ritual was altering the *bar mitzvah*, in which Kahane suggested that a JDL member's true *bar mitzvah* occurred at his first violent street protest. See Magid, *Meir Kahane,* 59–70.

[495] Judith Butler, "Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time," *The British Journal of Sociology* 59 no. 1 (2008): 13.

unfolds over time. Judaism has no genes; it is the creation and recreation of human beings working in history. Each community of Jews creates its Judaism anew, reading and understanding their own peculiar and historically specific worldviews."[496] Omer's assertion that Judaism can and should be employed toward nonviolent solidarity is thus well within the bounds of how people generally, and Jews specifically, interact with their religion. In *Does Judaism Condone Violence? Holiness and Ethics in the Jewish Tradition*,[497] Alan Mittleman puts Satlow's observations to work to construct a Jewish view of holiness that rejects violence. Mittleman explicitly connects the Jewish concept of holiness with peace while detaching it from violence, despite observable violence in the tradition:

> I would argue that constructions of holiness that push Jewish morality in chauvinist, racist, and overall violent directions are a disgrace to Judaism, however ancient their textual pedigree…I want to make a constructive case for severing the link between holiness and violence. To do this, we shall have to dig deeply into the roots of holiness, morality, and violence.[498]

Rather than adhering to the violent precedent in the Jewish corpus, Mittleman paves his own way while acknowledging his deviation: "Although it will not map entirely onto the historical phenomenology of holiness in Judaism, the 'natural history of holiness' that I will propose is compatible with Jewish understandings."[499] Mittleman suggests that Jewish notions of holiness can be leveraged to help humans overcome violent instincts, despite traditions of violence within the Jewish corpus. In response to proposed arguments which

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[496] Michael L. Satlow, *Creating Judaism: History, Tradition, Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 7.

[497] Alan L. Mittleman, *Does Judaism Condone Violence? Holiness and Ethics in the Jewish Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

[498] Mittleman. *Does Judaism Condone Violence?,* 14.

[499] Mittleman. *Does Judaism Condone Violence?* 88.

assert an ontological difference between Jews and non-Jews, Mittleman admits that such a distinction "is an artifact of Jewish law." Mittleman concludes, however, that "none of this excuses the contemporary uses to which these distinctions are put if the uses are immoral. Respect for the holiness of persons requires great sensitivity to the ascriptions of identity that we make. Coercive and reductive identification is a seedbed of violence."[500] In other words, we should adapt the tradition to fit our current need for constructive peacebuilding through what Omer calls Jewish critical caretaking. Or, as b. Sanhedrin 21b states, "each generation writes its own Torah" according to its own time and need.

Postcolonial, Liberationist, and Decolonial Discourse

I propose that contemporary Jewish leaders—including exegetes, educators, and rabbis—use decolonial thought explicitly as we write our own Torah. With the goal of adding options to the catalogue of Jewish critical caretaking, postcolonial, liberationist, and decolonial thought will help guide my rethinking of Esau-Edom and Amalek.

Postcolonial criticism is an amalgamation of theories and perspectives that scholars have used to uncover and analyze colonial domination and expose the impact colonialism and imperialism have had, and continue to have, on culture and society. A complete analysis of the history of Postcolonialism and its major contributors is beyond the scope of this dissertation,[501] but according to the Bible critic Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, postcolonial

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[500] Mittleman, *Does Judaism Condone Violence?*, 188.

[501] See, among others: Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks,* trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture,* ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

theory is "an oppositional discourse which tries to 'write back' and wreck any persisting colonial assumptions and ideologies…In other words, postcolonial critics engage in and carry on with anti-colonial praxis and theory."[502] According to Sugirtharajah, the disciplines that engage postcolonial discourse: 1) dislodge Western constructions of knowledge about the other; 2) reclaim the histories of the subaltern and chronicle forms of overt and covert resistance; 3) resist and transcend binary models by which the West has categorized its others; and 4) expose the link between power and knowledge in the production of the colonial other.[503]

A related heuristic, which also centers the experiences of the other, and which will also help guide my reading of Esau-Edom and Amalek, is liberationist thought.[504] The Peruvian Dominican priest Gustavo Gutiérrez laid the foundations for liberation theology based on the emergent Catholic concept referred to as the preferential option for the

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(New York: Routledge, 1994); María Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," *Hypatia* 22 no. 1 (2007): 186–209; Walter Mignolo, "The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101 no. 1 (2002): 57–96; Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21 nos. 2–3 (2007): 168–178; Gurminder K. Bhambra, "Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues," *Postcolonial Studies* 17 no. 2 (2014): 115–121.

[502] R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, ed. David F. Ford and Rachel Muers (Maiden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 536.

