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Unleashing Holy Hell:
A Socio-Rhetorical Investigation of Punitive Miracles in the Septuagint and Luke-Acts

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Abstract

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The books of Luke and Acts feature a striking series of episodes in which God miraculously mutes, blinds, and kills people who run afoul of the divine will. This dissertation investigates how early Christian readers would likely perceive these stories, both internally (within Luke-Acts) and in relation to their precursors (within Israel's scriptures). Chapter 1 analyzes previous approaches to Luke's punitive miracles, showing that these perspectives are inadequate for articulating an early Christian understanding of the relevant stories in Israel's scriptures and Luke's corpus. An adapted version of Vernon Robbins's socio-rhetorical interpretation is best suited to this task. Chapter 2 probes the intersection of miraculous judgments and what early Christian readers would likely understand as a prophetic storyline running through LXX Genesis–2 Kings. Chapter 3 extends this investigation into the Septuagintal versions of 1–2 Chronicles, 1–4 Maccabees, Job, Jonah, and Daniel, books that often present divergent views of the role of punitive miracles in Israel's history. Chapter 4 investigates the six Lukan punitive miracles in turn (Zechariah's muting; Judas's death; Ananias and Sapphira's deaths; Saul's blinding; Herod's death; and Bar-Jesus's blinding), paying special attention to their meaning in the context of the prophetic storyline traced in previous chapters. This work concludes that early Christian readers would likely perceive Luke's punitive miracles as a sign that God's earthly kingdom has decisively restarted in the early Christian movement, producing a modest reconfiguration of "God's people." Whereas God's kingdom was formerly associated with a people constituted by covenant, the Lukan punitive miracles indicate a change. These events establish the Jewish believers as the locus of divine concern, showing that God's creative purposes now reside in the church. These miracles simultaneously anticipate God's creation of a second people to complement Israel. By foregrounding faith as the response proper to God's renewed kingdom, these events prepare for the inclusion of believing Gentiles alongside believing Jews on an equal footing. Luke's punitive miracles delicately reconfigure "God's people" in a renewed divine kingdom, narrowing the prophetic storyline's focus while retaining a place for Israel as God's covenant people.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ANTF	Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BA	La Bible d'Alexandrie
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BCR	The Blackwell Companions to Religion
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BegC	<i>The Beginnings of Christianity</i> . Part 1: <i>The Acts of the Apostles</i> . Edited by Frederick J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake. 5 vols. London: Macmillan, 1922.
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BIOSCS	<i>Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BMSEC	Baylor Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity
BRS	Biblical Resource Series
BUS	Broadcast University Series
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>

BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CNT	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
Conc	Concilium
<i>CR</i>	<i>Classical Review</i>
<i>CTM</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
<i>CurBr</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>Classical World</i>
DCLY	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook
DSI	De Septuaginta Investigationes
EBib	Etudes bibliques
EH	Europäische Hochschulschriften
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ES	Emerging Scholars
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
<i>EstBíb</i>	<i>Estudios bíblicos</i>
<i>ExAud</i>	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GAP	Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha
<i>GELS</i>	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint</i> . Takamitsu Muraoka. Leuven: Peeters, 2009.

<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew-Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–1999.
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HCS	Hellenistic Culture and Society
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HEBT	Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud
<i>Hen</i>	<i>Henoch</i>
Herm	Hermaneia
HThKNT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IRT	Issues in Religion and Theology
ISBL	Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature
JAL	Jewish Apocryphal Literature Series
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCPS	Jewish and Christian Perspective Series
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JPSTC	JPS Torah Commentary
JPTSup	Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series
<i>JSCS</i>	<i>Journal of Septuagint and Cognate Studies</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series

JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>Kairos</i>	<i>Kairos: Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theologie</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KMTSJS	Kenneth Michael Tanenbaum Series in Jewish Studies
LBT	Library of Biblical Theology
LD	Lectio Divina
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
LSTS	The Library of Second Temple Studies
MdB	Le Monde de la Bible
<i>Mèt</i>	<i>Mètis</i>
NEchtB	Neue Echter Bibel
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NRTh</i>	<i>La nouvelle revue théologique</i>
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTL	New Testament Library
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTT	New Testament Theology
NTTS	New Testament Tools and Studies
NVAO	Norske Videnskaps-Akademi I Oslo
NVBS	New Voices in Biblical Studies

OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OTT	Old Testament Theology
PD	Parole de Dieu
<i>PIBA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association</i>
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>R&T</i>	<i>Religion and Theology</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RBén</i>	<i>Revue bénédictine</i>
<i>Rel</i>	<i>Religions</i>
<i>ResQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
RhSém	Rhétorique sémitique
<i>RivB</i>	<i>Rivista biblica italiana</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RRA	Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBR	Studies of the Bible and Its Reception
SBTS	Sources for Biblical and Theological Study
<i>Scr</i>	<i>Scriptura</i>
SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SEPT	Septuagint Commentary Series
SGLL	Studia Graeca et Latina Lundensia
Smyth	Smyth, Herbert Weir. <i>Greek Grammar</i> . Revised by Gordon M. Messing. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.

SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society for the New Testament Monograph Series
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SP	Sacra Pagina
SRivBib	Supplementi alla Rivista Biblica
SRR	Studies in Rhetoric & Religion
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
Str-B	Strack, Hermann Leberecht and Paul Billerbeck. <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> . 6 vols. Munich: Beck, 1922–1961.
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVTG	Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
TGl	<i>Theologie und Glaube</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TTH	Translated Texts for Historians
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WGRWSup	Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series
WSPL	Warwick Studies in Philosophy and Literature
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

ZECSNT Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament

ZNW *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In common parlance, “unleashing holy hell” means using devastating force against one’s opponent. Politicians use this phrase to threaten crushing military actions against weaker geopolitical rivals.¹ Sports journalists write about dominant athletes “ready to unleash holy hell” on opposing players.² Popular television shows portray bosses advising employees to “unleash holy hell on anybody who tries to hold you back.”³ “Unleashing holy hell” has become a popular idiom, describing what people with power do to those who cross them.

The books of Luke and Acts in the New Testament (NT) report events that count as “unleashing holy hell” on anyone’s accounting. Luke relates several episodes in which God miraculously mutes, blinds, and kills people who run afoul of the divine will.⁴ Although scholars sometimes disagree about which Lukan episodes portray miraculous judgments—or, as I will

¹ See Stephen Sestanovich, *Maximalist: America in the World from Obama to Truman* (New York: Vintage, 2014), 277–78, concerning deliberations within the White House after the September 11th attacks (“[The president] told his generals to ‘take all constraints off your planning.’ They should be ready to ‘unleash holy hell.’”).

² Lars Anderson, “The Thick Red Line,” *Sports Illustrated* 115.13 (2011): 65, describing a lineman for the Wisconsin Badgers in practice.

³ *The Bold Type*, season 1, episode 1, “Pilot,” directed by Gary Fleder, written by Sarah Watson, aired June 20, 2017, <https://www.hulu.com>, 00:40:44. In this episode, the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Scarlet* tells her employees, “I expect you to unleash holy hell on anybody who tries to hold you back because you don’t just work for *Scarlet*, you are *Scarlet*.”

⁴ I refer to the author of Luke-Acts as “Luke” for convenience. I make no claim about the authorship of these volumes.

call them, “punitive miracles”—it is beyond dispute that Luke depicts the era of Christian origins as a time during which these events occurred. The God of Luke-Acts unleashes holy hell, and this with some frequency.

The presence of punitive miracles in Luke-Acts is conspicuous given their relative absence elsewhere in the NT. Luke narrates miraculous punishments on six occasions (Zechariah’s muting [Luke 1]; Judas’s death [Acts 1]; Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths [Acts 5]; Saul’s blinding [Acts 9]; Herod’s death [Acts 12]; Bar-Jesus’s blinding [Acts 13]). In contrast, other NT narrative writings contain no such stories.⁵ Including stories of miraculous judgment in an account of Christian origins was not a foregone conclusion for Luke.

Nevertheless, Luke presumably expected his punitive miracles to make a compelling contribution to his account. The evangelist distributes punitive miracle stories widely, albeit unevenly, throughout his two volumes. These accounts often develop central Lukan themes. Most punitive miracles in Luke’s corpus contribute to characterization. Some accounts even play a role in plot development. The punitive miracles in Luke’s corpus are far from anecdotal.

Moreover, although Luke is the sole gospel writer to tell stories of miraculous judgment, he is in good company among what early Christians would perceive as antecedent scriptural traditions. Israel’s scriptures contain numerous punitive miracle episodes, including the flood, the “signs and wonders” that accomplish the Israelites’ release from Egyptian bondage, and the Lord’s destruction of the Assyrian army during Hezekiah’s reign. Most early Christian readers of

⁵ For the punitive miracles in Revelation, see David A. deSilva, “Toward a Socio-Rhetorical Taxonomy of Divine Intervention: Miracle Discourse in the Revelation to John,” in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 303–16. Gerd Theissen claims that the withering of the fig tree (Mark 11:12–14, 20–25) counts as a miraculous judgment (*The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, ed. John Riches, trans. Francis McDonagh, SNTW [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 109). I exclude this event from consideration here because it falls outside the parameters of what I consider a “punitive miracle” (see 1.2.1. The Definition Proper).

Luke's corpus would be well-acquainted with stories of God's miraculous intervention in judgment. From the likely vantage of these readers, punitive miracle episodes bring Luke's two volumes closer to Israel's scriptures than contemporary Christian writings.

These observations lead to the research question that guides my study. Luke is unique among NT authors for narrating stories of miraculous judgment. Yet these stories seem far from anecdotal or an afterthought given their prominent role in Luke's corpus and their conspicuous scriptural precursors. The evangelist presumably expected punitive miracle episodes to contribute to his account and impact readers. These findings lead me to ask, how would early Christian readers likely perceive Luke's punitive miracle episodes, both internally (within Luke-Acts) and in relation to their scriptural precursors (within Israel's scriptures)?

The following chapter will establish the framework for answering this question. First, I will address the challenge of defining a "punitive miracle," leading to a definition applicable to scriptural punitive miracles in their variegated forms (§1.2.). Second, I will review the history of scholarship on punitive miracles in Luke-Acts (§1.3.). Existing scholarship displays seven distinct yet frequently overlapping approaches to these events. Several approaches contribute to my understanding of the Lukan punitive miracles, but none adequately answers my research question. Third, I will articulate the methodology of this study (§1.4.). Utilizing an adapted form of socio-rhetorical interpretation, an approach developed by Vernon Robbins, I will investigate the punitive miracles in Israel's scriptures and Luke-Acts in the context of the "early Christian prophetic storyline." Fourth, I will present my study's thesis and provide an overview of subsequent chapters (§1.5.).

1.2. Toward a Definition of “Punitive Miracle”

1.2.1. The Definition Proper

Any attempt to understand punitive miracles must begin with the problem of definition. This difficulty pertains to each word in the term “punitive miracle.” First, what constitutes a “miracle” in the texts I will examine is not self-evident. Given the strong view of providence held by biblical writers, a wide range of events can be attributed to God. However, most people instinctively distinguish, for example, between God’s orchestration of events like the Babylonian exile and the extraordinary punishment of individuals and groups. In the former case, God directs historical forces to accomplish the divine will. In the latter case, God suspends the regular course of events to achieve desired results. The problem arises when moving beyond intuition to a criterion that permits distinctions between “normal” divine operations and extraordinary events. No self-evident criterion exists. Second, what makes a miracle “punitive” is an open question. This issue presents less of a challenge than the former one. The prior determination that an event is miraculous leaves just two options: the event is beneficent or maleficent. However, as an apocryphal episode about Peter shows, a miracle that strikes one person as harmful might seem helpful to another.⁶ An adequate definition of a “punitive miracle” should help distinguish this event from other modes of divine action and types of miraculous occurrences.

No single definition will fully encompass punitive miracles. However, the following statement adequately expresses the contours of these miracles and can, as necessary, be

⁶ See (Apocryphal) Epistle of Titus 83–93, in D. Donatien de Bruyne, “Epistula Titi, discipuli Pauli, de dispositione sanctimoni,” *RBén* 37 (1925): 47–72. This episode concerns a woman who dies following Peter’s prayer on her behalf and who returns to life when her father complains to Peter about this outcome. The revived woman goes on to a worse end than before, showing that her death was a favor from God.

amplified to account for their various features. *A “punitive miracle” is an event that transcends the course of typical human experience, coming about in response to an actual or threatened violation of the divine will. This miracle produces the deterioration, suspension, or destruction of the conditions that conduce to human wellbeing.* This statement addresses the abovementioned problems and permits the isolation of a set of miracles with evident affinities.

My definition addresses the difficulty of distinguishing modes of divine action (providential vs. miraculous) by defining the miraculous in terms of the transcendence of typical human experience. Events are not viewed as miraculous because they are unexpected or unfamiliar. People label events as “miraculous” because they diverge so far from the daily course of events that it seems plausible to interpret them as the actions of personal, superhuman forces. Two empirical factors and a host of literary factors cause an event to stand out in this manner.

Events with salient quantitative or qualitative features vis-à-vis ordinary occurrences stand out as miraculous from an empirical perspective. An event that differs quantitatively from everyday occurrences can be labeled “miraculous” because it extends the familiar to an absurd degree. Hence, it is not unusual for a person to share some bread with friends, but it would seem miraculous if they shared the same amount of bread with hundreds or thousands of people (see 2 Kgs 4:42–44; Mark 6:34–44). The miraculous is observed in the latter case through a quotidian activity on such a scale that it cannot result from natural or human forces. Likewise, an event that differs qualitatively from everyday occurrences can be dubbed “miraculous” because the event in question seems to be of an alternate order. Yair Zakovich has argued that some miracle accounts concern a temporary reconfiguration of the created order, resulting in the blurring of natural boundaries.⁷ Events reflecting this blurring, like darkness over Egypt for three days (Exod

⁷ Yair Zakovitch, “Miracle: Old Testament,” *ABD* 4:847.

10:22–23), strike observers as occurrences indicative of a non-natural order. Because these quantitative and qualitative features pertain to sensory experiences, they can be used to identify the miraculous in literary and non-literary settings.

Beyond empirical factors, there are a host of literary factors, which Zakovitch dubs “control mechanisms,” that allow us to identify miraculous events in narrative contexts. These factors form a set of tools that allow writers to bestow a miraculous character on events that would otherwise seem ordinary.⁸ Zakovitch identifies the following factors as salient:

Table 1: Zakovitch’s Control Mechanisms⁹

“Repetition”	An unusual event that occurs more than once is likely miraculous (see 1 Sam 5:3–4)
“Restoration of prior conditions”	A miracle worker who can reverse their miracle is likely genuine (see 1 Kgs 13:4–6)
“Prayer”	An unusual event prefaced by prayer is likely miraculous (see Judg 15:18–19)
“Prior announcement”	An unusual event prefaced by its prediction is likely miraculous (see Josh 3:9–17)
“Paradox”	An unusual event occurring under conditions that make it improbable is likely miraculous (see Gen 17:17–18; 18:11–12; 21:1–2)
“Miracle within a miracle”	An unusual event occurring through means that heighten its improbability is likely miraculous (see 1 Kgs 18:33–35)
“Limitation”	An unusual event targeting some people and excluding others is likely miraculous (see Exod 9:6)
“Foreigners acknowledge a miracle”	An unusual event that outsiders perceive as a miracle is likely miraculous (see Exod 8:13–15)

A couple of factors that Zakovitch discusses under different headings can be added to this list:

⁸ Zakovitch, “Miracle,” 4:848.

⁹ The table above compiles data from Zakovitch, “Miracle,” 4:847–49.

“Excitement and wonder in the face of an incident”	An unusual event that stimulates an extraordinary response is likely miraculous (see 1 Kgs 18:39–40)
“Precisely the right moment”	An ordinary event occurring close to another event to fortunate or hapless effect is likely miraculous (see Job 1:14–15, 17)

Most of these factors, in addition to the empirical factors mentioned above, inform my identification of miracles in Israel’s scriptures and the NT. The need to consider such factors is evident in the case of a text like 2 Sam 12:15–18. Read in isolation, this text concerns the death of David and Bathsheba’s child, an unfortunate yet common event in the ancient world. However, if we read this text in light of its context, it is evident that the child’s death is a tragic miracle. Nathan has announced that the child will die because of David’s sin (2 Sam 12:14). This prediction, combined with the remark that the Lord harms the child (12:15), clarifies that God has intervened in the child’s life to end it.¹⁰ Events that initially appear to lack a miraculous character may fit this description if they exhibit the requisite “control mechanism.”

My definition addresses the difficulty of distinguishing types of miraculous outcomes (beneficial vs. maleficent) by leveraging the concept of “conditions conducive to human wellbeing.” Miracles perceived as beneficent restore conditions conducive to human wellbeing where such conditions are deficient or absent (e.g., 2 Kgs 5:1–14). Miracles perceived as maleficent reduce, suspend, or destroy these conditions. Whether the conditions in question pertain to the physical environment or human faculties is immaterial. A miracle that undermines the created order can be just as maleficent as a miracle that afflicts the human body. Many of the plagues in the book of Exodus afflict the physical environment of Egypt, resulting in

¹⁰ This text displays an additional factor that marks the child’s death as miraculous: timing. The child’s death stands in close chronological and textual proximity to David’s sin and Nathan’s prophecy. This proximity causes the death to appear proportionately more miraculous than other events resulting from Nathan’s prophecy, such as the deaths of Amnon and Absalom (2 Sam 13:23–29; 18:9–15; see 12:10).

inconvenience, annoyance, and economic loss. The causes and results of these plagues do not differ in essential terms from the plague that causes the Egyptians to develop boils (Exod 9:10). The consideration that distinguishes beneficent and maleficent miracles is whether the event restores or undermines the conditions that permit human wellbeing. Maleficent miracles undermine the conditions that permit human survival and flourishing.

One final issue arises with mentioning miracles that undermine God's created order: the relationship between purely maleficent and punitive miracles. The persistent biblical witness to divine justice converts most maleficent miracles into punitive ones. These events should generally not be understood as gratuitous acts of divine violence but as condign punishment. This belief is reflected in the literary formulation of these events. In brief, the firm Jewish and Christian conviction in divine justice is reflected in an indelible constellation of motifs in punitive miracle episodes: the "fault-punishment sequence."¹¹ Biblical writers almost invariably preface the narration of miraculous afflictions with some statement or allusion to a fault on the part of the punished party.¹² This correlation ensures that God has not arbitrarily harmed humans.

The correlation between fault and punishment is so strong that breaking this bond is conspicuous. For instance, the death of David and Bathsheba's child, described above, seems to break this bond by failing to maintain the identity of the guilty and punished parties. David is the one who commits a coercive sexual act and murder, yet his child is punished in his stead. Such miscoordination is naturally a source of discomfort for modern readers. It seems to have also

¹¹ Lorenzo Tosco, *Pietro e Paolo ministri del giudizio di Dio: Studio del genere letterario e della funzione di At 5,1-11 e 13,4-12*, SRivBib 19 (Bologna: Dehoniane, 1989), 70 (italian: "sequenza colpa-punizione"). Despite its age, Tosco's monograph provides one of the most thorough treatments of this sequence to date. Tosco reviews a range of passages that display affinities with Acts 5:1-11 and 13:4-12 and determines that the essential components that define the genre in question are "fault" and "punishment" (*Pietro e Paolo*, 99).

¹² Tosco, *Pietro e Paolo*, 64-84.

been apparent to ancient minds: in 2 Sam 24:17, David notes the impropriety of innocent Israelites perishing because of his census. Stories like this are conspicuous because ancient Jewish and Christian writers regularly aligned fault and punishment in punitive miracle episodes. God is portrayed as consistent in action, recompensing each person according to their deeds. This conviction generally eliminated the possibility of divine capriciousness.