[503] Sugirtharajah, "Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation,"536. With regard to foundational work on postcolonial theory and biblical interpretation, see, among others: R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Postcolonial Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Fernando Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000); Musa Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretations of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000); Roland Boer, ed., *Postcolonialism and the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2013); Mark G. Brett, *Decolonizing God: The Bible and the Tides of Empire* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008); Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Laura E. Donaldson, ed., *Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading.* Semeia 75 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 1988); Roland Boer and Gerald West, eds., *A Vanishing Mediator? The Presence/Absence of the Bible in Postcolonialism*, Semeia 88 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2002).

[504] For an analysis of the key differences between liberation theology and postcolonial criticism, see R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation," 546–8; R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, 103–123.

poor.[505] Marc Ellis used Gutiérrez and his theology as a model for outlining his own Jewish theology of liberation, despite the Christ-centric nature of extant liberation theologies. In truth, there is little overlap between Christian and Jewish theologies of liberation outside of an emphasis on how each tradition can be read so as to promote shared liberation.[506] Motivated by a series of trips to Israel/Palestine beginning in the early 1970s in which he witnessed the brutality of Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Ellis focused his Jewish theology of liberation not on the poor, but on the plight of Palestinians. Ellis argues that in response to the Holocaust, Jews rejected their quietist identity as an other among others in favor of a militarization of Jewish life and an exclusionary conception of liberation. According to Ellis, the violence perpetrated against Jews in the Holocaust resulted in an "ecumenical deal" between Jews and Christendom in which Christian hegemony writ large repents for the genocide it committed by giving the State of Israel unchallenged power. The allegiance with hegemonic Christianity has created a new form of Judaism that serves state power at the expense of other others in the pursuit of Jewish survival over all else. For Ellis, Kahane is but a symptom of a larger disease in which

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[505] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation,* trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973); Kira Dault, "What is the Preferential Option for the Poor?" *U.S. Catholic* 80 no. 1 (2015): 46. See also James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York: Maryknoll, 2020).

[506] Marc H. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation: The Challenge of the 21st Century,* 3rd ed. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004), 217. With regard to Jewish Liberation Theology generally, see also Marc H. Ellis, *Reading the Torah Out Loud: A Journey of Lament and Hope* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007); ibid., *Revolutionary Forgiveness: Essays on Judaism, Christianity, and the Future of Jewish Life* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2000); ibid., "Beyond the Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Solidarity with the Palestinian People," *The Link* 24 no. 2 (1992): 3–13; ibid., "Theologies of Liberation in Palestine-Israel and the Struggle for Peace and Justice," in *Theologies of Liberation in Palestine-Israel: Indigenous, Contextual, and Postcolonial Perspectives,* ed. Nur Masalha and Lisa Isherwood (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014), 39–56; Seth Farber, "Marc Ellis' Messianism and Theological Rationale for Jewish Solidarity with the Palestinians," *European Judaism* 38 no. 1 (2005): 110–25; Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *On Earth as it is in Heaven: Jews, Christians, and Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1987).

state power and the violent protection of Jews at the expense of the Palestinian other has replaced their relationship with God.

Ellis' Jewish Theology of Liberation was essential and transgressive at a time when the only consistent Jewish critique of the State of Israel came from the margins of the community, what Ellis termed the "New Diaspora."[507] Ellis and his New Diaspora agenda has garnered more support as the occupation has become further entrenched and with the rise of violent Zionist ideologies such as Kahanism, but the framework is not without its flaws. Ellis' liberationist model is, according to critics, overly focused on the oppression of Palestinians under Israeli occupation to the exclusion of other oppressive frameworks, including the oppression of Jews. Building on Ellis' liberationist approach, contemporary Jewish thinkers challenging violent ideologies within Judaism tend to do so as a part of a larger framework using what they refer to as Decolonial Judaism.[508] Musa W. Dube explains:

> 'Decolonizing' defines awareness of imperialism's exploitative forces and its various strategies of domination, the conscious adoption of strategies for resisting imperial domination, as well as the search for alternative ways of liberating interdependence between nations, races, genders, economies, and cultures.[509]

The rise of political Zionism that culminated in the creation of the State of Israel was a response to an internal European colonization that began in the late fifteenth century

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[507] Susanne Scholz and Santiago Slabodsky, eds., *The New Diaspora and the Global Prophetic: Engaging the Scholarship of Marc H. Ellis* (London: Lexington Books, 2021).

[508] See Slabodsky, *Decolonial Judaism*; ibid., "De-colonial Jewish Thought and the Americas," in *Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion,* ed. Purushottama Bilimoria and Andrew B. Irvine (London: Springer, 2009); ibid., "In Network: The Case for Decolonial Jewish Thought," *Politics and Religion* 10 no. 2 (2016): 151–171; Case, "Decolonizing Jewishness," 47–58; Thia Cooper, "Exile, Power, and Decolonizing God/Ourselves," in *The New Diaspora and the Global Prophetic,* 159–170.

[509] Musa W. Dube, "Reading for Decolonization (John 4:1–42)," in *Semeia* 75 (1996): 38. Benjamin Steinhardt Case defines decolonization as "the process of destroying colonial power structures and remaking oneself in a liberated image." Case, "Decolonizing Jewishness," 48.

alongside external European colonization, but it was not decolonial. As European powers began to colonize the Americas, a parallel colonization occurred within the evolving borders of Europe in which areas such as the Iberian Peninsula were conquered and the others who had inhabited the area, Muslims and Jews, were expelled or forced to assimilate to an emergent white, Christian identity. The developing concept of race was used to create hierarchies that justified the treatment of non-whites as non-European outsiders.[510] It also pitted subject populations against one another, and according to Slabodsky, "exclusion, forced labor, expropriation, genocidal practices were often different" depending on the population.[511] The internal colonization of Europe reached its most violent expression in the violent othering of the Jewish population beginning in the late nineteenth century and concluding with the Holocaust. Zionist thinkers like Theodore Herzl justifiably responded to the rise of antisemitism in the nineteenth century by advocating for Jews to leave Europe and form their own nation-state where they would be able to protect themselves. The problem, according to decolonial Jewish thinkers, is that the founders of political Zionism used European colonialism as a roadmap for their plans to create a sovereign Jewish nation. Eitan Bar-Yosef and Nadia Valman explain: "For Theodor Herzl and his contemporaries, the colonial dimensions of the movement were all but obvious, not only because Palestine was to be appropriated, settled, rejuvenated—in a word, colonized—but also because colonialism offered the Jews a chance to identify with or even mimic Western societies, without assimilating to them."[512] Using a colonial model was, according to

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[510] See J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993); Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000).

[511] Slabodsky, "In Network," 159.

decolonial thought, a fatal flaw for the larger Zionist project because it meant Jews acted like the oppressor instead of a universal liberator. According to Slabodsky, "The solution for Jews was not to leave the European nation-state, as Herzl urged them to do, but to combat coloniality. The sad outcome of the reproduction of coloniality by the State of Israel is further testimony to the erroneous assessment of the iconic father of political Zionism who was unable to see the long-standing of the problem."[513] So while Zionism began as a struggle for Jews to remake themselves in a liberated image, it was done in a way that centered Jewish suffering over and against the suffering of other victims of colonization. The State of Israel thus fell into the trap of coloniality in which Jews recreate the imperial conditions they once endured and position non-Jewish others in a racialized hierarchy.[514]

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[512] Eitan Bar-Yosef and Nadia Valman, "Introduction: Between the East End and East Africa: Rethinking Images of 'the Jew' in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture," in *'The Jew' in Late-Victorian and Edwardian Culture: Between the East End and East Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 6. In a 1899 speech to the first Zionist Federation conference in London, Herzl explicitly declared political Zionism's affinity for the colonial project: "The English were the first to recognize the necessity of colonial expansion in the modern world…therefore, I believe, the Zionist idea, which is a colonial idea, must be understood in England easily and quickly." Jacques Kornberg, "Theodore Herzl: A Reevaluation," *The Journal of Modern History* 52 no. 2 (1980): 248. See also Daniel Boyarin, "The Colonial Drag: Zionism, Gender, and Mimicry," in ibid., *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 no. 4 (2006): 387–409.

[513] Slabodsky, "In Network," 161. For an extended discussion of the relationship between Jews and colonialism, including the appropriateness of referring to the State of Israel as a colonial settler-state, see Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel, eds., *Colonialism and the Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017). See especially the conversation between Derek J. Penslar, Joshua Cole, and Elizabeth F. Thompson in Penslar, "Is Zionism a Colonial Movement?," ibid., 275–300; Cole, "Derek Penslar's 'Algebra of Modernity': How Should we Understand the Relation between Zionism and Colonialism?," ibid., 301–316; Tompson, "Moving Zionism to Asia: Texts and Tactics of Colonial Settlement," 317–326; and Penslar, "What We Talk about When We Talk about Colonialism: A Response to Joshua Cole and Elizabeth Thompson," ibid., 327–340.

[514] Jessica Wai-Fong Wong, "Israel and the Idolatry of Whiteness: The Critique of Race that Marc Ellis Never Knew He Made," in *The New Diaspora and the Global Prophetic*, 43–52. See also Karen Brodkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998). Kahane himself recognized the colonial nature of Zionism and used the colonialism inherent to Zionism to argue against its political expression in the modern State of Israel. According to Kahane, the idea that Israel can be both Jewish and a democracy is a sham and any attempt to placate Arab desire for self-determination is condescending, which is why Jews should expel Arabs completely under the authority of God's chosen people. Magid, *Meir Kahane*, 137–38.

Cultural violence supports all colonial systems, and Esau and Amalek play a part in justifying the Zionist colonial system. Kahanism is simply the most violent expression of this racialized hierarchy, but the entire arrangement is inherently violent and dependent on the subjugation of a racialized other. In an attempt to combat such deep-seated racialized violence, I look to Womanist Theology for examples of how exegetes have explicitly responded to racism and colonialism in their interpretations.