1.2.2. The Question of Literary Form

Given my construal of the “punitive miracle” as a constellation of motifs—fault and miraculous punishment—a discussion of the relationship between this phenomenon and literary forms is in order. This discussion is necessary because the idea of correlated motifs raises the specter of form criticism. In my view, punitive miracles are events that can be incorporated into various forms. However, these events do not constitute a distinct form. This finding will become apparent through a brief review of miracle scholarship, which has settled into two positions.¹³

One stream of scholars approaches biblical miracles as stories sharing basic features. As such, these scholars undertake a form-critical analysis of the “miracle story.” This stream has its genesis in Gerd Theissen’s *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, which advanced the investigation of miracles beyond the earlier form-critical studies of Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann.¹⁴ While there is nothing objectionable about a form-critical approach, scholars

¹³ My understanding of these positions is based on Michael Rydryck, “Miracles of Judgment in Luke-Acts,” in *Miracles Revisited: New Testament Miracle Stories and Their Concepts of Reality*, ed. Stefan Alkier and Annette Weissenrieder, SBR 2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 23; Michael Rydryck, “Gottes Machttaten und Gottes Nähe: Skizzen zur Wunderhermeneutik im lukanischen Doppelwerk,” in *Wunder in evangelischer und orthodoxer Perspektive*, ed. Stefan Alkier and Ioan Dumitru Popoiu (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 79–82.

¹⁴ Theissen, *Miracle Stories*; Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1919); Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, FRLANT 12 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921).

who pursue this course overlook features shared by the “miracle story” and other accounts that lack supposedly essential features of this form.¹⁵

The problems involved with this approach are visible in the two volumes of the recently released *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen* and its companion volume, *Hermeneutik der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen*.¹⁶ The volumes of the *Kompendium* provide initial forays into a range of miracle stories involving Jesus, the apostles, and other early Christians, while *Hermeneutik* explores the theoretical underpinnings of the enterprise.¹⁷ The *Kompendium* operates on a problematic definition of the “miracle story” that inhibits its selection of texts. The following statement reflects a consensus among *Kompendium* contributors:

Eine *frühchristliche* Wundergeschichte ist eine faktuale mehrgliedrige Erzählung (1) von der Handlung eines Wundertätigen ... an Menschen, Sachen oder Natur (2), die eine sinnlich wahrnehmbare, aber zunächst unerklärbare Veränderung auslöst (3), textimmanent (4a) und/oder kontextuell (4b) auf das Einwirken göttlicher Kraft zurückgeführt wird und die Absicht verfolgt, den Rezipienten/die Rezipientin in Staunen und Irritation zu versetzen (5a) um ihn/sie damit zu einer *Erkenntnis über Gottes Wirklichkeit zu führen* (5b) (allgemein: Erkenntnis zu führen) und/oder *zum Glauben bzw.*

¹⁵ Stefan Alkier, “Das Kreuz mit den Wundern oder Wunder ohne kreuz? Semiotische, exegetische und theologische Argumente wider die formgeschichtliche Verkürzung der Wunderforschung,” in *Hermeneutik der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen: Geschichtliche, literarische und rezeptionsorientierte Perspektiven*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann and Bernd Kollmann, WUNT 1/339 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 524; Rydryck, “Miracles of Judgment,” 28.

¹⁶ Ruben Zimmermann, ed., *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen*, 2 vols. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2013–2017); Bernd Kollmann and Ruben Zimmermann, eds., *Hermeneutik der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen: Geschichtliche, literarische und rezeptionsorientierte Perspektiven*, WUNT 1/339 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). For a critique of the definition of “miracle story” operative in *Kompendium*, see Alkier, “Das Kreuz mit den Wundern,” 515–44. My critique is informed by Alkier but developed independently. Alkier’s primary criticism that informs my critique is the *Kompendium*’s overly restrictive focus on the human miracle worker, which excludes miracles performed by the risen Jesus and unmediated acts of divine intervention. A second criticism from Alkier that I apply above is the *Kompendium*’s exclusion of accounts that are admittedly “miraculous” yet do not fit the *Kompendium*’s restrictive definition of the “miracle story.”

¹⁷ Bernd Kollmann and Ruben Zimmermann, “Vorwort,” in *Hermeneutik der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen: Geschichtliche, literarische und rezeptionsorientierte Perspektiven*, ed. Bernd Kollmann and Ruben Zimmermann, WUNT 1/339 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), v–vii.

zu einer Verhaltensänderung zu bewegen (5c) (allgemein: an eine nachfolgende Handlung zu appellieren).¹⁸

The essential components of this definition are clear enough. Few would dispute that most NT stories seen as “miraculous” contain references to miracle workers, unusual changes, and amazed participants. However, it is questionable whether this constellation of elements merits the designation “*frühchristliche Wundergeschichte*” to the exclusion of other episodes. To point out the most blatant problem, the emphasis on a miracle worker excludes accounts that narrate unmediated divine intervention.¹⁹ Ruben Zimmermann acknowledges that the *Kompendium*’s definition excludes such texts from consideration even as he confesses that these texts “setzen ... eine Durchbrechung von Alltagserfahrung voraus.”²⁰ The *Kompendium* employs a definition of the “miracle story” that excludes miraculous stories.

The unsuitability of the *Kompendium*’s definition becomes evident if we observe how this project handles punitive miracle accounts in Luke-Acts. On one hand, the *Kompendium*’s definition is suitable to the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) and the blindings of Saul (Acts 9) and Bar-Jesus (Acts 13). These episodes are featured in the *Kompendium*’s second volume.²¹ On the other hand, volume one lacks a treatment of Zechariah’s muting (Luke 1),

¹⁸ Ruben Zimmermann, “Gattung „Wundererzählung“: Eine literaturwissenschaftliche Definition,” in *Hermeneutik der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen: Geschichtliche, literarische und rezeptionsorientierte Perspektiven*, ed. Bernd Kollmann and Ruben Zimmermann, WUNT 1/339 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 322, 322 n. 39.

¹⁹ Zimmermann, “Gattung „Wundererzählung“,” 329.

²⁰ Zimmermann, “Gattung „Wundererzählung“,” 329.

²¹ Detlev Dormeyer, “Ein plötzlicher Tod als Warnung (Der Betrug des Hananias und der Sapphira): Apg 5,1–11,” in *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2017), 2:145–57; Andrzej Najda, “Blind werden, um in Wahrheit zu sehen! (Die Heilung des Paulus): Apg 9,1–19 (22,1–21; 26,9–23),” in *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2017), 2:180–88; Niclas Förster, “Der besiegte Magier (Die Blendung des Barjesus Elymas): Apg 13,6–12,” in *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2017), 2:216–27. Nadja’s treatment of Acts 9 is ambiguous.

while volume two fails to treat the deaths of Judas (Acts 1) and Herod (Acts 12). Zechariah's muting is likely omitted because Luke 1 features an angelic miracle worker.²² The exclusion of Herod's death may be due to the failure of this event to make an impression on the characters in the narrative.²³ The neglect of Judas's death seems to reflect the absence of a miracle worker in this episode. The *Kompendium*'s definition is amenable to some miracles in Luke-Acts but cannot incorporate others. This failure raises the question of whether a form-critical analysis is suited to the task.

The inability of form criticism to describe the full range of biblical miracles has stimulated another stream of scholarship. Scholars in this stream do not reject form criticism. Instead, they resist the notion that miracles can be reduced to literary forms. Klaus Berger argues, "Wunder/Wundererzählung ist kein Gattungsbegriff, sondern modern Beschreibung eines antiken Wirklichkeitsverständnisses." Berger rejects "miracle" and "miracle story" as form-critical labels primarily because miracles appear in various literary forms. Instead, Berger defines "miracle" as a "staunenswerter Erweis charismatischer Macht in erzählter Geschichte."²⁴ Stefan Alkier is in close agreement. He rejects "die formgeschichtliche Verarmung der Wunderfrage" in

Since the title of Najda's essay focuses on Saul's healing, he may think it is the healing—rather than Saul's blinding and healing—that is miraculous. This possibility finds support in Nadja's argument that the blinding is merely "die Wirkung der Epiphanie" rather than a genuine punishment ("Blind werden, um in Wahrheit zu sehen!," 184).

²² Zimmerman notes that volume one of the *Kompendium* focuses on narratives that feature "ein menschlicher Wundertäter" ("Frühchristliche Wundererzählungen — eine Hinführung," in *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2013], 1:50–51). Perhaps Zechariah's muting would have been included in the *Kompendium* if Luke had substituted a human for Gabriel, an angelic being. Zimmermann's position appears to have softened over time; see esp. "Gattung „Wundererzählung“,“ 330–31. It is conceivable that the miracle in Luke 1 would have been included had it been evaluated according to the guidelines governing volume two of *Kompendium*.

²³ See Alkier, "Das Kreuz mit den Wundern," 522.

²⁴ Klaus Berger, *Formen und Gattungen im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Francke, 2005), 362; see also Alkier, "Das Kreuz mit den Wundern."

favor of defining a “miracle” primarily as an event that reflects supernatural power and a “miracle text” as an account that refers to such an event.²⁵ This stream of scholarship does not deny that miracle stories exhibit some formal similarities.²⁶ Instead, these scholars object to the notion that one can attach the label “miracle story” to a limited field of texts and dismiss other passages from further consideration.²⁷

The advantage of Berger and Alkier’s approach is that it leaves the critic open to discovering miracles in various literary forms. Consequently, this position promotes the observation of affinities that would otherwise be neglected. This approach commends itself to my study since I propose to investigate how early readers of Luke-Acts were likely to perceive the punitive miracles in scriptural writings. Inventorying motifs and determining which are essential to a supposed “punitive miracle” form is unlikely to facilitate this purpose.

I conclude that punitive miracles are maleficent events that transcend ordinary human experience. These events are converted into divine acts of condign punishment through their association with actions that are plausibly interpreted as blameworthy. As such, these events are readily incorporated into established literary forms.

²⁵ Alkier, “Das Kreuz mit den Wundern,” 527.

²⁶ For example, see Berger, *Formen und Gattungen*, 363.

²⁷ For example, see Alkier, “Das Kreuz mit den Wundern,” 525–26.

1.3. History of Interpretation

1.3.1. Introduction

The present study seeks to answer a straightforward question: How were early Christian readers likely to perceive Luke's punitive miracles, both internally and in relation to their scriptural precursors? To answer this question, I must review previous work on the topic. I have identified seven scholarly approaches to the punitive miracles in Luke's corpus. These approaches frequently overlap, meaning my divisions are heuristic. I will review these approaches in turn to display how scholars tend to understand Luke's punitive miracles. Existing scholarship contributes to how I will approach my research question. However, the views delineated below are inadequate, on their own, for answering this question.

1.3.2. The Magical Approach

The "magical" approach takes its cue from the magical appearance of some punitive miracle episodes in Luke's corpus. Certain apostolic statements in these accounts resemble ancient curses. Scholars who utilize this approach aim to show how an understanding of ancient magic illuminates these forceful apostolic declarations.

Lyder Brun produced a treatment of blessings and curses in the context of early Christianity that is seminal to the magical approach.²⁸ The salient aspect of Brun's work is his

²⁸ Lyder Brun, *Segen und Fluch im Urchristentum*, NVAO HF 1 (Oslo: Dybwad, 1932); see David E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays*, WUNT 1/199 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 414–17, for Brun's contribution to the magical approach.

assessment that most punitive miracles “haben ... den Charakter des göttlichen Fluches.” Despite the absence of explicit maledictions in Acts 5, Brun finds curse-like pronouncements in Peter’s words before Ananias’s death (Acts 5:3–5) and the announcement of judgment before Sapphira’s death (5:9–10). The curse is more direct in Acts 13. Brun claims that Paul’s declaration (13:10–11) has “den Charakter einer religiösen Verfluchung.” He associates this curse with similar statements in the Hebrew Bible.²⁹ The virtue of Brun’s work is that he relates curses in early Christian texts to the Hebrew Bible and other Jewish writings.³⁰ However, as David Aune observes, this strength is simultaneously a weakness: by focusing on the “Jewish origin” of early Christian curses, Brun neglects their “magical complexion.”³¹

Aune has taken the initial step toward developing Brun’s work in light of ancient magic in his essay “Magic in Early Christianity.”³² Aune provides a definition of magic that emphasizes religious deviancy and the attainment of goals “through the management of supernatural powers

²⁹ Brun, *Segen und Fluch*, 74, 79, 100–101.

³⁰ Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” 414 n. 193.

³¹ Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” 414 n. 193. For a detailed critique of Brun’s *Segen und Fluch*, see Robert L. Beyer, “The Challenge: Restoring the Seven So-Called ‘Punitive Miracles’ in Acts to the Prophetic Genre” (Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, PhD diss., 1984), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (303324784). Beyer studies select episodes in Acts that are sometimes regarded as punitive miracle accounts, aiming to show that Luke’s second volume contains no such miracles. He agrees with Brun that the essential components of a punitive miracle are a curse and punishment. However, he argues that none of the relevant texts in Acts contain both elements. In Beyer’s view, three of these stories (Judas’s death [Acts 1]; Herod’s death [Acts 12]; the sons of Sceva [Acts 19]) are “fulfillment narratives” that lack curses and miracles. The other four (Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths [Acts 5]; Simon Magus [Acts 8]; Bar Jesus’s blinding [Acts 13]; Paul before the high priest [Acts 23]) must be read as “prophetic narratives” that exhibit a prophecy-fulfillment schema and also lack the requisite elements (“The Challenge,” 2, 20–29, 104–5, 153–54, 182–84). Beyer establishes that Luke portrays some early Christian figures as prophets. However, he does not successfully foreclose the possibility that these prophets make curse-like statements. Further, Beyer’s argument that the relevant episodes in Acts do not contain punitive miracles is odd and misguided (see esp. “The Challenge,” 83–84, 86, 102–4, 139–40, 143–45). I grant that the episodes concerning Simon Magus (8:18–24) and Paul before the high priest (23:2–3) do not count as punitive miracle episodes since no punishment manifests. However, it takes special pleading to evade the conclusion that Luke describes miraculous punishments in most other cases.

³² Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity.”

in such a way that results are virtually guaranteed.” He discusses Luke’s punitive miracles under the rubric of “magical prayer.” Like magic in general, a defining feature of magical prayer is the close association of pronouncement and accomplishment: “the act of invoking formulas of benison and malediction is regarded as tantamount to achieving the desired effect.” Concerning Acts 5, Aune emphasizes that Peter’s “curse” against Sapphira is “immediately effective,” causing her sudden death. Concerning Acts 13, Paul’s “imprecation” swiftly produces Bar-Jesus’s blindness. The apostles’ statements sometimes have an *ex opere operato* character,³³ like other ancient curses. Nevertheless, Aune does little to interpret Peter and Paul’s “magical prayers” in light of ancient magic. This task is left for others to complete.³⁴

Benedict Kent has most recently taken up the challenge of reading Luke’s punitive miracles in light of magical texts.³⁵ Kent’s contribution consists in utilizing recent work on Coptic and Greek curse texts. Drawing on scholarship on binding spells, Kent argues that the apostolic statements against Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), Simon Magus (Acts 8), and Bar-Jesus (Acts 13) are comparable to three types of spells—“direct curses,” “prayer wishes,” and “persuasive analogies”—as well as a related form described by H. S. Versnel as “prayers for justice.” The relevant texts in Acts display internal similarities and would have appeared “curse-like” to Luke’s early audience. Kent concedes that Luke has depicted the apostles’ miracles as “legitimate acts of powers” by connecting their utterances to “an established religious framework

³³ See Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” 410, for his acceptance of this term in the context of early Christian rites.

³⁴ Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” 376, 414–17.

³⁵ Benedict H. M. Kent, “Curses in Acts: Hearing the Apostles’ Words of Judgment Alongside ‘Magical’ Spell Texts,” *JSNT* 39 (2017): 412–40; see also Bernhard Heininger, “Im Dunstkreis der Magie: Paulus als Wundertäter nach der Apostelgeschichte,” in *Biographie und Persönlichkeit des Paulus*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Peter Pilhofer, WUNT 1/187 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 277.

... [thus] portraying Paul and Peter as genuine men of God.” Regardless, Kent’s essay exemplifies how scholars have become more aware of the resemblance between punitive miracle episodes and ancient magic.³⁶

The magical approach illuminates some features of Luke’s punitive miracle episodes. The forceful apostolic declarations in Acts likely appeared “curse-like” to many early readers of this text. However, the shortcomings of this approach become evident if we look beyond Acts 5 and 13. This approach cannot illuminate Saul’s blinding (Acts 9) and Herod’s death (Acts 12), episodes in which no intermediary announces judgment. Moreover, this perspective is unlikely to facilitate an interpretation of Luke’s punitive miracles in the context of Israel’s scriptures, where many similar episodes lack verbal announcements of judgment. The magical approach is too narrow to answer my research question.

1.3.3. The Salvation-Historical Approach

The “salvation-historical” approach describes studies that analyze Luke’s punitive miracles in the context of the historical narrative in Israel’s scriptures. The emphasis in such studies is on the continuity between Luke-Acts and God’s dealings with Israel. This approach is not necessarily exclusive of others. Nevertheless, the authors I include under this heading try to explain Luke’s punitive miracles in terms of Israel’s sacred history.

In a classic essay, G. W. H. Lampe argues that the miracles in Luke’s second volume must be understood in light of the “signs and wonders” of the Old Testament.³⁷ Old Testament

³⁶ Kent, “Curses in Acts,” 412–19, 424, 430, 432, 434–35.

³⁷ G. W. H. Lampe, “Miracles in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in Their Philosophy and History*, ed. C. F. D. Moule (London: Mowbray, 1965), 163–78.

signs and wonders are integral to “God’s work of salvation and judgment.” These events are “focal points at which the continuous activity of God becomes manifest both to his people and to their oppressors,” often appearing at “certain supreme turning-points in Israel’s history.” Old Testament signs and wonders advance sacred history. According to Lampe, Luke understands the miracles in his work similarly. The punitive miracles in Acts are divine judgments that stand in continuity with God’s past activities. Lampe seems to view the salvation-historical dimension of Luke’s miracles as a positive feature. He describes later apocryphal texts whose miracles lack this dimension as “tiresome” since they assume that “the truth of Christian doctrine may be proved by the ability of believers to perform apparently impossible feats.” The salvation-historical dimension of Luke’s miracles raises them from odious anecdotes to events worthy of their scriptural antecedents.³⁸

An essay by Jindřich Mánek shows that this facet of Luke’s punitive miracles permits a countervailing evaluation.³⁹ While examining the “Historisierung der Eschatologie” in Luke-Acts, Mánek considers select scenes of judgment from this perspective, including the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), the death of Herod (Acts 12), and the blinding of Bar-Jesus (Acts 13). In Mánek’s view, that Luke records such scenes as part of his narrative reflects the “Abschwächung der Apokalyptik.” Luke has abandoned the expectation of an imminent Parousia in favor of something like the typical view of the Old Testament (viz., “die Guten immer belohnt und die Bösen immer gestraft werden”).⁴⁰ Mánek does not describe Luke’s view of judgment in precisely the same terms as Lampe, yet both authors discover the key to Luke’s punitive miracles

³⁸ Lampe, “Miracles,” 165–67; see 174–77 for the discussion of Luke’s punitive miracles.

³⁹ Jindřich Mánek, “Geschichte und Gericht in der Theologie des Lukas,” *Kairos* 13 (1971): 243–51.

⁴⁰ Mánek, “Geschichte und Gericht,” 245–47, 249.

in their proximity to Israel's scriptures. Mánek prefers Paul's dialectical theology more than Lampe, leading him to characterize Lukan theology in terms of decline. The salvation-historical approach can defend or critique Luke's punitive miracles, depending on one's inclination.⁴¹

A shared shortcoming of the essays mentioned above is their tendency to generalize without respect to the details of Luke's text. This deficit has been made good by Lorenzo Tosco in a monograph on a pair of punitive miracles in Acts.⁴² Tosco investigates the Peter-Paul parallel produced by the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) and the blinding of Bar-Jesus (Acts 13), arriving at conclusions like his predecessors, especially Lampe. The details of Tosco's exegesis need not detain us. What requires attention are Tosco's findings that can be applied to the Lukan punitive miracles as a group. Tosco interprets his chosen texts in light of "il centro propulsore dell'opera lucana," which he identifies as the "iniziativa prorompente di Dio che, inarrestabilmente, porta a compimento il suo disegno di salvezza e college con un filo unico la storia dei padri all'evento Cristo ed alla predicazione apostolica al popolo ed ai pagani." Acts 5 contributes to this emphasis by showing that God uses Peter to protect the early church and its unity from Ananias and Sapphira's threat. Acts 13 provides an example of the task Barnabas and Saul are called to fulfill. This story shows that "l'intralcio (de parte ebraica) alle «dritte del Signore» non ha successo; ne favorisce anzi il compimento." Rather than hindering God, Bar-Jesus's opposition fuels the apostles' mission.⁴³

⁴¹ See Mánek, "Geschichte und Gericht," 250–51. Mánek tips his hand when he evaluates Luke's theology: "Diese Konzeption die Kirche mehr in die Nähe des weltlichen Denkens führt," with the result that "der Unterschied zwischen dem weltlichen und dem christlichen Stil des Lebens vermindert [wird]" ("Geschichte und Gericht," 250).