The Example—Hagar in the Womanist Theology of Delores Williams

Womanist theologians and their allies provide examples for how I would like to reread Esau-Edom and Amalek with the goal of negating cultural violence while generating multidirectional memory through critical caretaking.[515] According to Karen Baker Fletcher, Womanist theologians ground their work "in the historical and cultural expressions of black people in North America carving out their own religion."[516] These exegetes think "transnationally"[517] by looking at the world around them, their own experiences, and the historical experiences of the people in their communities in order quite explicitly to create a theology that helps Black women conceive of their circumstances living in a racist and oppressive system. Hagar is a key figure for Womanist theologians. In particular, Womanist theologian Delores Williams uses Hagar to center Black women's experiences by mapping the legacy of American slavery onto the biblical story and the power differential between

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[515] See Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982); and L. Byron and Vanessa Lovelace, eds., *Womanist Interpretations of the Bible: Expanding the Discourse* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016).

[516] Karen Baker Fletcher, "Womanist Theology and Jewish Liberation Theology: Where is the Dialogue?" in *The New Diaspora and the Global Prophetic*, 255.

[517] Fletcher, "Womanist Theology and Jewish Liberation Theology," 251.

Sarah and Hagar.[518] Williams explains that God does not always liberate, and therefore we need actively to engage a hermeneutic of suspicion that inserts black liberation into the narrative.[519] Traditionally, Sarah has been adopted as a model for white womanhood, especially in the United States, as a strong figure who overcame adversary and infertility in order to thrive in harsh circumstances. When Black women are at the center of the story, however, Sarah is understood to be a powerful woman who uses her status as a weapon against her racialized slave, Hagar. Sarah is therefore realigned from the margins to the text's oppressor, while Hagar becomes a figure with whom Black women can identify because she endured beyond oppression. Emily Peecook points out that Hagar was a slave whom God did not liberate, but instead taught how to survive in the wilderness, a situation with which Black women can identify:

> Hagar acts as an ideal for black womanhood in her struggle against all odds to make a life for her and her son in a hostile environment. The image of Hagar in the wilderness is something black women strive for because it embodies defiance, risk, independence, endurance, holding up of family without a mate, making a way through extreme poverty, and having a close relationship with God.[520]

Positioning Hagar as the protagonist gives Black women the opportunity to identify their experiences with the biblical story, and it also provides a framework for white women to examine their own positionality in an oppressive system. Jayme R. Reaves, a white woman, uses Williams' interpretation as a model for interrogating her privilege to offer a white feminist reading of the text that promotes allyship with Black women. Despite Reaves' own

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[518] Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002).

[519] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness,* 15–31; Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2015), 159.

[520] Emily Peecook, "Hagar; An African American Lens," *Denison Journal of Religion* 2 (2002): 11.

experience of oppression as a woman in a patriarchal system, race positions Reaves in the role of the oppressor: "In this story between Sarah and Hagar, Sarah is the oppressor. In this story, I am Sarah."[521] According to Reaves, white women "have wittingly or unwittingly been in the role of Sarah more often than we have been in the role of Hagar. Therefore, we have a responsibility to take that reality seriously by acknowledging it, delving deeper, being receptive to challenge, and allowing it to transform how we view, and operate within, the world."[522] Reaves' re-contextualization of Sarah from her position of relative power in a white supremacist and patriarchal system is an excellent example for how I would like to re-read Esau-Edom and Amalek through a self-critical lens in the context of contemporary Israel/Palestine. Williams and Reaves both offer examples for the decolonial reading of Esau-Edom and Amalek that I attempt below. My hope is that we rabbis, Jewish educators, and exegetes re-read Esau and Amalek not only acknowledging the harm traditional interpretations have caused but also being receptive to challenging our own complicity in a way that transforms the interpretation of the figures beyond the established paradigm.

Rereading Esau-Edom and Amalek

Judith Plaskow argues that "[i]f the Torah is our text, it can and must answer our questions and share our values; if we wrestle with it, it can and will yield meaning."[523] Here, I will briefly wrestle with the Esau and Amalek texts. I will suggest two different directions for

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[521] Jayme R. Reaves, "Sarah as Victim and Perpetrator; Whiteness, Power, and Memory in the Matriarchal Narrative," *Review & Expositor*, 115 no. 4 (2018): 484.

[522] Reaves, "Sarah as Victim and Perpetrator," 483.

[523] Judith Plaskow, "Jewish Memory from a Feminist Perspective," *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality,* ed. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1989), 46.

reading Esau-Edom and Amalek that consider the contemporary realities of the world generally, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict specifically, and actively interprets the text with compassion toward the other. The goal of this final section is not to be an exhaustive exegetical display. Rather, it is to suggest to rabbis, Jewish educators, exegetes, and anyone else who uses biblical texts as a part of their leadership in Jewish spaces, that they should also wrestle with texts in order to yield a meaning that supports Jewish introspection and a sense of solidarity with the non-Jewish other.

Reading the Esau narrative in Genesis with compassion and with an eye toward solidarity, while also showing an awareness of the harm the text has caused throughout history, can lead naturally to an emphasis on the fraternity of Esau and Jacob that can then be projected on the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A familial reading of Genesis 25–35 can militate against the traditional understanding of Esau as enemy other and depict him as a sympathetic character deceived by his brother Jacob at the direction of their mother Rebekah. Such a reading emphasizes the brotherhood inherent in the rivalry and invokes the complicated nature of family relationships, which involve pain and deception, even in the healthiest families. The story also sets the stage for a dramatic reconciliation.[524] This nuance can be understood as a metaphor for Jews and Palestinians, two peoples who share a complicated history with the West as racialized others and who have harmed one another in their individual pursuits of liberation. Jews, in response to the horrors of the Holocaust, violently occupied and displaced Palestinian inhabitants from the land that they had inhabited for hundreds of years, an occupation that continues to this day. Palestinians

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[524] See Joel Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 53–56.

responded, with the support of the larger Arab world, with violence in the form of coordinated, multilateral military assaults in 1967 and 1973, and then random acts of terrorism beginning with the First and Second Intifadas. Viewing the violence related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the lens of Esau and Jacob's brotherhood can therefore provide a metaphor for the protracted violence between the two peoples. Jacob and Esau also offer a glimmer of hope that both sides will one day meet in peace, recognizing their shared humanity as brothers.

While there are obvious and positive connections to be made between the Jacob and Esau narratives and the contemporary conflict in Israel/Palestine, there are, to my mind, multiple problems with a reimagining of the fraternal reading of Gen 25–35. First, such a reading endorses the idea that Esau = Palestinians, a notion that remains, and will likely always remain, dangerous in light of the Damn Edom theology with which the character is so easily associated and which encompasses the violent trappings outlined in the preceding chapters of this dissertation. Second, associating Jews with Jacob in the context of his duplicitous relationship with Esau plays into antisemitic stereotypes that characterize Jews as conspiratorial and deceptive. Third, fraternal readings can ultimately support an Orientalist reading of the text that continues to other Esau and the Palestinians as backwards and naïve, even when done with an attempt at compassion. And lastly, the fraternal reading suggests equality between Palestinians and Israelis that simply does not exist. Esau, after all, was able to acquire vast riches to the point that his birthright and blessing are of no material significance, and his martial strength terrifies Jacob as they prepare to meet (Gen 32:4–22), a scenario not matched in the contemporary reality. Considering the problems that could emerge from a fraternal reading of Esau and Jacob

that maps Palestinians and Jews onto the biblical characters, I suggest that Jewish critical caretakers interested in biblical interpretation instead draw from and emphasize a different extant reading.[525]

In order to decolonize the text and therefore "adopt strategies for resisting imperial domination, as well as search for alternative ways of liberating independence between nations, races, genders, economies and cultures,"[526] I suggest that Jewish leaders prioritize a self-reflective and introspective reading. Rather than Esau=Palestinians and Jacob=Jews, critical caretakers within the larger Jewish community can stress a reading of Genesis 25–35 in which Esau and Jacob are two sides of the Jewish experience. That is, at different times throughout history, Jews have acted as Jacob, other times as Esau, and at times have expressed characteristics of both simultaneously. If we take Jacob to be the pious tent-dweller more concerned with reading than with physical prowess, he can represent Jews at various times throughout history and today. Rabbinic Judaism, as outlined in chapter 2, is often quietistic and focused on reading and interpreting text rather than gaining military or state power. Even today, many Jewish communities hold traditional textual literacy and academic ability, both religious and secular, in the highest regard, with many Jews choosing to study in yeshivas and/or enter academia over entering institutions such as the IDF. If Esau tends to express violent tendencies that resulted in militarism and violent hegemony, he is able to represent different manifestations of Jewish nationalism, the creation of the

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[525] See Rami M. Shapiro, *Embracing Esau: A Jewish View of the Deep Masculine and its Reclamation* (Miami, FL: Lighthouse Press, 1994); Rami M. Shapiro, "Men and Dreams: Embracing Esau" in *Brother Keepers: New Perspectives on Jewish Masculinity,* ed. Harry Brod and Shawn Israel Zevit (Harriman, TN: Men's Studies Press, 2010); Ora Horn Prouser, *Esau's Blessing: How the Bible Embraces those with Special Needs* (Teaneck, NJ: Ben Yehuda Press, 2011). With regard to the reimagining of Jacob and Esau in contemporary Jewish and Israeli popular culture and media, see Malachi Haim Hacohen, *Jacob & Esau: Jewish European History Between Nation and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 592–610.