⁴² Tosco, *Pietro e Paolo*.

⁴³ Tosco, *Pietro e Paolo*, 12, 208.

Tosco's treatment of genre is also noteworthy. He adduces several passages that display the "sequenza colpa-punizione" ("fault-punishment sequence") found in Acts 5 and 13, arguing that these episodes all belong to a genre he labels "giudizio di Dio" ("judgment of God"). Although a "descrizione della colpa" (*description of the fault*) and its "punizione miracolosa" (*miraculous punishment*) are constitutive of this genre, relevant accounts often include additional motifs like an "intervento verbale" (*verbal intervention*, which may include "un richiamo dell'azione colpevole" [*recall of the guilty action*] and "annuncio della punizione" [*announcement of the punishment*]), an "appello" (*appeal*), and a "condono" (*remission*). These episodes feature characters like *the person at fault*, a "punitore" (a *punisher* who implements the penalty), an "offeso" (the *offended party*), an "accusatore" (an *accuser* who delivers the verbal intervention), an "intercessore" (an *intercessor*), and the *audience*. The "ruolo mediatore" (mediator role) of characters like the punisher and the accuser, often held by prophets, is particularly significant because performing this role burnishes their profile as a close associate of the deity. Overall, the salient feature of judgment of God accounts is the "superamento deciso e immediato di un pericoloso attentato ai valori riconosciuti dalla comunità linguistica a cui il testo appartiene." The miracles in Acts 5 and 13 clearly emphasize God's ability to overcome all such opposition. Tosco's finding that passages outside Acts also exhibit this fault-punishment sequence paves the way for additional intertextual comparisons. Tosco's monograph broadly fills in the gaps left by Lampe and Mánek.⁴⁴

The advantage of the salvation-historical approach is its focus on an undeniable aspect of Luke-Acts. Luke's two volumes manifestly continue sacred history. The miraculous judgments in this corpus are surely one means of connecting it to Israel's scriptures. The drawbacks of this

⁴⁴ Tosco, *Pietro e Paolo*, 64–105, 109–10, 112–13.

approach are twofold. First, this approach has yet to be applied to the Lukan punitive miracles as a group. Second, what makes a miracle “continuous” with those in Israel’s scriptures is often poorly defined. The salvation-historical approach requires a more consistent application and needs supplementation from other approaches to illuminate Luke’s punitive miracles.

1.3.4. The Eschatological Approach

The “eschatological” approach focuses on the “end-times” character of the Lukan punitive miracles. This approach overlaps with the salvation-historical approach when its proponents argue that Luke’s miracles simultaneously continue and culminate a train of such events beginning in Israel’s scriptures. The eschatological approach offers intriguing suggestions about the relationship between the punitive miracles in Luke-Acts and Luke’s theology.

Lampe, whose work I considered above, requires attention under this heading. According to Lampe, Luke associated the start of the “new age”—that is, “the time when the fulfillment of the prophetic hopes become manifest”—with Christ’s ascension and Pentecost. From this vantage, Luke’s miracles are “characteristic signs of the new age” accompanying the church’s eschatological mission. Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 is central to this perspective. Peter identifies the miracles (τέρατα and σημεῖα) of Pentecost as a fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32. Lampe suggests that this fulfillment extends to the apostles’ τέρατα and σημεῖα in Acts 2:43 and beyond. Peter’s sermon opens the door to interpreting the post-Pentecost miracles as eschatological. Lampe does little to explain how this outlook has affected Luke’s development of specific episodes. His

contribution consists of the finding that Luke's miracles are eschatological because they are set within a framework of end-times fulfillment.⁴⁵

A few years after Lampe's essay appeared, Marv Miller contributed to the study of Luke's miracles with a dissertation on the subject.⁴⁶ The noteworthy aspect of Miller's work is his analysis of the relationship between Luke's miracles and God's kingdom. Miller leverages the concept of a "visitation of God" to express Luke's understanding of the kingdom's presence. The visitation of God has positive and negative aspects. The positive side of divine visitation is the "invasion of the heavenly realm into the earthly, an intervention of God's will into history to bring about the fulfillment of promised blessing." The negative side of this phenomenon is "God's action in judgment." Luke's punitive miracles exemplify this manner of divine visitation. In their positive and negative varieties, Luke's miracles are far from superfluous aspects of his work. These events show that God has again assumed the divine *modus operandi* of the Old Testament, "where [God] is the only author of death and disease as well as healing." The novel aspect of Luke's narrative is that these characteristic OT events now also represent "eschatological judgement." Compared to Lampe's essay, Miller forges a closer connection between punitive miracles and Luke's theology. The events in question are the continuation and culmination of the divine judgments in Israel's scriptures.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Lampe, "Miracles," 170–71, 173–74.

⁴⁶ Marv H. Miller, "The Character of Miracles in Luke-Acts" (Graduate Theological Union, ThD diss., 1971), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (302459159).

⁴⁷ Miller, "The Character of Miracles," 188–205, 210, 262–63. For a similar perspective, see Rydryck, "Miracles of Judgment," 28, 32. Rydryck has expanded on this work in a dissertation ("Die Wunder an den Widersachern: Wunderhermeneutik am Beispiel der Strafwunder im lukanischen Doppelwerk" [Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Dr. Theol. Diss., 2017]). This longer work, which would presumably be informative for my project, is unavailable at the time of writing.

The chief contribution of the eschatological approach is its illumination of the relationship between punitive miracles and Luke's theology. These events communicate that salvation history has reached its climax in the era of Christian origins. The weakness of this approach is like the salvation-historical view: the eschatological approach does not clearly articulate how "eschatology" is reflected in the formulation of Luke's punitive miracles. Lampe argues that Luke's view of miracles reflects the perspective of the Hebrew Bible, meaning these miracles are continuous with earlier ones. However, he also describes these miracles in terms of a promise-fulfillment schema and characterizes them as eschatological. This framing suggests that something novel occurs in this "new age." The problem arises in trying to determine what is new about these miracles. Miller makes some headway toward this goal by associating Luke's miracles with "eschatological reversal."⁴⁸ This find is salutary, yet it remains to be consistently applied to Luke's punitive miracles. Further work is needed to show how Luke's punitive miracles are continuous with and the climax of similar events in Israel's scriptures.

1.3.5. The Apocalyptic Approach

The "apocalyptic" approach understands the punitive miracles in Acts in terms of the fulfillment of end-times expectations. This perspective distinguishes itself from the eschatological approach by focusing on the struggle between God and the forces of darkness, a theme common in apocalyptic literature. According to the authors included under this heading, Luke's miracles should be interpreted in the context of apocalyptic expectations.

⁴⁸ Miller, "The Character of Miracles," 204.

Miller, whose dissertation I discussed in the last section, holds that apocalyptic features coexist with the eschatological dimension of Luke's punitive miracles. He argues that Luke combined his eschatology with an "apocalyptic element" consisting of "the eschatological conquest of the demons and their leader." God's eschatological act of asserting control over the world requires conquering Satan. With this accomplished, God can exercise divine authority without interference. Satan has been disarmed, even if he still causes problems. Jesus and the disciples now release those whom Satan has bound while God executes judgment on Satan's human collaborators. Luke's punitive miracles become meaningful in this context. The miraculous judgments against Judas (Acts 1:18), Ananias (5:5), and Bar-Jesus (13:11) punish people who have associated with Satan in one way or another. The finding that apocalyptic has influenced Luke's punitive miracles is an advance.⁴⁹

Susan Garrett has also contributed to the apocalyptic approach by studying magic in Luke-Acts.⁵⁰ Garrett focuses on three accounts in which the apostles confront magicians (Simon Magus [Acts 8:4–25]; Bar-Jesus [13:4–12]; the sons of Sceva [19:11–20]), showing that Luke uses these stories "to make the theological point that Christians wield authority over the devil in the post-resurrection era." Her salient finding is that Luke is less concerned about magic and magicians and more interested in the role of these stories in "an overarching and surprisingly apocalyptic myth about Satan's struggle and fall." According to Garrett, Jesus's struggle against Satan unites Luke's two volumes. Jesus contests Satan's authority during his ministry, culminating in the Lord's decisive victory upon his exaltation. Henceforth, Satan lacks his

⁴⁹ Miller, "The Character of Miracles," 205–10, 263–64.

⁵⁰ Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

authoritative position, and Jesus's followers hold the advantage. Within this framework, Luke understands magicians to be "diabolical agents," which explains his emphasis on the victory of believers over magicians as a sign of Satan's powerlessness. More broadly, Garrett recognizes that the struggle against magicians is one aspect of a more extensive battle. She points to believers performing healings and exorcisms and the defeat of satanic collaborators like Ananias, Sapphira, and Saul as instances in which the devil is overcome. She writes, "These incidents, like the ones involving magicians, point beyond the visible human arena to the invisible spiritual one, where the Holy Spirit repeatedly meets the spirit of the devil and causes it to shrink or flee." Luke's apocalyptic outlook exceeds texts concerning magic. Accordingly, Garrett's work on this theme illuminates passages beyond the purview of her study.⁵¹ In a later chapter, I will consider Garrett's work at greater length.⁵²

The apocalyptic approach is foundational to understanding Luke's punitive miracles. Luke undeniably portrays some victims of miraculous punishment as satanic collaborators. Judas, who is miraculously disemboweled, was possessed by Satan (Acts 1:18; see Luke 22:3). Ananias, who falls dead at Peter's feet, is influenced by the devil (Acts 5:5; see 5:3). Bar-Jesus, whom Paul blinds, is a "son of the devil" (13:11; see 13:10). The problem with this approach is its inapplicability to other miracles. This perspective can hardly explain Zechariah's muting (Luke 1), whom Luke portrays as a faithful member of the covenant community. Moreover, the punitive miracles in Israel's scriptures never factor into an apocalyptic struggle between God and Satan. The apocalyptic approach is necessary for understanding the novelty of many Lukan miracles. Nevertheless, this approach, on its own, is inadequate to answer my research question.

⁵¹ Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 1–2, 57–58, 102–3.

⁵² See "4.3.5. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline."

1.3.6. The Historiographical Approach

The “historiographical” approach interprets Luke’s punitive miracles in light of Greco-Roman and Jewish historical writings. Accounts of divine punishment are standard in such texts. To read Luke-Acts, the reasoning goes, we must view this corpus in its ancient historiographical context.

G. W. Trompf’s monograph on retribution in early Christian literature exemplifies the historiographical approach.⁵³ Concerning Luke-Acts, Trompf seeks to associate divine retribution in Luke’s corpus with the desire of ancient historians to reveal the “moral order that lay behind events.” This is an appropriate comparison because Luke-Acts is “arguably the first clear exemplar of Christian historiography.” In Trompf’s assessment, “The overall impression is left [by Acts] that the righteous succeed — their labours are rewarded in spite of severe adversities — and that the Gospel is indeed taken ‘to the ends of the earth’ ... Those unjustly opposing the new movement ... are not only requited negatively for being unable to suppress it ... but are rejected by God.” Like his contemporaries, Luke has written about the past to elucidate the relationship between historical events and divine retribution.⁵⁴

Trompf acknowledges some differences between Luke and other historians. First, Luke’s belief in a final judgment led him to believe that every action would receive appropriate recompense eventually. In contrast, other historians “were normally under pressure only to discern divine judgments in those portions of the past they chose their narratives to encompass.” Luke did not experience the “pressure” felt by other writers to fully elucidate the workings of divine retribution in their historical narratives. Second—and building on the first point—Luke’s

⁵³ G. W. Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography: Narratives of Retributive Justice* (London: Continuum, 2000). For another work along these lines, see O. Wesley Allen Jr., *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke-Acts*, SBLDS 158 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997). Allen’s monograph will receive further attention in the section on the literary-critical approach.

⁵⁴ Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, 51, 63, 65.

expectation of a final judgment affected his perception of the retributive outcomes narrated in his corpus. Trompf writes, “Luke does not want the point missed that whatever the signposts of blessed outcomes and negative requitals are, they have some connection with the *final* Judgment.” Luke’s scenes of divine punishment anticipate a future judgment.⁵⁵

Trompf considers specific Lukan episodes in light of this framework. According to him, the deaths of Judas (Acts 1:18) and Herod (12:23) represent divine judgment for the wrongs these figures committed. In Herod’s case, the punishment is a judgment against “Herodianism.” Paul’s curse against the high priest (Acts 23:3) denotes “God’s rejection of rebellious Jews as a whole group.” The demonic beating of the sons of Sceva (19:16) reflects a “tilting against the Jewish hierarchy.” Trompf also gives brief attention to the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira (5:5, 10) and the blinding of Bar-Jesus (13:11), but his discussion of these episodes is less illuminating. Overall, Trompf shows that Luke’s punitive miracles communicate a trenchant message: “The enemies and betrayers of God’s new ways, whether they are powerful, marginal, or even internal to the new movement, must suffer penalties befitting their recalcitrance.” Like other historians, Luke narrates scenes of divine retribution to demonstrate “the moral order ... behind events.”⁵⁶

A recent dissertation by Monika Ertl builds on Trompf’s work.⁵⁷ Ertl examines divine retribution in Greco-Roman and Jewish literature, showing that this is a common theme, especially in the Hellenistic and Jewish spheres. A significant finding of Ertl’s study is that

⁵⁵ Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, 69, 71, emphasis original.

⁵⁶ Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, 51, 76–77.

⁵⁷ Monika Ertl, “Göttliche Vergeltung in der Apostelgeschichte unter Berücksichtigung des literarischen Umfelds” (University of Munich, PhD diss., 2016), doi:10.5282/edoc.21539.

divine retribution was so central in Luke's historiographical context that he was compelled to include it in his writings. Luke did not invent stories to achieve this purpose. Instead, he crafted scenes of divine judgment when his traditions were amenable to this interpretation. Moreover, Ertl shows that Luke's punitive miracles are essential to the divine plan of salvation, demonstrating "das Fortschreiten der Mission, trotz aller Hindernisse und Widrigkeiten." Punitive miracles have been enlisted in the service of a pivotal Lukan theme. Finally, Ertl argues that these miracles contribute to Luke's creation of a "Stiftungsmemoria" for the church. Luke, wanting to help the church situate itself in the world, produced a work that relates the origins of the Christian movement and defines it in the context of its cultural environment. The Lukan punitive miracles are an essential component of this *memoria* since they demonstrate "die göttliche Fürsorge für seinen Heilsplan und die Ausbreitung der Botschaft." These miracles helped early Christians perceive themselves in terms of the divine mission and appreciate the protection associated with this identity.⁵⁸

The historiographical approach interprets Luke's punitive miracles in the context of similar Greco-Roman and Jewish episodes. The authors mentioned above demonstrate that Luke's punitive miracles resemble similar accounts in contemporary histories. Specifically, they have established that punitive miracles are appropriate to the genre of ancient history. Luke's use of these miracles grants him entry to a larger conversation among historians about divine providence. The disadvantage of this approach is its incidental bearing on how early Christians were likely to view Luke's punitive miracles. As Vernon Robbins observes, early Christians looked to "the stories of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah" to illuminate "the nature of God's world and one's responsibilities in it" rather than other available

⁵⁸ Ertl, "Göttliche Vergeltung in der Apostelgeschichte," 11–55, 67–68, 78, 226, 229–32, 235.

stories.⁵⁹ By extension, they were likely to conceptualize Luke's punitive miracles in the context of Israel's scriptures. Luke's miraculous judgments resemble scenes of divine punishment in contemporary ancient histories, and it is plausible that these stories influenced Luke.

Nevertheless, casting the interpretive net to include such episodes would not help answer my research question. My approach must be "historiographical" to the extent of engaging the punitive miracles in writings like the Deuteronomistic History.⁶⁰ Yet the present study would benefit little from probing ancient historiography more broadly.

1.3.7. The Normative Approach

The "normative" approach is based on the observation that punitive miracle episodes reinforce rules.⁶¹ At their core, these episodes concern a fault and its miraculous punishment. The decisive divine response to the violation of a rule shows that God underwrites this regulation.

The normative approach is closely associated with Gerd Thiessen, who addresses punitive miracles in his study of miracle stories.⁶² Theissen devotes attention to punitive miracles while discussing "rule miracles." Rule miracles are events that "seek to enforce sacred

⁵⁹ Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, RRA 1 (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2009), 229; see 232ff. for the "prophetic story-line," which I will explore at greater length in my methodology section. In context, Robbins observes that early Christians focused on these biblical figures rather than the leading characters of Greek mythology. I extrapolate this idea from the literary figures of interest to the texts of interest.

⁶⁰ Thus, Ertl, "Göttliche Vergeltung in der Apostelgeschichte," 34–41.

⁶¹ I have derived the title of this approach from Gerd Theissen's label ("Normenwunder"; *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten: Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien*, SNT 8 [Gütersloh: Mohn, 1974], 114).

⁶² Theissen, *Miracle Stories*; see also Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 293–94, where "norm miracles" that "punish offenses" are identified as "punitive miracles."

prescriptions.” As such, “they may be classified according as they justify rules, reward behaviour in accordance with the rules or punish behaviour contrary to the rules.” Punitive miracles belong to the last category. Theissen explains the utility of punitive rule miracles in simple terms: “In enforcing rules both ancients and moderns rely more on fear of punishment than on encouragement through praise.” Punitive miracle episodes are a means of affixing the divine imprimatur to essential regulations.⁶³

Given this outlook, it is reasonable to expect an abundance of punitive miracle episodes in early Christian writings. The need for such stories was undoubtedly greatest during the initial generations of the Christian movement.⁶⁴ Yet curiously, Theissen finds just one “rule miracle of punishment” in Luke-Acts: the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).⁶⁵ He provides no clear analysis of the other Lukan stories featuring miraculous judgments. Theissen’s treatment of punitive miracles is incomplete and somewhat perfunctory. Theissen’s basic observation is sound but underwhelming: punitive miracles may support “sacred prescriptions.”⁶⁶

The normative view of punitive miracles is widespread, making it impractical to summarize all the ways scholars have used it. I will consider a recent essay by Meghan Henning as a sample of how this approach has been developed.⁶⁷ Henning briefly reviews select punitive miracle episodes in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Acts of Peter, following the

⁶³ Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 106–12.

⁶⁴ See Tosco, *Pietro e Paolo*, 108–10.

⁶⁵ Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 109.

⁶⁶ Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 109, emphasis omitted.

⁶⁷ Meghan Henning, “Niedergestreckt und zerstört: Strafwunder und ihre pädagogische Funktion,” in *Kompendium der frühchristlichen Wundererzählungen*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2017), 2:76–81.

trajectory set by Theissen's work. Her primary finding is succinctly stated: "[Strafwunder] die göttliche Macht verdeutlichen und eine numinose Strafhandlung für bestimmte Vergehen vor Augen führen ... Dementsprechend können sich die Wunder positive auf ihre Augenzeugen auswirken und sowohl ihnen als (vor allem) auch den Lesern des Textes eine pädagogische Lektion erteilen." Punitive miracles are not simply harmful events that advertise the consequences of disobedience. These miracles contribute to readers' moral development.⁶⁸

Within this framework, Henning surveys the punitive miracle episodes in Acts. She locates punitive deaths in Acts 1 (Judas), 5 (Ananias and Sapphira), and 12 (Herod), paying special attention to aspects of these texts with a "pedagogical" dimension. According to Henning, the field that Judas purchased (Acts 1:18) is a symbol reminding people of this disciple's actions and grisly end. The response of people to Ananias and Sapphira's deaths ("fear"; 5:5, 11) offers a model for readers, who should likewise be afraid of offending God. The death of Herod Agrippa (12:23) is an "abschreckendes Beispiel." As for the miraculous blindings in Acts 9 (Saul) and 13 (Bar-Jesus), Henning writes, "bietet die Apostelgesichte [*sic*] auch das Motiv der plötzlichen Erblindung als Mittel, um zwischen jenen zu unterscheiden, die würdig sind, in die urchristlichen Gemeinde aufgenommen zu werden, und jenen, die sich Gott widersetzen." Saul and Bar-Jesus's loss of sight communicates their opposition to God. Overall, Henning offers new insights into Luke's punitive miracles. Her work advances Theissen's approach by considering the "pedagogical function" of these stories.⁶⁹

The appeal of the normative approach is that most of Luke's punitive miracle episodes exhibit readily identifiable faults resulting in swift recompense. These features make the

⁶⁸ Henning, "Niedergestreckt und zerstört," 76.