[526] Dube, "Reading for Decolonization," 38.

State of Israel, and then the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Regardless of how critical caretakers interpret Jacob and Esau, my baseline assumption is that any real world connection with Edom should be explicitly rejected because of the pervasive danger caused by the connection to the Damn Edom theology.

An introspective reading of Esau corresponds well with a reading of Amalek that first appeared in Kabbalistic discourse in which Amalek is seen as the *yetzer hara,* the evil inclination within us. Zohar 3:160a, in parsing the report of the spies sent to scout the land before the Israelites cross the Jordan (Num 13:29), explains that the Amalekites who reside in the Negev represent "the evil impulse, the accuser, denouncing a person, always present in the body." Daniel Matt explains that Amalek is the embodiment of the demonic serpent, the evil impulse (*yetzer hara*) that is constantly trying to thwart humanity.[527] For later Hasidic masters, the Zoharic interpretation of Num 13:29 became foundational for understanding Amalek. Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev (1740–1809), for example, explained that the command to wipe out the remembrance of Amalek is actually a command for Israel to erase the evil in their hearts:

> It seems, that it is not only for this that the seed of Israel is being commanded regarding the erasing of Amalek, which is from the seed of Esau. Rather, every person in Israel needs to erase the evil part that is concealed in one's heart that is known by the name Amalek. This is because whenever the seed of Amalek is found in the world it is found in the human being, since the human is a small world, and therefore there is a reality to "Amalek", to the force of evil inside every human being, which arises every time to make a human being sin, and is regarding this that the remembrance comes in the Torah.[528]

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[527] Translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt, *The Zohar [Sefer ha-Zohar]: Translation and Commentary,* 12 vols. (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 9:37–38.

[528] Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev, "Exodus, Homily for Purim," in *Kedushat Levi* (Jerusalem: Munkatch, 1965), https://www.sefaria.org/Kedushat_Levi%2C_Exodus%2C_Homily_for_Purim.1?vhe=Kedushat_Levi_-_Munkatch_1939&lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en. See also Rabbi Shlomo Hakohen Rabinowcz (1801–1866): "We have already written about the warning regarding memory, as it is written: 'you shall surely erase the

Avi Sagi describes this attitude as a symbolic approach to Amalek, and explains that such a reading disengages the motif from a concrete and literal reading of the biblical text.[529] There are different symbolic approaches that depict Amalek as (1) the embodiment of a metaphysical struggle between good and evil; (2) a conceptual battle between justice and morality vs. military power, or, (3) in the case of the *yetzer hara,* a psychological battle against the existence of "radical human evil."[530] With regard to Amalek representing a conceptual battle between justice and armed might, Sagi references Rabbi Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), who depicted Amalek as the sword striving for power, and Israel as the voice of God calling out to humanity. Amalek, like Esau before him, glorified force and might, while Israel declared victory for those who confronted such violence unarmed and represented the moral superiority of Abraham and his descendants.[531]

In contemporary discourse, Rabbis Shalom Carmy and Avi Weiss argue similarly. Carmy poses the question with regard to why Amalek lingers in Jewish consciousness, "why long ago wickedness remains such a central part of our consciousness and presence, albeit a shadowy one, in the halakhic corpus?" His answer is that "the specific acts and

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memory of Amalek from beneath the heaven, do not forget.' This means that a person must erase and uproot and nullify from within all memory of the *yetzer ra*, the evil impulse in him, that which arouses him and reminds him of appetites and the needs of this world in vain and insipid things, and also during prayer and Torah study when a person sets his heart to be correct and stand before the blessed Name, it confuses him with its trickery and reminds him of worries about this world and the needs of his household and livelihood." Shlomo Hakohen Rabinowcz, "On Festivals, Rosh Hashana," in *Tiferet Shlomo* (Warsaw: Natan Schriftgisser, 1867). *https://www.sefaria.org/Tiferet_Shlomo%2C_on_Festivals%2C_Rosh_Hashanah?lang=en.*

[529] Avi Sagi, "The Punishment of Amalek in Jewish Tradition: Coping with the Moral Problem," *HTR* 87 no. 3 (1994): 330–336. See also Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 134–137 and ibid., "'From the Generation of Moses to the Generation of the Messiah': The Jews Confront 'Amalek' and His Incarnations" (Hebrew) *Zion* 64 no. 4 (1999): 444–446. Horowitz refers to this phenomenon as "Amalek allegorized."

[530] Sagi, "The Punishment of Amalek," 330–336.