⁶⁹ Henning, "Niedergestreckt und zerstört," 78–79.

normative approach intuitive.⁷⁰ However, it is doubtful that the normative approach is equally helpful in every case. Ertl's comments about the application of this approach to Acts 5:1–11 are apropos: "Lukas zeigt keine Ansätze dem Lese rein Paradebeispiel für eine moralische Regel vor Augen führen zu wollen, da der Leser schwerlich in die Situation des Hananias kommen dürfte und erst durch längere Überlegungen zu Schlussfolgerungen für sein eigenes Leben kommen könnte."⁷¹ Acts 5 concerns circumstances that are not comparable to what average readers will experience. Luke has executed his intention poorly if he wanted this account to offer an example. Ertl's critique applies to some other Lukan miracles as well. For instance, Henning argues that Herod's death is simultaneously a "göttliche Strafe gegen ein spezifisches Vergehen" and an "abschreckendes Beispiel."⁷² However, she fails to explain how this death instructs or deters readers. It is unlikely that an average reader would find themselves in a circumstance like Herod's. Readers must engage in complicated hermeneutical processes to obtain instruction for their lives from this story. Given these considerations, the normative approach is unlikely to help answer my research question. Some of the punitive miracles in Luke-Acts indeed had a "normative" function among early readers of this corpus. However, this function does not appear to be a uniformly leading concern of these episodes.

⁷⁰ See Henning, "Niedergestreckt und zerstört," 81.

⁷¹ Ertl, "Göttliche Vergeltung in der Apostelgeschichte," 134.

⁷² Henning, "Niedergestreckt und zerstört," 79.

1.3.8. The Literary-Critical Approach

The “literary-critical” approach explores how punitive miracles operate in Luke-Acts. Luke has placed his accounts of miraculous judgment into a narrative context, resulting in literary dynamics he may or may not have envisioned. By probing these dynamics, scholars try to show what Luke’s punitive miracles contribute to the enveloping story.

J. Massyngberde Ford employs a literary-critical approach while exploring miracles in Acts.⁷³ As part of a larger argument, she claims that Luke’s “cursing miracles” are connected to manifestations of the Holy Spirit. According to Ford, Luke repeatedly narrates significant works of the Spirit followed by cases of “the false use of supernatural power” (e.g., Acts 2:1–12 → 5:1–11 [Ananias and Sapphira]; 10:44–48 → 12:20–23 [Herod]). In each case, the Spirit overcomes this opposition through a cursing miracle. This manner of arranging the church’s story promotes a distinct agenda: “Through the six cursing miracles ... Luke shows that Christianity is to have no part in: Lying to the Spirit [:] Simony [:] Blasphemy [:] False Prophecy [:] Idolatry [:] Ventriloquism [:] False Exorcism [:] and Magical Books.” Ford’s discussion of Luke’s punitive miracles is a simple sketch, leaving much to be desired in her analysis of specific texts. Yet she establishes that the literary dimension of these events is ripe for study.⁷⁴

O. Wesley Allen’s monograph on Herod’s death takes the literary-critical approach a step further.⁷⁵ Two aspects of Allen’s study are relevant to the present discussion. First, Allen argues that Luke-Acts exhibits a distinct pattern of retribution: the Third Gospel raises the prospect of

⁷³ J. Massyngberde Ford, “The Social and Political Implications of the Miraculous in Acts,” in *Faces of Renewal: Studies in Honor of Stanley M. Horton Presented on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Paul Elbert (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 137–60.

⁷⁴ Ford, “The Social and Political Implications,” 151, 153.

⁷⁵ Allen, *The Death of Herod*.

God's judgment (e.g., see the Magnificat, which looks forward to "a reversal for both the oppressed and the oppressor"), while Acts recounts this judgment. Accordingly, Allen identifies accounts of divine judgment in Acts 1 (Judas's death), 5 (Ananias and Sapphira's deaths), and 12 (Herod's death). The punitive miracles in Acts instantiate what Luke's first volume anticipates.⁷⁶

Second, Allen shows that Luke-Acts features a "prophetic pattern" in which divine judgment figures prominently. This pattern, which draws on the story of Moses and his "persecution" by Pharaoh, unites Luke's portraits of Jesus, Stephen, Peter, and Paul. Given this pattern, Luke-Acts can be divided into sections. Jesus's section spans the Third Gospel and concludes at the beginning of Acts when Jesus's persecutor, Judas, experiences a punitive death. Peter's (and the Twelve's) section comes next. This section is interrupted by an excursus devoted to Stephen and his persecutor, Saul, which concludes with the "retributive-like blinding conversion/call of Saul." Peter and the Twelve then remain the focus until Herod, the persecutor of the early church, meets a grisly end. Herod's death brings us to the moment of Saul's introduction as a Christian missionary, and it is at this point that the analysis ends. Allen does little to explain how Saul's encounter with Bar-Jesus figures into this pattern. Allen offers an impressive, albeit incomplete, reading of the miracles in Luke's corpus.⁷⁷

The literary-critical approach to Luke's punitive miracles is promising. It is reasonable to search for a plausible early Christian understanding of these events by trying to read them as part

⁷⁶ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 74, 116–17, 120–30. The surprising argument in Allen's work is that Saul's blinding is not a punitive miracle. According to Allen, Luke conditions readers to anticipate Saul's death and then frustrates this expectation by narrating a healing and conversion. The reader's knowledge of the "Death of Tyrant" type scene produces an expectation that Saul's blindness will lead to his death, making Saul's healing a surprising turn of events. The clash between genre-based expectations and Saul's outcome causes the reader to conclude that "blindness is an instrument used by God to bring about Saul's conversion/call" (*The Death of Herod*, 126–28).

⁷⁷ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 143–46; see 202–5 for a brief attempt to determine Bar-Jesus's relationship to this pattern.

of Luke's story. However, work remains to be done in this regard. Some of Ford's conclusions are unpersuasive. She construes Herod's death as "an example of the false use of supernatural power" following the Gentiles' reception of the Spirit.⁷⁸ However, she does not explain how Herod falsely used such power. Ford seems intent on aligning the king's death with other retributive events, leading her to misrepresent what happens in Acts 12. Allen's theory of how punitive miracles structure Luke's narrative is intriguing but incomplete. His argument for a "prophetic pattern" underlying Luke-Acts does not cohere well with Bar-Jesus's blinding. Nor, for that matter, can this pattern explain Zechariah's muting. Work remains to be done in the literary-critical investigation of Luke's punitive miracles.

1.3.9. Summary and Prospects

Scholars have made significant progress in interpreting Luke's punitive miracles. At least seven distinct yet overlapping approaches can be discerned in their works. Several of these approaches provide direction for answering my research question. The *salvation-historical* approach establishes the role of punitive miracles in producing continuity among scriptural writings (Lampe, Mánek), the capacity of these events to advance biblical history (Lampe, Tosco), and the basic contours of the "judgment of God" account (Tosco). My analysis will pay special attention to the motifs and characters that Tosco identifies as common in these accounts, and I will develop his claim that the mediating role of characters like prophets accentuates their closeness to God. The *eschatological* approach demonstrates that Luke's punitive miracles culminate a train of such events beginning in Israel's scriptures. That they culminate this

⁷⁸ Ford, "The Social and Political Implications," 151.

sequence means they are “characteristic signs of the new age” (Lampe) or indications of God’s kingdom now “visiting” the world to produce “eschatological judgement” or “eschatological reversal” (Miller). The *apocalyptic* approach shows that Luke’s punitive miracles often reflect a conflict between God and Satan. These events display Satan’s weakness through the defeat of his human collaborators (Miller, Garrett). The *historiographical* approach reveals that Luke’s punitive miracles likely allowed early Christians to perceive themselves in terms of God’s mission and appreciate the divine protection associated with this identity (Ertl). Finally, the *literary-critical* approach clarifies that the punitive miracles in Acts instantiate the reversals anticipated in Luke’s Gospel (Allen). I assume all these findings as the baseline of my study.⁷⁹

None of these approaches, on its own, is adequate for answering my research question. I want to determine how early Christians would likely perceive the Lukan punitive miracles, both internally and in relation to their scriptural precursors. Consequently, another approach is warranted. This method should accommodate the approaches most suitable to answering my research question (i.e., the salvation-historical, eschatological, apocalyptic, and literary-critical approaches). It also needs to provide what these approaches lack individually: a robust basis for articulating what unites punitive miracles across biblical literature. Such an approach is available in “socio-rhetorical interpretation.”

⁷⁹ Thus, I will not cite the scholars mentioned above except when their works make specific additional contributions to my argument.

1.4. Methodology

Vernon Robbins's approach to socio-rhetorical interpretation (SRI) will guide my investigation. Robbins has developed SRI over several decades, producing numerous papers, essays, and books that have nurtured it into a full-fledged "interpretive analytic."⁸⁰ He describes this approach as "socio-" due to its incorporation of knowledge from the social sciences. It is "rhetorical" given its view of textual language as a "means of communication among people," serving various ends. These dual emphases yield an approach that "integrates the ways people use language with the ways they live in the world."⁸¹ Given its multifaceted nature, it is impractical to provide a detailed account of SRI's development and procedure here.⁸² I will introduce this approach's salient features and explain how they orient my study.

The defining feature of SRI in Robbins's earlier works is the investigation of "texture." SRI conceives of a text as a "tapestry" comprised of several "textures."⁸³ These textures are fourfold: "inner texture," "intertexture," "social and cultural texture," and "ideological texture."⁸⁴ Investigating each domain involves the following:

⁸⁰ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 5: "An interpretive analytic, in contrast to a method, applies analytical strategies for the purpose of inviting other analytical strategies where those other strategies could illumine something the first set of strategies did not find, exhibit, discuss, and interpret."

⁸¹ Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1996), 1.

⁸² For such an account, see Vernon K. Robbins, "Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune, BCR (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 192–219.

⁸³ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 2–3.

⁸⁴ Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 27–40; similarly, Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992), xxiii, xxvii–xxix; cf. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 2–4, 120–31, which adds a "sacred" texture to this list.

Table 2: Robbins's Textures⁸⁵

Inner texture	How the language of a text produces communication
Intertexture	How a text relates to external phenomena including, but not limited to, other texts
Social and cultural texture	How a text exhibits stances relative to society and culture
Ideological texture	How the language of a text and its interpreters reflects and promotes "alliances and conflicts" among people

I cannot engage each of these textures due to the wide range of texts I will examine. My analysis will focus on the inner texture and intertexture of punitive miracle accounts in Israel's scriptures and Luke-Acts. To this end, I will pay special attention to certain "sub-textures":

Table 3: Robbins's Sub-Textures⁸⁶

Inner texture	"Repetitive-progressive texture"	The recurrence and sequencing of words in an episode
	"Opening-middle-closing texture"	The relationship between the beginning, middle, and ending sections of an episode
	"Narrational texture"	How a narrator stages an episode, including which characters are present and allowed to speak
	"Argumentative texture"	"Logical progression": How an episode's claims nurture and fulfill readerly expectations "Qualitative progression": How an episode unfolds contrary to its previously stated claims, producing unexpected results
Intertexture	"Oral-scribal intertexture"	"Recitation": Reproducing words from an oral or textual tradition in a more or less direct manner "Recontextualization": Reproducing traditional words, absent any indication of their original context

⁸⁵ The table above compiles data from Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, xxiii, xxviii.

⁸⁶ The table above compiles data from Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 8–29, 40–50, 58–62; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 46–64, 97–115. These books occasionally differ in their presentation. *Exploring the Texture of Texts* distinguishes the "repetitive" and "progressive" textures. *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* does not discuss "qualitative progression" or "allusion." My display synthesizes the relevant categories from Robbins's volumes.

	“Reconfiguration”: Reworking traditional words to make a new version superior to the former one
“Cultural intertexture”	“Reference”: The mention of a figure or tradition broadly known to members of a particular culture
	“Allusion”: A reference loosely tied to a textual tradition
	“Echo”: The faint evocation of tradition broadly known to members of a particular culture

I generally do not distinguish these textures or call attention to their labels to maintain a smooth presentation. Regardless, my literary and intertextual analysis of punitive miracle episodes in the following chapters amounts to an investigation of inner texture and intertexture.

A recent focus of SRI concerns the “modes of discourse” common among early Christians. While investigating the textures of early Christian texts, Robbins discovered that certain textures are associated with specific discourse patterns.⁸⁷ He describes these patterns as “modes of discourse” or “rhetorolects”⁸⁸ and identifies six in the NT: “wisdom,” “prophetic,” “apocalyptic,” “precreation,” “priestly,” and “miracle.”⁸⁹ These modes often “intermingle” or “blend” in early Christian writings,⁹⁰ facilitating the rise of a “richly variegated culture of early Christian discourse by the end of the first century.”⁹¹ Robbins’s work on rhetorolects moves

⁸⁷ Robbins, “Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation,” 197; see also Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 6–7.

⁸⁸ Vernon K. Robbins, “The Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse,” *Scr* 59 (1996): 353, 355–57.

⁸⁹ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 7. The names attached to some rhetorolects have changed. “Wisdom,” “apocalyptic,” and “miracle” have remained stable (see Robbins, “Dialectical Nature,” 357–60). In contrast, the prophetic, precreation, and priestly rhetorolects were initially called “opposition,” “cosmic,” and “death-resurrection,” respectively (“Dialectical Nature,” 360–61).

⁹⁰ Robbins, “Dialectical Nature,” 356; Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 7.

⁹¹ Vernon K. Robbins, “Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination,” in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*, BibInt 89 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 171.

rhetorical analysis beyond the familiar divisions of deliberative, forensic, and epideictic rhetoric to an analysis attentive to the social contexts early Christians experienced.⁹²

The socio-rhetorical understanding of rhetorolects has evolved.⁹³ Robbins has long defined a rhetorolect as a “form of language variety or discourse identifiable on the basis of a distinctive configuration of themes, topics, reasonings, and argumentations.”⁹⁴ His initial forays into describing the rhetorolects focused on the unique ways these modes present “enthymematic argumentation,” a domain he calls “rhetology.”⁹⁵ He has more recently distinguished this dimension from the “pictorial narration” proper to each rhetorolect, which he calls “rhetography.”⁹⁶ The discovery of rhetography is a substantial advance for SRI, opening the way to the rhetorical analysis of literature primarily comprised of narration.⁹⁷ Currently, SRI understands the rhetorolects as discursive modes that mix rhetology and rhetography in distinctive ways.⁹⁸

⁹² Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 1–3, 14–16.

⁹³ My overview in this and the next paragraph broadly follows Robbins, “Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation,” 197–200.

⁹⁴ Robbins, “Dialectical Nature,” 356; see also Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 7.

⁹⁵ Vernon K. Robbins, “Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text,” in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy’s Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson, SRR 8 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 85–86; see Robbins, “Dialectical Nature,” 357–61; Vernon K. Robbins, “Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation,” in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference*, ed. Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Walter Übelacker, ESEC 8 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 27–65.

⁹⁶ Robbins, “Rhetography,” 86. This essay provides a helpful definition: “Rhetography refers to the graphic images people create in their minds as a result of the visual texture of a text. Rhetography communicates a context of meaning to a hearer or reader. A speaker or writer composes, intentionally or unintentionally, a context of communication through statements or signs that conjure visual images in the mind which, in turn, evoke ‘familiar’ contexts that provide meaning for a hearer or reader” (“Rhetography,” 81).

⁹⁷ Robbins, “Rhetography,” 82–84.

⁹⁸ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 17.

Incorporating critical spatiality theory and conceptual blending theory into SRI has produced a deeper understanding of the relationship between rhetography and rhetology in each rhetorlect.⁹⁹ The impetus for recruiting these theories was the finding that rhetology is closely associated with “‘lived experiences’ in specific places in the first century Mediterranean world.”¹⁰⁰ By combining the critical spatiality and conceptual blending theories, Robbins has reached a fuller description of how rhetorlects relate to experiences in different locations:

People’s words and phrases evoke conventional discourse frames (rhetorlects) that invite pictures of spaces and actions that exist in cultural memory. Sensory-aesthetic experiences of the body in various social places ... are the ‘firstspace’ contexts in which people develop and perpetuate special pictures and memories in their minds. People activate cognitive and conceptual abilities to interpret these social places and actions as ‘secondspace’ cultural, religious, and ideological places. In addition, people use processes of part-whole, similar-dissimilar, opposite, etc. to relate pictures, actions, and reasonings (in ‘generic’ spaces) to one another. In the context of these activities, people negotiate their daily lives in ongoing contexts of sensory-aesthetic experiences which are ‘thirdspace’ ‘spaces of blending.’”¹⁰¹

It is beyond my investigation’s scope to explore critical spatiality theory and conceptual blending theory. It suffices that these theories cooperate to produce an analysis of each rhetorlect in terms of “‘experienced spaces” (firstspace), “‘conceptualized spaces” (secondspace), and “‘spaces of blending” (thirdspace).¹⁰² I will summarize Robbins’s analysis of each rhetorlect in these terms to introduce each one.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Robbins, “Rhetography,” 99.

¹⁰⁰ Robbins, “Conceptual Blending,” 163.

¹⁰¹ Robbins, “Conceptual Blending,” 164–65.

¹⁰² Robbins, “Conceptual Blending,” 165.

¹⁰³ Robbins’s descriptions of secondspace conceptualizations are occasionally unclear. My summary of these conceptualizations is guided by the following statement, which I adapt to each rhetorlect as appropriate: “During 2002, sociorhetorical interpreters began to work seriously with critical spatiality theory, with special focus on ‘2nd space’ conceptualization, where metaphorical reasoning blends ‘1st space’ experiential knowledge of places and spaces in the Mediterranean world with the cosmos, where it is presupposed that God dwells” (*Invention of Christian Discourse*, 107). Thus, God’s cosmos is conceptualized as God’s residence (wisdom), the place “where

Wisdom. Embodied existence, human households, and the world at large comprise the experienced space of the “early Christian wisdom rhetorlect” (firstspace). This space is blended with a conceptualization of the “cosmos” as God’s residence (secondspace). The outcome of this blending is a perception of God as a “heavenly Father” and people as the deity’s “children” who should use divine wisdom to cultivate “good, righteous action, thought, will, and speech” (thirdspace). Features of this rhetorlect relevant to my argument include the description of human interrelationships in familial terms and the generation of discourse centered on “a way of life in the world that co-participates with God in the production of goodness and righteousness.”¹⁰⁴

Prophetic. Human kingdoms comprise the experienced space of the “early Christian prophetic rhetorlect” (firstspace). This space is blended with a conceptualization of the “cosmos” as the place “where God rules as king” (secondspace). The outcome of this blending is a perception of God as a “heavenly King over his righteous kingdom on earth,” which includes “God’s people,” who are led by prophets and kings to reflect God’s righteousness (thirdspace). Features of this rhetorlect relevant to my argument include a focus on the “prophet” and “king” as primary personages and the generation of discourse that “accuses people of wrongdoing and sometimes warns them that the consequences of continuing with evil ways of life in the world may lead to a fiery result.”¹⁰⁵

God rules as king” (prophetic), a “heavenly temple city” in which “God rules as emperor” (apocalyptic), a place beyond space and time where God is a “loving heavenly emperor with a household populated by loving people” (precreation), and a “heavenly temple” where God sits on a “priestly throne” (priestly) (see the respective descriptions above for citations). The miracle rhetorlect cannot be accommodated to this schema given Robbins’s identification of its secondspace as God’s presence with miracle workers themselves.

¹⁰⁴ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 107, 110, 129, 134, 192.

¹⁰⁵ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 110, 219–20, 226, 233–35, 490.

Apocalyptic. Human empires comprise the experienced space of the “early Christian apocalyptic rhetorlect” (firstspace). This space is blended with a conceptualization of a “heavenly temple city” as the place “where God rules as emperor” over creation (secondspace). The outcome of this blending is a perception of God as a “heavenly emperor” intent on purging evil from the universe (thirdspace). This divine act makes the universe a place where “holy bodies experience perfect well-being in the presence of God.” The feature of this rhetorlect relevant to my argument is its focus on Satan and other evil forces as God’s opponents.¹⁰⁶

Precreation. A human emperor’s household comprises the experienced space of the “early Christian precreation rhetorlect” (firstspace). This space is blended with a “philosophically conceptualized cosmos” beyond space and time where God is a “loving heavenly emperor with a household populated by loving people” (secondspace). The outcome of this blending is a perception of God as a “heavenly Emperor Father” who makes the “eternal benefits” of the divine household available to “heirs and friends” (thirdspace). The extension of these benefits is made possible by the journey of God’s Son into the world, where the Son establishes “friendships” resulting in “eternal peace, salvation, and life.” This rhetorlect does not figure into my argument given the lack of precreation discourse in Luke-Acts.¹⁰⁷

Priestly. Earthly temples comprise the experienced space of the “early Christian priestly rhetorlect” (firstspace). This space is blended with a conceptualization of a “heavenly temple” where God sits on a “priestly throne” (secondspace). The outcome of this blending is a perception of a mutually beneficial relationship wherein humans sacrifice to God, and God

¹⁰⁶ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 110, 342–43, 393–94.

¹⁰⁷ Robbins, “Conceptual Blending,” 169; Robbins, “Rhetography,” 96; Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 31, 111; Vernon K. Robbins, “Precreation Discourse and the Nicene Creed: Christianity Finds Its Voice in the Roman Empire,” *R&T* 18 (2011): 340.

responds by “act[ing] redemptively among humans in the world.” Features of this rhetorlect relevant to my argument include a focus on the “priest” as a primary personage, the foregrounding of purity and holiness as qualities of God and God’s people, and the identification of specific human (blessing, fasting, praising, praying, singing, worshipping) and divine acts (forgiving sins, giving the Holy Spirit) as “priestly.”¹⁰⁸

Miracle. Interactions between miracle workers and individuals suffering from various afflictions comprise the experienced space of the “early Christian miracle rhetorlect” (firstspace). This space is blended with a conceptualization of the miracle worker as a “‘location’ where God can function as a miraculous renewer of life” (secondspace). The outcome of this blending is “extraordinary renewal within people,” leading to communities of mutual care (thirdspace). Features of this rhetorlect relevant to my argument include a focus on the “miracle worker” as a primary personage, the foregrounding of “belief” as a central miracle topos, and the interpretation of miracles as events wherein God “restore[s] order and well-being.”¹⁰⁹

The socio-rhetorical understanding of rhetorlects suggests a twofold basis for punitive miracles. First, punitive miracles belong to the miracle rhetorlect as dramatic divine incursions into human affairs.¹¹⁰ These events differ in some ways from Robbins’s analysis of the miracle rhetorlect. The harmful effect of these miracles inverts the outcome of the miracles Robbins examines. Rather than restoring order and wellbeing, punitive miracles undermine such conditions. Moreover, Robbins’s focus on the miracle worker as the locus of divine action does

¹⁰⁸ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, xxvi, 109, 112, 378, 398; Vernon K. Robbins, “Priestly Discourse in Luke and Acts,” in *Jesus and Mary Reimagined in Early Christian Literature*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins and Jonathan M. Potter, WGRWSup 6 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 19, 33–40.

¹⁰⁹ Robbins, “Argumentative Textures,” 37–44; Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 109, 111, 501.

¹¹⁰ For the basis of punitive miracles in the miracle rhetorlect, see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 317 n. 89.

not fit many punitive miracles in Israel's scriptures (e.g., the flood, the death of Lot's wife) and one in Luke's corpus (the death of Judas). Regardless, the miraculous dimension of punitive miracles broadly associates these events with the miracle rhetorolect.

Second, punitive miracles participate in the prophetic rhetorolect. The basis for this finding has been laid by Lorenzo Tosco, who identifies the core of specific punitive miracle episodes as the motifs of fault and miraculous punishment.¹¹¹ These motifs correspond to the “reproach and threat” segments of the prophetic “lawsuit speech.”¹¹² By featuring a person who announces a fault and its punishment and highlighting these motifs in other ways,¹¹³ punitive miracle episodes enact the prophetic lawsuit speech in narrative form. These events are a species of prophetic discourse. Robbins has hinted at this conclusion by mentioning a “dynamic mixture of miracle and prophetic rhetorolect” in the account of Bar-Jesus's blinding (Acts 13).¹¹⁴ It remains to explore this mixture in Acts 13 and elsewhere more thoroughly.

The location of punitive miracles in the prophetic rhetorolect suggests how we can conceptualize Luke's use of these events. Robbins has identified a “prophetic story-line” associated with the early Christian prophetic rhetorolect (ECPR).¹¹⁵ He writes:

As Christianity spread throughout the Mediterranean world, leaders of the movement regularly spoke in strongly confrontational ways in public settings. Their speech regularly included a rehearsal of special actions God had taken in the past, stories about people God had chosen in the past to communicate special messages about God's actions,

¹¹¹ Tosco, *Pietro e Paolo*, 98–105.

¹¹² Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 223, quoting John J. Schmitt, “Prophecy: Preexilic Hebrew Prophecy,” *ABD* 5:484.

¹¹³ Tosco, *Pietro e Paolo*, 98–105. Tosco notes that this figure is not essential to punitive miracle episodes.

¹¹⁴ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 317 n. 89.

¹¹⁵ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 235.

assertions about the rejection, suffering, and sometimes death of people who carried out God's directions, and assertions about actions God will take in the future.¹¹⁶

The NT lacks a comprehensive account of God's "special actions" and the people involved.¹¹⁷

Regardless, ECPR presupposes, draws on, and authorizes a reading of Israel's scriptures centered on "God's kingdom on earth."¹¹⁸ Robbins's description of ECPR as a "network of reasoning" suggests this reading's contours:

[ECPR] is a network of reasoning that focuses on the establishment of righteousness and justice in God's world. Enactment of righteousness and justice occurs through specially selected people, some of whom function as prophets and kings in the story-line of God's activities, and some who are simply part of the group God has selected to establish, maintain, renew, or begin anew the special kingdom God has planned for the world.¹¹⁹

ECPR identifies a prophetic storyline in Israel's scriptures. This storyline is the series of events whereby God forms and develops an "earthly kingdom" populated by people who "enact God's righteousness and justice"—that is, they reflect God's character.¹²⁰ Two character types are central to the prophetic storyline. First, this storyline features prophetic figures, including traditional prophets like Moses and Elijah and less apparent characters like Abraham.¹²¹ Common to these figures is the possession of a "prophetic task," a duty initiated by "God's direct

¹¹⁶ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 221.

¹¹⁷ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 228–29.

¹¹⁸ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 220, 226–28, 232, 234–35. The impetus toward this reading is the "image-description structuring" of ECPR. Robbins writes: "The image-description structuring [of ECPR as an "idealized cognitive model"; see *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 106–7] emphasizes the relation of events in God's renewed kingdom on earth to God's initial inauguration of and communication with a chosen kingdom to Israel. This structuring produces a sequential history that begins with Israel in the past, restarts with the story of Jesus after the kingdom of Israel came to an end, and continues after the death and resurrection of Jesus in the lives of Jesus' followers" (*Invention of Christian Discourse*, 226–27).

¹¹⁹ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 234.

¹²⁰ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 227, 238–39; see 233.

¹²¹ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 234–42.

confrontation of them with speech” that contributes to the prophetic storyline and the development of God’s kingdom.¹²² Second, the prophetic storyline features kings, understood as divine “agents” who implement “righteousness and justice throughout God’s kingdom.”¹²³ The prophetic storyline begins with Abraham and ends when Israel loses political sovereignty.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, ECPR understands that this storyline has “restarted,” featuring “God’s renewed kingdom” in the early Christian movement.¹²⁵ Since Luke’s punitive miracles participate in the prophetic rhetorolect, it is natural to search for the coherence of his miracles with their scriptural precursors in the context of the prophetic storyline that Luke’s corpus assumes and extends.¹²⁶

In light of the above, a socio-rhetorical understanding of the “early Christian prophetic story-line” shapes how I investigate punitive miracle episodes in the following chapters.¹²⁷ My

¹²² Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 232. In my reading of Robbins, two criteria permit the identification of a prophetic task. First, God must order an individual to perform specific actions. Second, these actions must contribute to the prophetic storyline and the development of God’s kingdom. Given these criteria, a person can perform a prophetic task and function as a prophetic figure without being a prophet as such (see *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 238).

¹²³ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 234.

¹²⁴ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 227, 235.

¹²⁵ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 226–27.

¹²⁶ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 226–27. It would also be possible to trace the intersection of punitive miracles with the miracle storyline in Israel’s scriptures, which Robbins associates with Elijah and Elisha’s healing miracles (“Priestly Discourse,” 15–16). However, this approach is less likely to yield substantive insights into the relationship between Luke’s punitive miracles and their scriptural antecedents than the one taken above. Focusing on the miracle storyline would cover much of the same ground as the prophetic storyline but produce a less distinct conceptualization of how punitive miracles relate to the formation of God’s kingdom. Israel’s scriptures contain far more punitive miracles than beneficent ones, meaning that an analysis of the miracle storyline (understood as the sequence of harmful and helpful divine actions) would remain primarily focused on punitive miracles. Nevertheless, as a practical matter, this approach would permit less analysis of the relationship between punitive miracles and the prophetic rhetorolect, which gives these events their discursive edge. A desideratum for future research would be an investigation of beneficent miracles on their own terms, the results of which could be brought into conversation with the present study.

¹²⁷ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 235; see also 249–50, 281, 312, 317 for this phrase. Following Robbins, I use “early Christian prophetic storyline” to denote the storyline that early Christians perceived in Israel’s scriptures and extended into the early Christian movement. I refer to the “Septuagint’s prophetic storyline” or “Luke’s prophetic storyline” when this storyline’s former or latter segments are in view, respectively.

analysis of inner- and intertexture will focus on how punitive miracles intersect with this storyline. Rather than viewing these events as isolated incidents, my goal is to understand how early Christians would likely perceive these events in the context of an extensive story about God's kingdom. The association of this storyline with the prophetic rhetorolect causes me to pay special attention to three features of punitive miracle accounts. First, the prominence of prophets and kings in the prophetic storyline suggests the need to determine how punitive miracles contribute to characterizing such individuals. Second, the presence of recurrent topoi in ECPR requires considering how punitive miracles contribute to these topoi's development. Robbins does not provide a comprehensive list of prophetic topoi, but he has identified several that will figure into my study: injustice; divine action through a select individual; the people's rejection of the prophet; God's kingdom; the hardness of people's hearts; blindness; and blessedness.¹²⁸ Third, the prophetic storyline's focus on the formation of God's kingdom makes it necessary to consider how punitive miracles promote this theme. Given these foci, my investigation will yield two results: 1. It will establish and articulate how punitive miracles cohere with the early Christian prophetic storyline; 2. It will isolate a set of "patterns and conventions" in Israel's scriptures that can facilitate the interpretation of Luke's punitive miracles.¹²⁹

This investigation builds on previous scholarship. My project synthesizes the best features of the salvation-historical, eschatological, apocalyptic, and literary-critical approaches described above. Nevertheless, using a socio-rhetorical approach allows me to advance our

The former designation reworks Robbins's description of a "prophetic story" in the Hebrew Bible, while the latter reformulates his "prophetic story-line of the Gospel of Luke" in a more precise form (*Invention of Christian Discourse*, 234, 298).

¹²⁸ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 245, 275–76, 290, 325.

¹²⁹ My use of "patterns and conventions" depends on S. John Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor: Character Types in Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup 144 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 89.

understanding of Luke's punitive miracles. By investigating the punitive miracles in Israel's scriptures and Luke-Acts through the lens of the early Christian prophetic storyline, I will establish a plausible understanding of how early Christians would likely perceive these events.

1.5. Thesis and Overview

My thesis is that early Christian readers would likely perceive Luke's punitive miracles as making a compelling contribution to their sacred history. In light of the early Christian prophetic storyline, where miraculous judgments are integral to forming and preserving God's earthly kingdom among the Israelites, these readers would likely view the similar episodes in Luke's corpus to mean that God's kingdom has been renewed after a prolonged absence. This vantage produces a modest reconfiguration of "God's people." Whereas God's kingdom was formerly associated with a people constituted by covenant, the Lukan punitive miracles indicate a change. These events establish the Jewish disciples as the locus of divine concern. God's creative purposes now reside in the church, with a view toward benefitting Israel and the created order. Simultaneously, the same events anticipate God's creation of a second "people" from the Gentiles to complement Israel. These miracles foreground faith as the response proper to God's renewed kingdom, which prepares for the inclusion of believing Gentiles alongside believing Jews on an equal footing. Luke's punitive miracles delicately reconfigure "God's people" in the renewed divine kingdom. These events narrow the prophetic storyline's focus to the church while retaining a place for Israel as God's covenant people.

I will develop and defend this thesis throughout the following four chapters. In chapter 2 ("Punitive Miracles in the LXX Primary History"), I examine the punitive miracles in Genesis–2 Kings. I argue that the Septuagint forms an appropriate background for understanding Luke's

punitive miracles. I then trace the intersection of punitive miracles and what early Christian readers would likely perceive as the “prophetic storyline” that runs through LXX Genesis–2 Kings. In chapter 3 (“Divergent LXX Voices”), I extend my study into the Septuagintal versions of 1–2 Chronicles, 1–4 Maccabees, Job, Jonah, and Daniel. Although these texts stand at a distance from Genesis–2 Kings, I argue that early Christians would likely read these “divergent voices” in light of the Primary History, which I consider the Septuagint’s narrative center of gravity. From this vantage, the punitive miracles in these books attest to diverse manners of carrying the Primary History and its vision of God’s kingdom into new contexts. In chapter 4 (“Punitive Miracles in Luke-Acts”), I turn to the six texts containing miraculous judgments in Luke’s corpus. Given my understanding that Luke-Acts continues the prophetic storyline, I interpret these Lukan episodes in light of my findings in chapters 2–3. Contextualizing Luke’s punitive miracles in this manner produces a plausible understanding of how early Christian readers would likely perceive these events. Finally, in chapter 5 (“Conclusion”), I summarize my argument, articulate its contributions, and pose new questions this study raises.

CHAPTER 2. PUNITIVE MIRACLES IN THE LXX PRIMARY HISTORY

2.1. Introduction

Israel's scriptures are the natural place to begin investigating Luke's punitive miracles. These scriptures profoundly influenced Luke, as shown by the numerous biblical quotations, references, and allusions in the Lukan corpus. Further, Luke wrote Luke-Acts to continue the biblical story. As Jacob Jervell puts it, Luke "offers holy history, the continuation of the history presented in the Scriptures ... Luke obviously has the idea that he is contributing to the Scriptures."¹³⁰ If Luke-Acts extends scriptural history, it is incumbent on us to uncover the role of punitive miracles in this history as a precursor to understanding Luke. We cannot assume that Luke used punitive miracles precisely as Israel's sacred writings do. However, the starting point for understanding Luke is the corpus he had pretensions of continuing.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Jacob Jervell, "The Future of the Past: Luke's Vision of Salvation History and Its Bearing on His Writing of History," in *History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts*, ed. Ben Witherington III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 116.

¹³¹ I do not deny the value of Greco-Roman literature in interpreting Luke-Acts. Daniel Marguerat has shown that Luke-Acts adopts a rhetorical strategy he terms "semantic ambivalence." With this device, Luke allows various terms, phrases, episodes, and themes to display "semantic duality"—that is, a concurrent "Jewish dimension, turned toward the LXX" and a "Hellenistic dimension oriented to Greek philosophy or culture" (*The First Christian Historian: Writing the "Acts of the Apostles,"* trans. Ken McKinney, Gregory J. Laughery, and Richard Bauckham, SNTSMS 121 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 68–75). I focus on the story that emerges from Israel's scriptures because Luke has connected his two volumes to this story (see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 229).

The form of Israel's scriptures that concerns us is the Septuagint (LXX).¹³² Luke knew Israel's scriptures in their Greek form, as shown by the close adherence of his biblical quotations and allusions to the LXX and his imitation of Septuagintal grammar and syntax.¹³³ Luke wrote for "an LXX-competent audience."¹³⁴ Most importantly, Luke directed readers to the LXX as his primary intertext, as S. John Roth has demonstrated.¹³⁵ Roth observes:

Luke's formal preface (1.1–4) has been likened to the prefaces in classical historical works ... as well as to prefaces of other Hellenistic writing. It is widely noted that by opening his Gospel in this fashion, Luke deliberately places his work into the context of sophisticated Greek literature. Moreover it is universally recognized that with Lk. 1.5, the writer abruptly changes his writing style ... The abrupt shift signals the presence of an intertext, and the specific style adopted at Lk. 1.5, that is, Septuagintal style, signals that the intertext is the LXX. By his Septuagintal writing style and by the way he draws attention to that style as a style deliberately chosen, Luke indicates that the LXX is the background against which his account is to be read.¹³⁶

¹³² For the problems involved with the term "Septuagint," see R. Timothy McLay, *The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 6–7. I retain this term given its conventional use.

¹³³ For Luke's LXX citations and allusions, see William Kemp Lowther Clarke, "The Use of the Septuagint in Acts," *BegC* 2:84–105; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Use of the Old Testament in Luke-Acts," in *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies*, 2nd ed., BRS (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 304–6; Carl R. Holladay, "Luke's Use of the LXX in Acts: A Review of the Debate and a Look at Acts 1:15–26," in *Die Septuaginta und das frühe Christentum — The Septuagint and Christian Origins*, ed. Thomas Scott Cauley and Hermann Lichtenberger, WUNT 1/277 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 254–300. For Luke's Septuagintalisms, see Albert Wifstrand, *Epochs and Styles: Selected Writings on the New Testament, Greek Language and Greek Culture in the Post-Classical Era*, ed. Lars Rydbeck and Stanley E. Porter, trans. Denis Searby, WUNT 1/179 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 28–45; H. F. D. Sparks, "The Semitisms of St. Luke's Gospel," *JTS* 44 (1943): 129–38; H. F. D. Sparks, "The Semitisms of the Acts," *JTS NS* 1 (1950): 16–28; Eckhard Plümacher, *Lukas als hellenistischer Schriftsteller: Studien zur Apostelgeschichte*, SUNT 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 38–50, 67–72.

¹³⁴ Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor*, 84–94. Roth establishes Luke's assumption of an "LXX-competent audience" by probing five phenomena: "unclarified references to historic characters in the drama of Israel's story; unclarified references to particular biblical episodes; biblical quotations that require the audience to recognize the passage as biblical without help from the narrator; an implied warning against erroneous scriptural interpretation; and expressions that are explicable only to someone familiar with the LXX" (*The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor*, 84; see pp. 84–88). For Luke's relationship to the LXX, see also Joel B. Green, "Internal Repetition in Luke-Acts: Contemporary Narratology and Lucan Historiography," in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts*, ed. Ben Witherington III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 295–96; Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 33.

¹³⁵ Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor*, 89.

¹³⁶ Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor*, 89.

The affinity of Luke-Acts to the LXX is no triviality. Instead, as Roth concludes, “Luke’s rhetoric invites his readers to look for patterns and conventions that arise out of the LXX.”¹³⁷ Luke used the LXX and expected sufficient familiarity with this corpus for his readers to draw connections between the Greek Old Testament and Luke-Acts.

The investigation of the LXX over the Masoretic Text (MT) will sometimes be inconsequential. However, two considerations forecast the advantage of this approach. First, there are examples of scriptural reasoning in Luke-Acts that assume the LXX and are impossible on the MT (e.g., Acts 15:16–18 = Amos 9:11–12 LXX).¹³⁸ These examples indicate that we would do well to follow the LXX in general. Second, investigating the LXX entails examining texts and books unavailable in Hebrew, like the Prayer of Azariah (Daniel 3 LXX) and 1–4 Maccabees. The presence of additional data makes it reasonable to expect that my investigation of the LXX will yield a perspective that does not fully coincide with the MT.

This brings me to the question of what I mean by the “LXX.” It is common for New Testament scholars to speak as though one can exhaustively consult the LXX by perusing Alfred Rahlfs’s *Handausgabe*.¹³⁹ The truth is more complicated. Much of the LXX’s transmission history need not detain us, but two facts are salient. First, the LXX is not a stable body of literature. Editors started revising the books of the LXX before the Christian era to bring them

¹³⁷ Roth, *The Blind, the lame, and the Poor*, 89.

¹³⁸ See Jacques Dupont, “L’utilisation apologétique de l’Ancien Testament dans les discours des Actes,” in *Études sur les Actes des Apôtres*, LD 45 (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 272–74; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002), 13–18.