[531] See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Be-Maʿagalei Shanah: Pirkei Iyun midei Ḥodesh be-Ḥodsho* (Bnei Barak, Israel: Netsah, 1966) 2.190–193.

motivations of Amalek are symbols of perpetual temptations to violence and betrayal that will continue to infect the lives of nations until they are eradicated."[532] Avi Weiss also explains that Amalek is the embodiment of evil in this world rather than a placeholder for a contemporary enemy: "Today, Amalek is understood more broadly to refer to our obligation to stand up against evil. Only when we do and succeed will the world be redeemed." Weiss claims that while God does not need humans to exist, humans help God make the world whole through our ability to eradicate evil (Amalek) by manifesting love, justice, and compassion, which is the antithesis to Amalek.[533]

While not exhaustive, here I have offered two readings of Jacob and Esau with an eye toward decolonizing the characters in order to decrease the violence associated with them. Jewish critical caretakers must acknowledge the violent and troubling nature of both the Esau and Amalek narratives and their subsequent interpretations in order to combat Jewish cultural violence. Rather than using the characters to depict the relationship between Jews and another other metaphorically, rabbis, Jewish educators, and Jewish exegetes more generally can reclaim the motifs as an opportunity for self-reflection and their reclamation of agency against evil and violence as they manifest in the real world.

CONCLUSION

I began this chapter by looking at how Kahane's depiction of Esau-Edom and Amalek functions within the context of traditional Jewish historiography and memory. I then drew

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[532] Shalom Carmy, "The Origin of Nations and the Shadow of Violence: Theological Perspectives on Canaan and Amalek," *Tradition* 39 no. 4 (2006): 78.

[533] Avraham Weiss, *Torat Ahavah: Loving Torah* (New York: Gefen, forthcoming). See also Avraham Weiss, *Spiritual Activism: A Jewish Guide to Leadership and Repairing the World* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2008), 58–62.

from RCP scholarship to show how Jewish conceptions of historiography and memory support Jewish cultural violence in the case of Esau-Edom and Amalek, and proposed that Jewish peacebuilders respond by helping Jews form multidirectional memory. I next used decolonial theory to outline how Jewish exegetes can function as critical caretakers and support nonviolent solidary with others. Finally, I suggested a self-reflective, decolonial reading of Esau and Amalek that Jewish critical caretakers can use to promote solidarity and multidirectional memory rather than violent exclusion.

Drawing from Auerbach, James Okoye explains the moral imperative that contemporary Bible commentators have to read the text so as to reduce harm:

> Exegetes bear tremendous ethical responsibility for making sure that the biblical text is not used or interpreted as a toxin that kills individuals or peoples. Exegesis, to be true to the *total* message of the word of God, must sometimes resist the tyranny of Scripture and the ideology of certain of its texts. This is so especially where the ideology of the 'story world' runs afoul of the universal faith confessions of ancient Israel about their God and ours.[534]

Bible critics can and should participate in the same explicit and intentional alteration to received tradition that Omer outlined as a corrective and which is supported by a long tradition of solidarity within the Jewish intellectual tradition. It is not only academics, however, that bear such responsibility. The Jewish community's emphasis on its textual tradition means that leaders ranging from congregational rabbis to Jewish educators and Hillel professionals and essentially anyone else who functions as a leader within the Jewish community, has the opportunity and responsibility to act as their own corrective to violent texts. We can recognize the harm that the text has caused and actively work to interpret stories in a way that resists both the literary and literal tyranny that the texts impose on

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[534] James C. Okoye, "Sarah and Hagar: Genesis 16 and 21," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 3 no. 2 (2007): 175.

the reader and on the culture. Finally, we can offer alternative readings that promote inclusive and mutual liberation through solidarity rather than violent exclusion.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I outlined how Jewish writers used the biblical characters Esau, Edom, and Amalek as othering mechanisms throughout the Jewish literary corpus to justify violence toward perceived outsiders and threats to the Judahite, Judean, and then Jewish community. I used historical criticism to show how Judahites in the Late Iron Age II period, then Judeans in the Second Temple period, and finally Jews from the rabbinic period to the present, created representations of their "others" by depicting them as Esau, Edom, and Amalek. I then drew from the subfield Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding (RCP) to confront the inherent violence of associating these biblical characters with living people and communities. As a counterpoint, I offered a different reading of those characters, one that promotes self-reflection rather than violent othering. Throughout the dissertation, I used Esau, Edom, and Amalek as litmus tests to show how political status, sense of religious identity, and construction of the other change in relation to one another in ways that are used to justify violence.

Chapters one and two depended on traditional Bible scholarship and methods, especially historical criticism. In chapter one, "Esau, Edom, and Amalek as Cyphers for the Edomites and Idumeans in Iron Age Judah and Second Temple Judea," I traced Judahite, Judean, and then Jewish uses of Esau, Edom, and Amalek meant to represent their "others." I showed that Jewish authors used the characters to refer to the Edomites and then the Idumeans as a way to other them while preferentially defining their own identity. Genesis depicts a fraternal relationship between Esau/Edom and Jacob/Israel that certainly exhibits violent tension. But it also exhibits a tenderness that suggests there was an established alliance between the two separate, but similar and neighboring, cultures. The

Babylonian destruction altered the relationship forever because of Edom's association with the attack on Jerusalem. Edom and Esau thus became vicious enemies to Judah in prophetic literature. Esau-Edom subsequently came to represent the Idumeans in the Persian and then Hellenistic periods. The Idumeans were ethnically different from the Edomites, and yet Esau-Edom remained salient for Judean writers who sought to differentiate themselves from their particular other that encroached on their culture and territory. The character of Amalek highlighted the violent nuances inherent in the Esau-Edom motif and showed how Judeans used that motif to promote explicitly violent othering in their attempts to malign the Idumeans. Chapter two, "Israel Against Empire: Esau, Edom, and Amalek as Cyphers for Rome in Rabbinic Literature," outlined how the rabbis continued to use Esau, Edom, and Amalek to navigate their identity vis-à-vis their "other" under Roman rule. The rabbis altered the motifs of Esau and Edom to make them cyphers now for Rome, the gentile empire responsible for destroying the second temple, for exiling the Jews from their native land, and for committing mass violence against the Jewish population. I began with an outline of how Judahite and Judean writers responded to their subjugation under successive foreign empires from the eighth century BCE to the second century CE. I showed that the rabbis made a drastic change in their received tradition by using Esau and Edom to depict their foreign overlords rather than the catalogue of motifs available to them that had long been used for that purpose. I then showed how the rabbis used Esau and Edom to alter their received tradition after the Bar Kokhba Revolt. The rabbis used Esau and Edom as a part of a larger project intended to decrease direct violence in the Jewish response to gentile domination and adopt a form of quietism against Roman rule. Next I looked at rabbinic discourse on Amalek to emphasize even more how the rabbis gravitated toward

an accommodationist stance to gentile hegemony, a stance that endured until the Modern Period.

Chapters three and four depended on RCP and Jewish Ethics more broadly. Chapter three, "Esau and Amalek in Contemporary Orthodox Jewish Ideology and Extremist Discourse," outlined how Esau, Edom, and Amalek have been used in contemporary extremist rhetoric. Chapter three showed the malleability inherent in depicting people as Esau, Edom, and/or Amalek and how the characters have been used in the recent past to encourage violence. After an overview of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Orthodox Jewish exegesis on Esau, Edom, and Amalek, I concluded with an extended treatment of the Jewish extremist Meir Kahane, who used the motifs of Esau and Amalek to promote his violent ideology now known as "Kahanism." In the both descriptive and prescriptive chapter four, "Confronting the Violent Legacies of Esau-Edom and Amalek: Jewish Cultural Violence and forming Multidirectional Memory," I used RCP to show how Jewish conceptions of historiography and memory help to support and engrain Jewish violence, ultimately bolstering Kahanist ideology. I then suggested that Jewish peacebuilders work toward forming and sustaining multidirectional memory among Jews by becoming critical caretakers, doing so by using their tradition and history as mechanisms to support nonviolent solidarity with others. Finally, I suggested a decolonial direction for reading Esau and Amalek that Jewish critical caretakers, rabbis, and Jewish educators can use to promote solidarity and multidirectional memory rather than violent exclusion.

The goal of the dissertation was to suggest and depict another tool for the Jewish peacebuilder's toolkit. I hope that Jewish leaders—rabbis, Jewish educators, and lay-leaders interested in deep exegesis—will see the combination of historical-critical analysis

and RCP as a compelling supplement in their efforts to promote peace in a Jewish framework.

Historically significant events of social upheaval occurred while I was working on this dissertation, and these had a dramatic effect on my writing. I wrote the bulk of chapters two through four while living in Los Angeles during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and then the height of the protests that happened in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd. My days were spent writing and editing in the morning and then traveling to different parts of the city in the afternoon and evening to take part in demonstrations. A common theme I saw on posters and heard spoken by leaders was that there were no allies there because we were all involved in a shared struggle. As Lilla Watson, an indigenous Australian (Murri) activist, explained: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together." I believe that we are at a decisive point in history, a point at which Jews can either choose to be a part of the fight for shared liberation, or can opt out. The point of this dissertation has been to show how biblical themes have regrettably worked against the idea of shared struggle against oppression and how exegetes and activists can militate against that impulse in the future. Judaism is not a peaceful religion that extremist Jews have misinterpreted over the course of history in order to justify their violence. Rather, the historical arc that I have outlined here shows that its violence is a well-established option justified by both religious texts and their interpretations. Judaism is ambivalent with regard to whether the tradition justifies violence or peace, especially with regard to the biblical characters Esau, Edom, and Amalek. It is therefore up to Jews to decide whether they want to use their religion to promote

peace or violence, and then advocate for either. This dissertation is meant to give those who promote peace, or seek ways to do so, another model for depicting how violence has negatively affected the Jewish experience over the course of millennia.

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