¹³⁹ Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, eds., *Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, Rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

into conformity with the Hebrew text.¹⁴⁰ This effort, which produced the *kaige* revision, muddled the stream of transmission from the initial Old Greek (OG) texts to early Christian authors. Critically, the New Testament contains OG and *kaige* readings.¹⁴¹ This finding entails our general ignorance of the text type(s) available to Luke and his readers.¹⁴² Second, the slow process of LXX canonization in the pre-Christian era,¹⁴³ compounded by the lack of the codex format, means we cannot assume that Luke and his readers knew all the books now associated with the LXX. The textual history of the LXX undermines claims about Luke's relationship to this corpus that rely too heavily on specific text types or book lists.

¹⁴⁰ The seminal work that probes the early revision of the LXX is Dominique Barthélemy, *Les devanciers d'Aquila: Première publication intégrale du texte des fragments du Dodécaprophète*, VTSup 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1963). For an analysis of Barthélemy's contributions to LXX studies, see Robert A. Kraft, "Reassessing the Impact of Barthélemy's *Devanciers*, Forty Years Later," *BIOSCS* 37 (2004): 1–28; Adrian Schenker, "What Were the Aims of the Palestinian Recensions, and What Did They Achieve? With Some Biographical Notes on Dominique Barthélemy," in *The Legacy of Barthélemy: 50 Years after Les Devanciers d'Aquila*, ed. Anneli Aejmelaeus and Tuukka Kauhanen, DSI 9 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 14–22.

¹⁴¹ Emanuel Tov, "The Septuagint between Judaism and Christianity," in *Die Septuaginta und das frühe Christentum — The Septuagint and Christian Origins*, ed. Thomas Scott Cauley and Hermann Lichtenberger, WUNT 1/277 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 12–15. Martin Karrer and Ulrich Schmid point to the presence of καὶ γὰρ in Peter's quotation of Joel (Acts 2:18 = Joel 3:2 LXX) as evidence of the "kaige-tendency" in the Lukan corpus ("Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament and the Textual History of the Bible — the Wuppertal Research Project," in *Von der Septuaginta zum Neuen Testament: Textgeschichtliche Erörterungen*, ed. Martin Karrer, Siegfried Kreuzer, and Marcus Sigismund, ANTF 43 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010], 180). OG Joel lacks this feature: καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς δούλους καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς δούλας ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἐκχεῖται ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος μου.

¹⁴² John Wevers's remark about the character of LXX manuscripts in antiquity applies here: "Those who read and pondered the LXX did not have the autograph; they had copies, in fact, had copies of copies. It was the mss which readers had, not the original text, and these mss represent later developments of the text; all these mss constituted eclectic texts, based on a complicated and often untraceable textual genealogy" (*Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*, SCS 35 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993], xvii). It is possible to make judgments about Luke's text based on his quotations and allusions, as Clarke does (see "The Use of the Septuagint," 2:95–96). However, we cannot extrapolate these judgments to cover portions of the LXX that Luke does not quote given the likelihood that he had access to a mixture of texts. We are entirely in the dark regarding the text type(s) available to Luke's early readers.

¹⁴³ For an overview of the LXX canonization process, see Anneli Aejmelaeus, "Die 'Septuaginta' als Kanon," in *Kanon in Konstruktion und Dekonstruktion: Kanonisierungsprozesse religiöser Texte von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart: Ein Handbuch*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Stefan Scholz (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 315–27. Aejmelaeus holds that we cannot speak of a Greek canon before the great uncials (the "Septuaginta" as Kanon," 323).

Despite our ignorance, it is possible to probe the LXX as a conceptual resource like early Christian readers of Luke-Acts might have done. Following Roth, I intend to identify “patterns and conventions that arise out of the LXX.”¹⁴⁴ The details that change from one text type to the next will generally not affect this search. Further, the goal of this study is not to discern Luke’s mental processes—which texts influenced him, and which did not—but to uncover the role of punitive miracles in the storyline that Luke-Acts continues. It is irrelevant if Luke was familiar with an outlier like 3 Maccabees; what matters is the effect produced when early Christians read the Lukan punitive miracles in light of 3 Maccabees. The search for patterns and conventions relieves us of the need to be overly concerned about text types and contents.

The texts I examine have been selected from the LXX books contained in Rahlfs’s *Handausgabe*. The present chapter investigates relevant texts in Genesis–2 Kings. These episodes belong together given the coherence of Genesis–2 Kings as a “Primary History” in Israel’s scriptures.¹⁴⁵ The following chapter examines narratives that appear elsewhere: mainly in the remaining historical books, but also among the wisdom literature and prophetic books. I describe these texts as “divergent voices” because, to varying degrees, they present different views of the role of punitive miracles in Israel’s history.¹⁴⁶ The Göttingen critical editions are the

¹⁴⁴ Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor*, 89.

¹⁴⁵ For the “Primary History” as a “distinct story sequence,” see David J. A. Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help?: And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, JSOTSup 94 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 85–105, esp. 89–100. Henry Swete’s presentation of the Greek and Latin evidence (codices, patristic lists, and synodal lists) shows that early Christians usually kept the books of Primary History in a fixed order: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1–4 Kingdoms (*An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, ed. Richard Rusden Ottley, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914], 201–14).

¹⁴⁶ Clines associates several of these books (1–2 Chronicles; Daniel; 1–2 Maccabees) with a “Secondary History” anchored in 1–2 Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah (*What Does Eve Do to Help?*, 90–91). The designation “Secondary History” is valid but not helpful in investigating LXX punitive miracles. First, a couple of books treated in the next chapter (Jonah; Job) are not historical books on any reckoning. Second, the use of punitive miracles in 1–2 Chronicles radically differs from 1–4 Maccabees—and, for that matter, any other LXX book. The association of Chronicles and Maccabees under a single schema would obscure the Chronicler’s idiosyncrasies.

basis of LXX quotations and translations whenever possible.¹⁴⁷ Rahlfs's *Handausgabe* performs this function for books that lack a critical edition.¹⁴⁸

I begin by tracing the intersection of punitive miracles and the prophetic storyline in Genesis–2 Kings. Given my interest in ECPR's appropriation of Israel's scriptures, I divide this history into five segments: the Prehistory, the Origins of the Kingdom (Abraham), the Establishment of the Kingdom (Moses), the Kingdom in Canaan (Joshua and judges); and the Integrity of the Kingdom (kings and prophets).¹⁴⁹ These divisions are artificial, but they provide a heuristic that allows me to uncover the roles of punitive miracles in forming God's kingdom.

¹⁴⁷ Quotations and translations of the following books are based on the Göttingen editions: **Genesis** (John William Wevers, ed., *Genesis*, SVTG 1 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974]); **Exodus** (John William Wevers and Udo Quast, eds., *Exodus*, SVTG 2.1 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991]); **Leviticus** (John William Wevers and Udo Quast, eds., *Leviticus*, SVTG 2.2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986]); **Numbers** (John William Wevers and Udo Quast, eds., *Numeri*, SVTG 3.1 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982]); **Deuteronomy** (John William Wevers and Udo Quast, eds., *Deuteronomium*, 2nd ed., SVTG 3.2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006]); **Ruth** (Udo Quast, ed., *Ruth*, SVTG 4.3 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006]); **2 Chronicles** (Robert Hanhart, ed., *Paralipomenon liber II*, SVTG 7.2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014]); **1 Esdras** (Robert Hanhart, ed., *Esdrae liber I*, 2nd ed., SVTG 8.1 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991]); **Ezra-Nehemiah** (Robert Hanhart, ed., *Esdrae liber II*, SVTG 8.2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993]); **1 Maccabees** (Werner Kappler, ed., *Maccabaeorum liber I*, 3rd ed., SVTG 9.1 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990]); **2 Maccabees** (Werner Kappler and Robert Hanhart, eds., *Maccabaeorum liber II*, 3rd ed., SVTG 9.2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008]); **3 Maccabees** (Robert Hanhart, ed., *Maccabaeorum liber III*, 2nd ed., SVTG 9.3 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980]); **Psalms** (Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Psalmi cum Odis*, 3rd ed., SVTG 10 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979]); **Job** (Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Iob*, SVTG 11.4 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982]); **Sirach** (Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach*, 2nd ed., SVTG 12.2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980]); **the Twelve** (Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Duodecim Prophetarum*, 3rd ed., SVTG 13 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984]); **Isaiah** (Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Isaias*, 3rd ed., SVTG 14 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983]); **Jeremiah** (Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Ieremias, Baruch, Threni, Epistula Ieremiae*, 3rd ed., SVTG 15 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006]); **Ezekiel** (Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Ezechiel*, 3rd ed., SVTG 16.1 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006]); **Daniel** (Joseph Ziegler, Olivier Munnich, and Detlef Fraenkel, eds., *Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco*, 2nd ed., SVTG 16.2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999]).

¹⁴⁸ Quotations and translations of **Joshua**, **Judges**, **1–2 Samuel**, **1–2 Kings**, **1 Chronicles**, **4 Maccabees**, and all other LXX books not mentioned above (n. 147) are based on Rahlfs's *Handausgabe*. For the reader's convenience, chapter and verse references to the LXX follow Rahlfs, regardless of a book's textual basis. Quotations and translations of the Masoretic Text are based on Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 5th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997).

¹⁴⁹ Robbins explores "three key periods of time" in the prophetic storyline centered around Abraham, Moses, and the various prophets under Israel's kings (*Invention of Christian Discourse*, 232). I have expanded these divisions into the five listed above based on the distribution of punitive miracles in the prophetic storyline.

2.2. The Prehistory

2.2.1. Introduction

The role of punitive miracles in the Primary History emerges from the tension between Gen 1–2 and the following chapters. Genesis 1–2 depicts God ordering the created realm to make an environment suitable for divine purposes and conducive to human flourishing. As Walter Brueggemann puts it, the “outcome” of God’s creative effort “is a place of fruitfulness, abundance, productivity, and extravagance—all terms summed up in the word *blessing*.”¹⁵⁰ Critical to these chapters is the role of human wisdom: creation’s wellbeing depends on the exercise of “careful, constant, reflective attention to the shapes and interconnections that keep the world generative.”¹⁵¹ This order is threatened in Gen 3 as the first humans disobey a divine command. It is unwarranted to derive a doctrine of original sin from this event. However, Terence Fretheim is right to discern here an “originating sin” that initiates “a *process* by which sin became ‘original,’ that is, universal and inescapable.”¹⁵² Genesis 4–6 shows that humans increasingly distance themselves from God and the initial conditions of creation, resulting in the divine recognition of the “universality and inevitability of human sinfulness” in 6:5.¹⁵³ This recognition prompts God’s decision to send the flood in 6:7. The first punitive miracle is a

¹⁵⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 529.

¹⁵¹ Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 531–32.

¹⁵² Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 70–71, emphasis original.

¹⁵³ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 70–71, 77–79.

response to the frustration of God's plans. Humans were created to look to the creation's wellbeing, yet they stray from this task and jeopardize God's project.¹⁵⁴

2.2.2. Prehistorical Miracles

The flood account in Gen 6–9 amounts to a “reboot” of creation in which God tries to check the problem of human sinfulness.¹⁵⁵ This judgment is prompted by the divine recognition of the ubiquity of evil human deeds and intentions (Gen 6:5, 11–13), and it consists in the destruction of every living thing not preserved in the ark. The language used to describe the flood indicates a return to the conditions of creation: just as Genesis opens with the earth as an undifferentiated landscape of water (1:2), this narrative describes the removal of the boundaries God set in the beginning (7:11, 19–20; see 1:6–10).¹⁵⁶ God then establishes what amounts to a fresh start as the recipients of divine favor emerge from the ark and receive instructions to fulfill the mandate issued to the first pair (9:1–2, 7; see 1:28).¹⁵⁷ At the same time, this beginning is qualified by the recognition that the problem that prompted the flood remains. God acknowledges that evil human intentions exist after the flood using language that evokes the pre-flood situation (8:21 // 6:5), meaning that the divine judgment failed to extinguish the spark of human sinfulness.

¹⁵⁴ Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 531–32.

¹⁵⁵ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 81.

¹⁵⁶ David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed., JSOTSup 10 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 80; see also Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 10. Clines rightly observes that the order of destruction (“earth, birds, cattle, wild animals, swarming creatures, humans”) largely mirrors the order of creation. God sets boundaries that permit the emergence of dry ground in Gen 1:6–10 and then creates birds (Gen 1:20–23), non-human land animals (1:24–25), and humans (1:26–30). The difference between Gen 1 and 6—and a minor one at that—pertains to the enumeration of non-human land animals.

¹⁵⁷ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 81.

The flood's ineffectiveness as a lasting solution initially surfaces in Gen 9. The first note of trouble is sounded in 9:20–27 as Ham, one of Noah's sons, dishonors his father and elicits a curse on his progeny. This story confirms God's declaration about human sinfulness (Gen 8:21). If a fresh start was granted to humanity, then Ham has quickly effaced this new beginning.

More significant for my purposes is the miracle in Gen 11. This tale relates how God confounds human speech and scatters the resulting divisions of people (Gen 11:8–9). Two considerations reveal why the steps taken by the mass of humanity in 11:1–4 are blameworthy. First, the import of 11:5–6 is that God interprets the construction of an imposing city as an indication of unified humanity's threat to the divine plan. Second, the desire of the builders to avoid dispersion runs counter to the mandate given to Noah and his sons (9:1, 7).¹⁵⁸ God commanded the flood survivors to fill the earth, yet the inhabitants of Babel build a tower to secure a common habitation. God responds by multiplying the number of languages, changing the character of the created order.¹⁵⁹ The multiplication of languages checks the threat posed by postdiluvian humanity, directing creation toward its initial goal (1:28; 9:1, 7).¹⁶⁰

2.2.3. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

The punitive miracles of the prehistorical period are divine responses to threats against God's plans for creation. The flood amounts to a reboot of creation after the post-Eden proliferation of

¹⁵⁸ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 89.

¹⁵⁹ There is no reason to envision a multiplicity of languages before Gen 11. God introduces a new wrinkle into the fabric of creation by diversifying human speech.

¹⁶⁰ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 89.

wickedness. The confusion of languages at Babel alters the created order to address problems remaining after the deluge. In both cases, God exerts control to “right” the created order.¹⁶¹

Neither miracle fully resolves the problems that have cropped up in the narrative. Humans tend toward evil after the flood, much as they did before. Scattering the people at Babel diffuses this problem across the world. Punitive miracles seem inadequate for the task of restoring creation. The failure of these miracles leaves matters unsettled at the end of the present period. God calls Abraham amid this uncertainty, beginning the prophetic storyline.

2.3. The Origins of the Kingdom: Abraham

2.3.1. Introduction

The calling of Abraham initiates the Septuagint’s prophetic storyline. This storyline is the sequence of events whereby God forms a kingdom populated by people who reflect God’s character. Abraham appears in the wake of Gen 1–11, and his calling represents a new divine response to the problems that threaten God’s creative purposes.¹⁶²

At first glance, Abraham seems an unlikely figure to begin the “prophetic” storyline.¹⁶³ He neither utters divine oracles nor performs miracles. However, God’s actions clarify that

¹⁶¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: An Introduction*, LBT (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 166: “The exodus deliverance has, in larger scope, the effect of ‘righting’ creation according to the will of the creator.” Brueggemann’s insight is readily applied to the prehistorical punitive miracles.

¹⁶² My reference to God’s “creative purposes” adapts Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 112, who speaks of God’s “creational *purpose*” (emphasis original).

¹⁶³ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 234–35.

Abraham must be understood in prophetic terms. First, God describes Abraham as a “prophet” in Gen 20:7. This marks the first appearance of *προφήτης* in the LXX. Second, the relationship between God and the patriarch is prophetic: God issues commands to Abraham aimed at creating a people who belong to God and dwell in a chosen land, and Abraham obeys these commands, despite their hardships.¹⁶⁴ Third, some of Abraham’s actions anticipate stereotypical prophetic activities.¹⁶⁵ Abraham begins the prophetic storyline in his capacity as the forerunner of the prophets and as the progenitor of a family that will form the germ of God’s kingdom.

The divine promises in Gen 12:2–3 provide a rubric that enables us to uncover the intersection of punitive miracles and the origins of God’s kingdom. God promises: 1. to make Abraham a great nation; 2. to bless Abraham;¹⁶⁶ 3. to bless those who bless Abraham; 4. to curse those who curse Abraham; 5. to make Abraham a vehicle of blessing for all peoples. The logic of punitive miracles in this period emerges from the first, second, and fourth promises. From the perspective of the first and second promises, punitive miracles protect Abraham’s household as the seed of God’s kingdom. From the perspective of the fourth promise, these miracles inflict woe on those who threaten Abraham. Also relevant is the scope of the fifth promise: God’s dealings with Abraham pertain to “all the tribes [*αἱ φυλαί*] of the earth.” These *φυλαί* are the tribes who were enumerated in Gen 10 and who experienced punishment in Gen 11.¹⁶⁷ The

¹⁶⁴ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 235–37.

¹⁶⁵ The most noteworthy actions appear in Gen 18 and 20. In Gen 18:20–33, Abraham bargains with God, anticipating similar actions on the part of Moses (Exod 32:7–14; Num 14:11–25). In Gen 20:17, Abraham’s prayer forms a necessary component in the healing of Abimelech’s household, prefiguring Moses’s intercession on behalf of Pharaoh (Exod 8:4–10, 21–27; 9:27–30, 33; 10:16–19).

¹⁶⁶ This statement simplifies three divine commitments (*εὐλογῆσω σε καὶ μεγαλυνῶ τὸ ὄνομά σου, καὶ ἔσῃ εὐλογητός*; Gen 12:2). These commitments boil down to the notion that God will bless the patriarch.

¹⁶⁷ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 18–19.

mention of these tribes indicates that the Abrahamic promises are oriented toward the mass of humanity featured in Gen 1–11. Insofar as punitive miracles preserve Abraham as God’s instrument for blessing “all the tribes,” these events benefit all people.

2.3.2. Punitive Miracles and Abraham

The punitive miracles involving Abraham appear at the beginning (Gen 12:10–20) and near the end (20:1–18) of the Abraham cycle. They occur when the patriarch is vulnerable as an alien living among foreigners. The former story is set in Egypt and relates the consequences of Abraham’s decision to pass off his wife, Sarah, as his sister (12:11–13). Pharaoh takes Sarah into his household (12:15)—presumably as a wife or concubine—and God strikes Pharaoh and his household with “great and harmful afflictions” (12:17). The story in Gen 20 unfolds in much the same manner. Here it is Abimelech, king of Gerar, who takes Sarah as his wife (20:2). In this case, God afflicts Abimelech with an ailment (see 20:17) and closes the womb of every woman in the royal household (20:18).¹⁶⁸ The outcomes of these stories differ in detail,¹⁶⁹ but the import is the same: Abraham is enriched, and Sarah is released (12:16, 18–20; 20:14, 16).

The salient difference between these texts is their function in Abraham’s career. The account of Sarah in Pharaoh’s household serves two purposes. First, it recounts the initial

¹⁶⁸ The relationship between Abimelech’s affliction and the closing of wombs in his household is obscure. Abimelech and the members of his household face the threat of death (Gen 20:3, 7). This threat is presumably posed by the affliction that is healed in 20:17. It is unclear whether the affliction that makes Abimelech and his household members liable to death is also responsible for the closing of wombs.

¹⁶⁹ An incidental difference concerns the attitudes of the rulers toward Abraham at the time of his departure: whereas Pharaoh ejects Abraham and his household from Egypt (Gen 12:19–20), Abimelech invites Abraham to remain in Gerar as a resident alien (20:15). Abimelech’s attitude is likely tied to Gerar’s location in the promised land (see 26:1–6). On the other hand, Pharaoh’s attitude anticipates the posture of a later Pharaoh who will expel the Israelites after the last plague (Exod 12:29–32).

fulfillment of God's promises to the patriarch. The defense of Sarah (Gen 12:17) fulfills the divine promise to bless Abraham (see 12:2)—his household is protected during a time of acute vulnerability—and the commitment to curse those who curse him (see 12:3). Second, this account anticipates the plagues of the exodus event, and it consequently undergirds the promise that God will make in Gen 15:13–14.¹⁷⁰

The account of Sarah in Gerar has a bearing on the fruitfulness of Abraham's household. God has promised to bless Abraham with descendants in a series of statements (Gen 12:2; 13:16; 15:5; 17:2, 4–6), and God has recently added that these descendants will come through the erstwhile barren Sarah (17:15–16, 19, 21; 18:10, 14; see 11:30; 16:1–2). These declarations associate Sarah with fruitfulness, despite contrary appearances. This correlation explains the character of the miracle in Gen 20. Abimelech threatens fruitful Sarah,¹⁷¹ and the condign punishment for the king's offense is the barrenness of his household. Only once Abimelech secures Abraham's blessing—conveyed here by intercession—does his household again become fruitful (20:17–18).

The punitive miracles in Gen 12 and 20 display a relationship to the Abrahamic promises, but they express this relationship differently. The affliction of Pharaoh's household reveals that the promise of blessing entails divine protection. The experience in Abimelech's household anticipates and safeguards the fruitfulness of Abraham and Sarah.

¹⁷⁰ This text displays several features that anticipate the exodus event: 1. The story is set in Egypt (Gen 12:10); 2. The journey to Egypt is caused by famine (12:10); 3. Pharaoh is an oppressor (12:15); 4. Pharaoh experiences divine judgment (12:17); 5. The experience of judgment makes Pharaoh aware of Sarah's identity (12:18); 6. Abraham is enriched at the Egyptians' expense (12:16); 7. Abraham and Sarah leave Egypt and travel to Canaan (12:20–13:1). The effect of narrating this story before 15:13–14 is to lend credibility to the promise in the latter passage. God is merely promising to do what has already been done with Abraham and Sarah. The likeness of 12:10–20 and the exodus account is also observed in Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 375–76.

¹⁷¹ Sarah's association with Abimelech calls Isaac's paternity into question (see Gen 21:1–2).

2.3.3. Punitive Miracles in the Cities of the Plain

The remaining punitive miracles in the Abraham cycle concern Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction (Gen 19:24–25). The reason for this destruction is not clearly articulated; we merely find oblique statements like Gen 13:13: “the men in Sodom were very evil and sinful before God.” However, a hint of this catastrophe's cause appears in 18:20: “the outcry [*κραυγή*] against Sodom and Gomorrah has been multiplied.” *Κραυγή* is only used in connection with the offenses of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis (18:20–21; 19:13). The term next appears in Exodus when God expresses concern about the oppressed Israelites' cries (Exod 3:7, 9). It is reasonable to infer that these groups commit similar offenses. Like the Egyptians, the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah commit oppressive acts that prompt pleas to God. These offenders pose an existential threat to others and are decisively judged by a God committed to creation's wellbeing.

Sodom and Gomorrah's fate is also a matter of divine faithfulness to Abraham. God has promised the possession of Canaan to Abraham's descendants on several occasions. However, God clarifies in Gen 15:16 that this transfer will not occur until the Amorites reach the requisite degree of sinfulness. The land transfer involves judging the Amorites and removing their deeds from the land. As of Abraham's lifetime, the Amorites—and all other inhabitants of Canaan—remain in place. Matters are different in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. God cannot postpone judgment until the Israelite conquest. Strictly speaking, no transfer of possession occurs here; Abraham does not take control of these cities' ruins. However, the narration of Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction, in the context of a promise about land acquisition, foreshadows this promise's fulfillment. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah hints at God's desire to make the land suitable for Abraham's descendants.

A punitive miracle involving Lot's family also appears in the lead-up to Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction.¹⁷² This event facilitates the extraction of Lot's family from Sodom. Two angels visit Lot just before the city's destruction, and they blind a group of men who seek to rape them and threaten violence against Lot (Gen 19:4–5, 9–11).¹⁷³ The angels then warn Lot of Sodom's fate and forcibly extract his family from the city (19:12–13, 16). The key to this rescue appears in a statement that summarizes God's intentions: "God remembered Abraham and sent out Lot from the midst of the destruction" (19:29). Lot is not a member of Abraham's household (see 13:5–12), but he receives divine protection as a near relative of the patriarch. The nature of the protection that Lot enjoys is like what I demonstrated with Abraham. Punitive miracles occur in Abraham's life when he is vulnerable as a resident alien among foreigners (12:10; 20:1). Lot is similarly protected while living in Sodom (19:9).¹⁷⁴ Thanks to his association with the patriarch, Lot's household is protected in Sodom, just as Abraham's was in Egypt and Gerar.

¹⁷² A second punitive miracle appears in Gen 19:26: Lot's wife glances back at the cities of the plain and is turned into a pillar of salt. I omit this miracle from the discussion above because the transformation of Lot's wife is incidental to the prophetic storyline. This miracle serves two purposes: it demonstrates that Lot and his family are reluctant to leave Sodom (see also Gen 19:14, 16, 18–20), and it explains why Lot's wife does not prevent the incestuous relations in 19:30–38.

¹⁷³ Lot interprets the threat against the angels as blameworthy because the proposed act would undermine his hospitality (Gen 19:7–8). The fact that Lot offers his daughters in place of the angels (19:8) reveals that he has no qualms against sexual coercion as such.

¹⁷⁴ The operant term that associates these deliverances is *παροικέω*. The Abrahamic miracles occur while Abraham is dwelling as a foreigner in Egypt (Gen 12:10: *κατέβη Ἀβρὰμ εἰς Αἴγυπτον παροικῆσαι ἐκεῖ*) and Gerar (20:1: *παρώκησεν ἐν Γεράροις*). The men of Sodom describe Lot as a foreigner dwelling in their midst just before the angels blind them (19:9: *εἰς ἧλθες παροικεῖν· μὴ καὶ κρίσιν κρίνεις*).

2.3.4. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

Matters were unsettled at the end of the Prehistory as punitive miracles failed to restore creation. Abraham's calling comes amid this uncertainty as a new divine response to threats against God's creative purposes. What is striking about this period is that punitive miracles persist. We might expect God to abandon such miracles given their ineffectiveness. Instead, these events are now co-opted by the prophetic storyline as a means of forming God's kingdom. It is too early to determine whether this arrangement will succeed where punitive miracles, on their own, failed.

Characterization. The miracles in this period characterize Abraham as a prophetic figure. This characterization is less a matter of making Abraham look like a prophet than it is a matter of elucidating his prophetic task.¹⁷⁵ This elucidation comes by way of contrast. The miracles in the Prehistory were universal judgments, affecting all persons for creation's benefit. The miracles in this period are localized, affecting those in the patriarch's vicinity and benefitting Abraham and his family. The shift in the scope and purpose of punitive miracles from the last period to this one reveals Abraham's importance in God's plan. God is focusing the same divine energy on preserving Abraham that once produced the flood and the proliferation of languages. Punitive miracles express Abraham's position in the divine economy.

The development of prophetic topoi. The punitive miracles in this period develop the topoi of divine action through a select individual, blessedness, and injustice. First, divine action through a select individual appears in God's calling of Abraham to a prophetic task. Abraham fulfills his duty, and God responds by protecting Abraham during times of acute vulnerability. God matches individuals' obedience to their tasks with divine protection. Second, blessedness is a vital feature of the Abrahamic promises. God ensures the blessedness of Abraham's household

¹⁷⁵ For Abraham's prophetic task, see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 232, 235–36, 242.

by judging those who would harm the patriarch. Blessing for some entails judging others. Third, injustice is prominent in Sodom and Gomorrah's demise. God demonstrates severe impatience with behaviors threatening the creation and its inhabitants. Responding to injustice through a punitive miracle establishes a divine *modus operandi* that will become prominent in future eras.

The thematic development of God's kingdom. The shift from universal to localized punitive miracles exhibits God's evolving strategy. The fulfillment of God's creative purposes now centers on Abraham's family. This change is not thoroughgoing: the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah reveals that God retains a general concern for humanity's wellbeing. Regardless, the miracles in this period demonstrate that the deity is concerned with prospering all people by protecting and blessing Abraham's family as the seed of the divine kingdom. Anyone who gets in the way of this purpose will suffer like Pharaoh and Abimelech.

2.4. The Establishment of the Kingdom: Moses

2.4.1. Introduction

Genesis lacks punitive miracles after Abraham's death.¹⁷⁶ This book's subsequent chapters are concerned with the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, particularly that of making him a great nation (Gen 12:2).¹⁷⁷ As of the opening of Exodus, the Israelites have "grown and

¹⁷⁶ A possible exception appears in Gen 38:6–10: the deaths of Er and Onan are attributed to God in consequence of their failure to fulfill their levirate duties. It is undeniable that these events are portrayed as divine judgments, but it is not evident that they are miraculous judgments. For a similar perspective, see Yair Zakovitch, *The Concept of the Miracle in the Bible*, trans. Shmuel Himelstein, BUS (Tel-Aviv: MOD Books, 1990), 35.

¹⁷⁷ Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 48.

multiplied” and are “very strong” (Exod 1:7). They are fulfilling God’s mandates concerning fruitfulness (Gen 1:28; 9:1, 7) and now constitute the nation that God promised to Abraham.¹⁷⁸ However, the Israelites have multiplied in a foreign land, generating conflict. An Egyptian Pharaoh perceives Abraham’s descendants as a threat and commits hostile acts that catalyze the calling of Moses. As punitive miracles reappear under Moses, they are a divine response to a threat against the Abrahamic promises.

God checks the Egyptian threat by calling Moses to prophetic service. The account of Moses’s calling (Exod 3:1–4:17) does not describe him as a *προφήτης*, and he receives no summons to prophesy.¹⁷⁹ However, the prophetic profile is more evident in Moses’s case than in Abraham’s. God establishes the relationship between Godself and Moses as one in which Moses speaks on behalf of God, an arrangement defined as “prophetic” in Exod 7:1–2.¹⁸⁰ God charges Moses with performing miracles (*σημεῖα* and *τέρατα*; 7:3) that facilitate the Israelites’ release from bondage.¹⁸¹ Moreover, Moses’s activities are “prophetic” since they advance the prophetic storyline. God calls Moses because of the ancestral promises (2:23–25) and to establish Abraham’s descendants in the promised land (3:8, 10). Moses’s claim to the prophetic mantle is twofold. He is an individual whose relationship with God establishes him as a powerful divine agent and a leader who plays a crucial role in forming God’s kingdom.

¹⁷⁸ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 112, 328 n. 38.

¹⁷⁹ For characterizations of Moses as *προφήτης*, see Num 11:25–29; Deut 18:15, 18; 34:10–12.

¹⁸⁰ Aaron is described as the *προφήτης* of Moses in this passage. According to the text, a *προφήτης* is a person who receives words originating with God and who communicates these words to a recipient on God’s behalf.

¹⁸¹ For Moses’s performance of *σημεῖα* and *τέρατα*, see Exod 11:10; Deut 34:10–12.

Three rubrics allow us to uncover the role of punitive miracles in this period. First, punitive miracles continue to fulfill Gen 12:2–3. These miracles protect and bless Abraham’s descendants by inflicting woe on those who would harm them. Second, a new rubric emerges in the opening chapters of Exodus: the judgments on the Egyptians are instruments of revelation. In God’s description, one reason for the *σημεῖα* and *τέρατα* of the exodus event is to make the Lord (*κύριος*) known to the Egyptians (Exod 7:3–5) and Israelites (10:1–2).¹⁸² Punitive miracles do not reveal the term *κύριος*. Instead, these events make known the character and purposes of the God who bears this name. Concerning the Egyptians, punitive miracles impress the Lord’s status as the sovereign ruler of creation—a domain that includes Egypt (see esp. 7:17–18; 8:18; 9:29). Recognition of this status leads to the expansion of divine renown (7:5; 9:14–16; 14:4, 18; see also 18:11). Concerning the Israelites, punitive miracles make known the Lord’s status as the redeemer of the people (6:6–8; 10:1–2). Recognition of this status entails fulfilling obligations that will become codified in a covenant.¹⁸³ Third, punitive miracles in this period express the negative pole of the newly formed covenantal relationship between God and Israel. I will explore the implications of this rubric in due course. For now, suffice it to say that this relationship accounts for the most startling events in this period: miraculous judgments that fall on Israelites.

¹⁸² This rubric presupposes the Egyptians’ and Israelites’ ignorance of the Lord before this time. The Egyptians’ ignorance appears in Pharaoh’s first encounter with Moses and Aaron: Pharaoh claims not to know the Lord (Exod 5:2). The ignorance of the Israelites is different: they are familiar with the patriarchal God (*ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων*; 3:13) but do not know God by the name *κύριος* (6:2–3; see also 3:13–15).

¹⁸³ Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology*, 43–44, 97–98.

2.4.2. The Ten Plagues

The first series of miracles in this period is among the most spectacular in the Bible. This series consists of the plagues against the Egyptians. The act that provokes these plagues is an Egyptian Pharaoh's oppression of the Israelites in light of their numbers (Exod 1:8–22). This oppressive stance is reaffirmed throughout the narrative as the succeeding Pharaoh refuses to allow the Israelites to hold a festival in the wilderness (e.g., 5:1–5; 7:13, 22–23). These acts are blameworthy in the way Sodom and Gomorrah's were: they are oppressive acts that are odious to a God committed to creation's wellbeing. Indeed, these acts are doubly culpable when viewed in a broader context. Fretheim has argued that the flourishing of the Israelites in Exod 1:7 corresponds to the mandate given to the first humans in Gen 1:28. He writes, "[Exod 1:7] specifies a microcosmic fulfillment of God's macrocosmic design for a creation filled with life. Israel is here seen as God's starting point for realizing the divine intention for all creation." In this context, Pharaoh looms as "a historical symbol for the antireational forces of death" as he "seeks to subvert God's life-giving work with death-dealing efforts."¹⁸⁴ The Pharaohs are rulers who oppose God's plans for Abraham's descendants—and in turn, God's plans for creation.

The divine response to Egyptian oppression comes in the form of ten plagues. These judgments confirm the Lord's status as the ruler of creation.¹⁸⁵ This divine status is established by the degree and quality of power shown in these events. The plagues can be classified according to the following categories. First, the majority of plagues exhibit an intensification of natural processes. To be placed here are the fourth (dog flies; Exod 8:20), fifth (death of

¹⁸⁴ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 112–13. Fretheim is describing the first Pharaoh in Exodus, whose death is recorded in Exod 2:23.

¹⁸⁵ From this point forward, "Pharaoh" refers to the king active during the exodus event. My association of the exodus plagues and creation depends on Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 109–23.

domestic animals; 9:6), seventh (hail; 9:23–25), eighth (locusts; 10:13–15), and tenth plagues (death of firstborn offspring; 12:29). Divine power is revealed as familiar creatures (dog flies; locusts) act in a concerted effort to make human life unbearable and known processes (hail; death) have a universally destructive effect. Second, a few plagues feature transformations that are indicative of creative power. The first (the Nile becomes blood; 7:20–21), third (dirt becomes gnats; 8:13),¹⁸⁶ and sixth plagues (soot becomes festering wounds; 9:10) belong in this category.¹⁸⁷ These events demonstrate divine power in the metamorphosis of certain created elements (water, dirt, and soot) into different ones (blood, gnats, and festering wounds). Third, a couple of plagues feature a blurring of created boundaries. These are the second (frogs; 8:2) and ninth plagues (darkness; 10:22–23). The emergence of frogs from the Nile suggests that the boundary between water and dry land has failed (see Gen 1:9–10), while the prevalence of darkness upon the land for three days undermines the succession of day and night (see Gen 1:3–5, 14–18).¹⁸⁸ The ten plagues demonstrate God’s capacity to direct, transform, and alter creation for Abraham’s descendants. These events establish God’s status as the sovereign of creation.

¹⁸⁶ Gk. ἐπάταξεν τὸ χῶμα τῆς γῆς, καὶ ἐγένοντο οἱ σκνίφες. The translation of χῶμα as “dirt” follows John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus*, SCS 30 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 113–14.

¹⁸⁷ The third and sixth plagues explicitly involve metamorphoses in the MT. God says that the dirt “will become gnats” (וְהָיָה הָאֲדָמָה לְצִנּוֹת; Exod 8:12 MT), while the soot “will become dust” (וְהָיָה הָאֵפָר לְאֵשׁ; 9:9 MT) which, in turn, “will become boils” (וְהָיָה לְבִצְרוֹת ... הָאֵשׁ; 9:9 MT). The fact that these plagues involve the metamorphosis of inanimate objects is less apparent in the LXX. In the case of the third plague, God arranges for Aaron to “strike the dirt of the earth” (πάταξον τὸ χῶμα τῆς γῆς; 8:12) and announces that “gnats will be upon people and quadrupeds” (ἔσονται σκνίφες ἐν τε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις καὶ ἐν τοῖς τετράποσιν; 8:12). The sixth plague is similar: Moses is to cast soot into the air which will become dust, and then “festering wounds will be upon people and quadrupeds” (ἔσται ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τετράποδα ἑλκη; 9:8–9). The LXX does not explain the relationship between the prophetic act and the ensuing punishment in either text—lacunae due to the translator’s failure to render the Hebrew preposition ל (Wevers, *Greek Text of Exodus*, 128). Regardless, these acts and judgments are still juxtaposed in the LXX and lack any statement that disassociates them. It requires no leap of logic to conclude that a metamorphosis has occurred.

¹⁸⁸ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 120.

This divine status undermines Pharaoh's claim on the Hebrews. Pharaoh assumes the right to hold Abraham's descendants in Egypt despite a divine summons to the contrary. However, he cannot counteract events that humiliate his kingdom. In effect, these miracles contribute to an *a fortiori* argument: if Pharaoh cannot ward off his kingdom's ruin, then he has lost the ability and right to retain the Hebrews. It takes Pharaoh a while to appreciate this point (Exod 8:14–15; 10:7). Nevertheless, the death of Pharaoh's firstborn child (12:29) prompts him to release God's "firstborn," Israel (12:31–32; see 4:22–23).¹⁸⁹ The plagues conclude as Pharaoh solicits a blessing from Moses (12:32). With this action, Pharaoh recognizes the truth of Gen 12:2–3.¹⁹⁰ Pharaoh has opposed God's intent for the created order by oppressing the Israelites, so God "destabilizes" this order to loosen Pharaoh's grip on Israel.¹⁹¹

2.4.3. Pharaoh's Defeat at the Red Sea

The decisive defeat of Pharaoh's forces occurs at the Red Sea. Pharaoh initially permitted the Israelite departure from Egypt following the death of the firstborn (Exod 12:29–32). However, he quickly changes his mind and attempts to re-enslave the people (14:5–9). This fickleness marks the culmination of a cycle of affliction, repentance, reprieve, and hardening that has characterized Pharaoh's dealings with Moses and Aaron,¹⁹² pointing to the need for a decisive

¹⁸⁹ The logic of Exod 4:22–23 runs along these lines: Pharaoh refuses to release the Lord's firstborn son, Israel, and the Lord remedies this situation by killing Pharaoh's firstborn. This logic undergirds 12:29–32.

¹⁹⁰ Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 432–33.

¹⁹¹ Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 538–39.

¹⁹² The cycle of affliction, repentance, reprieve, and hardening is implicated in the second, fourth, seventh, and eighth plagues. If we construe the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in Exod 14 as a part of the narrative movement initiated by the death of the Egyptian firstborn, then the tenth plague is also to be included here.

judgment. This judgment comes in the form of the miraculous defeat of the Egyptian army. The text records three divine interventions: God throws the Egyptian army into confusion (14:24), renders their chariots inoperative (14:25),¹⁹³ and drowns the pursuing forces (14:26–28). The effect of these miracles is decisive. The Hebrews now depart from Egypt and bondage, and they simultaneously begin a new chapter of their history.

The liminal nature of this event emerges with the song in Exod 15. This song reveals that the inhabitants of the promised land are aware of the Lord's victory at the Red Sea and are terrified by what it forebodes (Exod 15:14–15). The defeat of the Egyptian army has notified the residents of Canaan that a threat is looming. In terms of God's promises, the time of bondage (Gen 15:13) is giving way to Israel's establishment in Canaan (15:14). This shift is made possible by the defeat of Pharaoh's army.

One feature of Exod 14 requires special attention because it is a new development in biblical history: God's miraculous intervention in battle. The interaction between the Egyptians and Israelites may not appear martial, yet several details confirm that this event is a battle. The Egyptian posture is evident: Pharaoh leads the entire contingent of his forces to re-enslave the Israelites (Exod 14:5–9). The Israelite posture is admittedly unwarlike, particularly in the LXX.¹⁹⁴ However, the people's reaction to the threat is what God predicted they would display at

¹⁹³ There are two possible interpretations of the phrase, “he [God] led them with force” (ἡγαγεν αὐτοὺς μετὰ βίας; Exod 14:25). The first interpretation, held by Wevers, emphasizes the inoperative condition of the Egyptian chariots. He offers the translation, “and he [the Lord] made them go with difficulty” (*Greek Text of Exodus*, 222). In this reading, the Lord creates a situation where the Egyptians find it challenging to make the chariots move. The second interpretation is reflected in the rendition of the NETS, “and [he] led them violently” (see also Daniel M. Gurtner, *Exodus: A Commentary on the Greek Text of Codex Vaticanus*, SEPT [Leiden: Brill, 2013], 338). The second view is less an interpretation and more a literal translation. That said, the second view allows that God plays an active role in the behavior of the chariots. In this reading, God first binds together the axles of the Egyptian chariots and then causes the chariots to careen out of control. In either case, the import of the text is the same: God's intervention prevents the Egyptians from operating their chariots.

¹⁹⁴ Whereas Exod 13:18 MT has the Israelites emerging from Egypt “lined up for war” (*HALOT*, s.v. “חמש”), the LXX has the Israelites departing in the “fifth generation” (πέμπτη δὲ γενεᾷ; 13:18).

the prospect of war: they wish to be back in Egypt (14:11–12; see 13:17). Moreover, God’s actions are described with martial terminology. Moses tells the Israelites that “the Lord will fight on your behalf” (14:14). God’s interventions neutralize the Egyptian advantage, leading the Egyptians to declare that “the Lord is fighting ... on their behalf” (14:25). The song of victory in Exod 15 celebrates the Lord as a figure who “shatters wars” (15:3)—that is, the Lord overwhelms the opposition in battle.¹⁹⁵ God has intervened at the point of Israel’s need in war.

This defeat of Pharaoh is consonant with the miracles I have considered thus far, yet its profile distinguishes it within the body of punitive miracles. The unity of this “war miracle” with other miraculous judgments is evident if we consider the relationship between the victory over Pharaoh’s army and the ten plagues. Pharaoh’s attempt to re-enslave the Israelites is the culmination of a cycle of affliction, repentance, reprieve, and hardening that has marked his dealings with Moses and Aaron. The miracles at the Red Sea terminate this cycle with a decisive judgment. These miracles belong to and conclude a narrative arc structured according to a series of miraculous punishments.¹⁹⁶ The setting is the chief difference between the war miracles and the plagues. The war miracles turn the tide of battle, while the ten plagues occur in daily life.

The war miracles at the Red Sea and the plagues in Egypt display thematic and formal similarities. We should not posit a sharp distinction between them. However, God’s victory at the Red Sea establishes a paradigm of divine intervention in battle. Future war miracles will fall

¹⁹⁵ Wevers, *Greek Text of Exodus*, 228. For a different interpretation κύριος συντρίβων πολέμους, see Alain Le Boulluec and Pierre Sandevor, *L’Exode*, BA 2 (Paris: Cerf, 1989), 172: “Le version LXX, à saveur messianique, rejette la conception d’un Dieu guerrier.” In this reading, the Lord’s actions result in the end of warfare altogether.

¹⁹⁶ Likewise, the most remarkable miracle in Exod 14 is formally similar to earlier ones. The drowning miracle consists of God’s instructions to Moses (Exod 14:26) and Moses’s compliance, which results in the ensuing miracle (14:27–28). A similar pattern appears in all but the fourth, fifth, and tenth plagues; see Exod 7:19–21; 8:1–2, 12–13; 9:8–11, 22–25; 10:12–15, 21–23. If we exclude 9:8–11 from these references, then a more precise pattern emerges that also applies to 14:26–28: 1. God commands Moses/Aaron to extend their hand/rod, 2. toward a specific location, 3. with the result that a judgment emerges from (or comes upon; 10:12–15) that location.

under the aegis of this event. It is best to classify the war miracle as a punitive miracle subtype. A miracle is punitive if it occurs in response to actual or threatened acts of hostility. It is additionally a “war miracle” if it occurs in a martial context.¹⁹⁷

2.4.4. The Wilderness Wanderings

2.4.4.1. A Turning Point

Israel’s history takes a surprising turn after Pharaoh’s defeat. Pharaoh proves to be the sole adversary who poses an existential threat in this period. His departure ushers the people into a time of relative peace as they idle in the wilderness. However, Israel’s conflict with Pharaoh is soon replaced by conflict with God. This strife is a consequence of God’s forming a covenantal relationship with Israel. This relationship shifts the orientation of punitive miracles. Punitive miracles have thus far been an external phenomenon (directed at adversaries). They will now be an internal phenomenon (directed at Israelites) for the rest of this period.

Alongside this new orientation comes a new mode of miracle. Up to this point, punitive miracles have operated on what I call “prophetic logic.” On prophetic logic, moral offenses merit punishment. Thus, increasing wickedness results in the flood, Abimelech’s taking of Sarah brings disaster to his household, and Pharaoh’s oppression of Israel produces the plagues. The

¹⁹⁷ The fact that Exod 14 creates a new category of punitive miracle is confirmed by the fact that it introduces what will become a stock motif: confusion in battle (Exod 14:24). God’s intervention in war will henceforth take the form of mentally incapacitating enemy combatants (in most cases). In this state, enemies cannot gauge battle conditions and must flee.

wilderness wanderings introduce a new mode of miracle that operates on “priestly logic.” On priestly logic, cultic offenses leave one exposed to the divine presence.¹⁹⁸

A metaphor can help illustrate the relationship between the prophetic and priestly modes. Up to this point, punitive miracles have followed the course of a well-defined stream. The stream now reaches a point of bifurcation. Two distributaries result that will follow parallel channels. Both channels contain miracles that can loosely be termed “punitive.” The broader channel is implicated in the unfolding of the prophetic storyline. The narrower channel participates in a “priestly storyline.”¹⁹⁹

The Septuagint’s priestly storyline is a product of the prophetic storyline.²⁰⁰ The divine initiative taken in the latter has as one of its goals the establishment of God’s presence among the people, a critical object of the former. Much of the priestly storyline lies beyond the scope of this investigation, dealing with matters like the construction of the tabernacle, the institution of the priesthood, and so forth. I will make a few salient points to orient my discussion of the priestly miracles in the wilderness.

¹⁹⁸ My understanding of priestly logic depends on Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 124–64. I have fashioned the “prophetic” and “priestly” labels for the modes described above from the “prophetic” and “priestly” rhetorolects, respectively.

¹⁹⁹ I have adapted the term “priestly storyline” from Robbins, “Priestly Discourse,” 15–17.

²⁰⁰ I base this observation on the evolution of the covenant formula in the Pentateuch (see Rolf Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula: An Exegetical and Theological Investigation*, trans. Margaret Kohl, OTS [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998]). This formula first appears in Gen 17:7 in a divine commitment to Abraham: “I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you, unto their generations, as an everlasting covenant, to be your God and [the God] of your seed after you.” By the time we reach Lev 26:11–12, this formula has broadened to include the promise of the divine presence: “I will place my tent among you, and my soul will not loathe you. And I will walk about among you and I will be your God, and you will be my people.” What was formerly a commitment to maintaining a special relationship with Abraham and his descendants (prophetic storyline) has been expanded to include God’s presence among the people (priestly storyline).

First, priestly miracles are appropriately understood in light of Israel's cultic system. The purpose of the cultic system is to facilitate the holy God's presence among impure people.²⁰¹ God makes Godself present at the holy site when this system works correctly. However, the deity's presence makes the shrine a singularly dangerous location. Israel Knohl's description of the tabernacle (from the vantage of priestly theology) captures the situation:

The inner cultic enclosure and its vessels are imbued with a "contagious" substantive holiness and may be neither touched nor seen. Thus, the priests, who alone may approach the holy, must first undergo purification, atonement, and anointing, which grant them an envelope of sanctity. But even after they have donned this protective "armor," they are still greatly endangered by their service in the sanctuary ... The sacred enclosure is a kind of minefield, in which the cultic ordinances serve to mark a narrow path where the slightest deviation may be fatal.²⁰²

The sanctuary is volatile because God's "numinous" presence pervades this space.²⁰³ According to Knohl, God's "'numinous' element" is "the aspect of divine essence that surpasses reason and morality"; it is that before which people gain "awareness of insignificance and contamination in comparison with the sublimity of God's holiness."²⁰⁴ The priests follow cultic regulations because God's presence permeates the tabernacle. Failure to follow these regulations results in exposure to the divine presence and death. Cultic exposure lies at the heart of priestly miracles. These events occur when a person fails to observe the proper protocols and suffers the consequences.

²⁰¹ Jacob Milgrom, "Israel's Sanctuary: The Priestly 'Picture of Dorian Gray,'" *RB* 83 (1976): 390–99.

²⁰² Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 149–50.

²⁰³ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 145–47. Knohl's understanding of the numinous depends on the seminal work of Rudolf Otto; see Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 146 n. 90; Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 1–40.

²⁰⁴ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 146, 151.

The nature of priestly miracles calls for a comment on their inclusion in this study. Strictly speaking, priestly miracles are not punitive.²⁰⁵ Punitive miracles are a divine response to actual or threatened violations of the divine will. Priestly miracles do not satisfy this criterion. The actions that lead to priestly miracles involve the violation of cultic regulations. However, this is a matter of disregarding technical instructions rather than a moral offense. A priestly miracle is like a child burning themselves on a hot oven despite their parent's warning. The burn is not parental punishment but a natural consequence of contacting the oven. So it is with priestly miracles: the harmful events that result from contacting God's presence are an inevitable consequence of the impure contacting the holy.²⁰⁶

Notwithstanding the nature of priestly miracles, it is prudent to include them in this study. Three considerations indicate this course of action. The first is a concession: it is common for scholars to cite priestly miracles as examples of punitive miracles.²⁰⁷ This trend, though insufficiently critical, makes it necessary to discuss these events. Second, as I noted above, the priestly storyline is a product of the prophetic storyline. It is reasonable for my readers to expect a treatment of the miracles in this derivative storyline alongside those of its prophetic source. Third, the distinction between the priestly and punitive modes collapses in some episodes. I would ignore data critical to interpreting these miracles if I overlooked their priestly antecedents.

²⁰⁵ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 140: "The punishment for the violation of the commandments [on priestly theology] is described as a necessary consequence of sin, rather than the act of a personal God who punishes those who transgress his will." For a similar distinction, see Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 129–30.

²⁰⁶ For impurity as the opposite of holiness, see Jacob Milgrom, "The Dynamics of Purity in the Priestly System," in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus*, ed. M. J. H. M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz, JGPS 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 29–32.

²⁰⁷ For example, see Alfons Weiser, "Das Gottesurteil über Hananias und Sapphira: Apg 5,1–11," *TGl* 69 (1979): 149; Ertl, "Göttliche Vergeltung in der Apostelgeschichte," 34.

A second point that should nuance the interpretation of priestly miracles is the Greek text's reluctance to portray the wilderness tabernacle as a divine abode.²⁰⁸ The MT of Exodus freely represents the tabernacle as a place for God's presence to lodge among the Israelites (Exod 25:8; 29:45–46 MT). The Greek text resists this concept by rendering the Hebrew שָׁכַן with unlikely equivalents.²⁰⁹ God's initial promise to dwell in the tabernacle (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם; 25:8 MT) becomes a commitment to appear there (καὶ ὀφθήσομαι ἐν ὑμῖν; 25:8 LXX). God's later promise to inhabit this edifice after its consecration (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל; 29:45 MT) is transformed into divine permission for Israel to call upon the deity (καὶ ἐπικληθήσομαι ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ; 29:45 LXX). The nature of these changes indicates a desire on the translator's part, as John Wevers puts it, to transform “the notion of God's dwelling [in the sanctuary] into a matter of self-revelation.”²¹⁰ These changes potentially limit the degree to which we may conceive of priestly miracles as cases of individuals contacting the divine presence.

As I assess the situation, OG Exodus's depiction of the tabernacle circumscribes the language one may use to describe God's relationship to this structure. However, this portrayal does not fundamentally alter the nature of priestly miracles. The fact that OG Exodus denies God's residence in the tabernacle means we should avoid anthropomorphic descriptions of God's relationship to it. Nevertheless, my study does not analyze “the text-as-produced” but “the text-as-received.”²¹¹ According to Claude Cox, analysis of the LXX as a produced text “focuses on the point of translation, when the Hebrew was rendered into Greek.” Investigation of the LXX as

²⁰⁸ See Le Boulluec and Sandevor, *L'Exode*, 252, 303; Wevers, *Greek Text of Exodus*, 395, 487–88.

²⁰⁹ Le Boulluec and Sandevor, *L'Exode*, 252.

²¹⁰ Wevers, *Greek Text of Exodus*, 395.

²¹¹ Claude Cox, “Some Things Biblical Scholars Should Know about the Septuagint,” *ResQ* 56 (2014): 87.

a received text treats this corpus “as a self-standing text, read and interpreted without recourse to its parent text.”²¹² The goal of my study is not the translator’s intentions but the Septuagint’s meaning as early Christian readers likely perceived it. From this vantage, it is salient that the Pentateuch does not eliminate all signs of the deity’s presence. Knohl observes that the phrase לפני יהוה (“before the Lord”) denotes “a permanent divine presence in the sacred precincts” (e.g., see Lev 4:4 MT).²¹³ The notion of the deity’s presence in the sanctuary is retained in OG Leviticus with ἐν ὧπιον κυρίου (e.g., see Lev 4:4, 18, 24). The Lord’s presence persists in the wilderness tabernacle despite the distaste for this idea in OG Exodus. It is reasonable to nuance the description of the divine presence in deference to OG Exodus—perhaps, by suggesting along with Alain Le Boulluec and Pierre Sandevor that God’s presence only fully inhabits the shrine in Jerusalem.²¹⁴ Regardless, the fact remains that the priestly wilderness miracles involve contact with the divine presence in Israel’s midst.

2.4.4.2. Priestly Punitive Miracles in the Wilderness

The care required in worshiping the God present in Israel’s midst is the theme of a pair of accounts in this period. The first episode concerns Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s sons, who are consumed by “fire from the Lord” when they present “alien fire” at the tabernacle (Lev 10:1–2). Two features suggest the paradigmatic quality of this account: its position in Leviticus²¹⁵ and the

²¹² Cox, “Some Things Biblical Scholars Should Know,” 87.

²¹³ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 131.

²¹⁴ Le Boulluec and Sandevor, *L’Exode*, 252.

²¹⁵ The episode appears after instructions about offerings (Lev 1–7) and the consecration of the Aaronides and the tabernacle (Lev 8–9). The deaths of Nadab and Abihu are the first events to transpire after the

statement that “fire from the Lord came out and devoured them” (10:2; see 9:24).²¹⁶ The nature of the priests’ error is found in the “alien” character of the fire: whereas the fire used to burn incense ought to come from the altar (16:12–13), Nadab and Abihu have procured fire from some other source.²¹⁷ The failure to use authorized fire exposes the priests to the Lord’s presence (16:2, 12–13), and they are devoured.²¹⁸

The second episode concerns the fate of some followers of Korah and unfolds along similar lines. Two hundred and fifty individuals, all Levites,²¹⁹ join Korah in pressing for the Levites’ admission into the priesthood (Num 16:1–3, 8–11). At Moses’s bidding, the group offers incense at the tabernacle (16:6–7, 16–18)—an act reserved for priests (17:4–5)—and divine fire promptly consumes the lot of them (16:35). The parallel between this judgment and the fate of Nadab and Abihu is established by the Lord’s description of the fire offered by Korah’s followers as “alien fire” (τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἀλλότριον; 17:2).²²⁰ Just as Aaron’s sons perished when they offered fire procured from a source of their choosing (πῦρ ἀλλότριον; Lev 10:1), the

implementation of the priestly system, and these deaths drive home the importance of following the system as prescribed. I describe this episode as paradigmatic because the fault of Nadab and Abihu presumably represents many similar risks (e.g., Exod 28:43; see also Exod 19:21–24; Num 4:17–20, 18:2–3).

²¹⁶ The use of ἐξῆλθεν πῦρ παρὰ κυρίου καὶ κατέφαγεν in Lev 9:24 and 10:2 confirms that the latter account is a negative counterpart to the former one. Leviticus 9 concludes with the remark that “fire from the Lord came out and devoured” the offerings upon the altar (Lev 9:24). The presence of fire here signifies the Lord’s acceptance of the offerings. In contrast, divine fire consumes the priests in Lev 10 because the proper protocols have not been observed (Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 150). The priests’ failure effectively causes them to become an offering.

²¹⁷ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 598.

²¹⁸ Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 150.

²¹⁹ Moses refers to Korah and the group with him as “sons of Levi” (Num 16:7–8).

²²⁰ The relevant portion of Num 17:2 (τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἀλλότριον τοῦτο σπεῖρον ἐκεῖ) differs from its Hebrew counterpart (Num 17:2 MT: וְאֵת־הָאֵשׁ זָרָה־הַלֵּזָה). Milgrom avers that the LXX reading may be superior to the MT and suggests that a scribal error could have eliminated the adjective זָרָה in the Hebrew text (*Leviticus 1–16*, 598). Whatever the case, the use of τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἀλλότριον associates Korah’s followers with Nadab and Abihu.

followers of Korah fail to make an acceptable offering and suffer the consequences. This encounter establishes Aaron as the head of the legitimate priestly line (Num 17:4–5). Aaron's position will soon be confirmed when he stops a plague through an incense offering like the one described here (17:11–15; see 16:16–17).²²¹ These episodes drive home the danger posed by the Lord's presence. God's presence among the people is typically associated with blessing, yet this arrangement results in disaster when the protocols permitting it are disregarded.

2.4.4.3. Prophetic Punitive Miracles in the Wilderness

The remaining miracles in this period are prophetic and exhibit the inward orientation described above. These miracles display the consequences of God's decision to form a covenantal relationship with Israel at Mount Sinai. This relationship establishes Israel as God's special people. However, it also subjects the nation to covenantal stipulations and sanctions.

The type of offense that characterizes the prophetic wilderness miracles is encapsulated in a series of conversations between God and Moses. After the people worship a golden calf during Moses's sojourn on Mount Sinai (Exod 32:1–6), Moses negotiates with God to preserve the nation (32:7–14, 31–34; 33:12–17; 34:9ff.). Moses talks the deity down from immediately destroying Israel (32:10–14), but the issue of God's abiding presence remains unresolved. On God's telling, the deity cannot accompany the people since their intransigence will provoke divine ire (33:3). Moses resists this explanation, eliciting a promise that God will indeed accompany the people (33:12–17). However, Moses's accomplishment in this matter is

²²¹ Moses told Aaron to participate in the incense offering with Korah's followers in Num 16:16–17, yet Aaron's participation in the contest is not recorded (see Num 16:18, 35). Aaron's intervention in the plague substitutes for his participation in the competition. Through this act, Aaron emerges as the priest who presents an effective offering.

temporary, and the possibility of divine violence against the people remains.²²² In this light, prophetic wilderness miracles occur when the people's faithlessness exhausts God's patience.

The act that particularly exhausts divine patience is disregarding God's redemptive actions. God's statement in Num 14:11 reveals God's rationale: "How long [will] this nation provoke me, and how long [will] they not believe me in all the signs (σημείους) I did among them?" The provocation of divine wrath is equivalent to the failure to heed certain σημεία. The σημεία in question are those performed "in Egypt, and this wilderness" (Num 14:22). The σημεία of Egypt consist primarily of the plagues that procured Israel's release. The wilderness σημεία are the deeds that transpired in the wake of this event. The logic underlying this equation is straightforward: the Israelites commit acts that arouse God's ire because they disregard God's deeds on their behalf. Disregarding the wilderness σημεία is problematic since, as Brueggemann argues, God's provisions in this period reflect the restoration of creation's bounty. He writes:

The Song of Miriam (Exod. 15.21) and the Song of Moses (15.1–18), culminating in the doxological celebration of YHWH's kingship (15.18), constitute a glad acknowledgment that the forces of chaos have been defeated, the disruption of creation is voided, and YHWH as the creator-king is again fully in charge, ready and able to enact again the well-being and abundance of YHWH's created order. It follows, then, that the gift of water (15.22–25; 17.1–7) and bread and meat (16.1–19) are the full gifts of creation again possible, available, and visible.²²³

The wilderness σημεία reimplement God's intentions for creation. Israel's disregard of these deeds constitutes opposition to God's creative purposes. By acting contrary to God's benevolent σημεία, Israel opposes God's creative plans and, like Pharaoh, stands liable to judgment.

²²² That the reprieve is temporary is established by the similar threats in Exod 32:10 and Num 14:11–12.

²²³ Walter Brueggemann, "Theme Revisited: Bread Again!," in *Reading from Right to Left: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of David J.A. Clines*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and H. G. M. Williamson, JSOTSup 373 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 83–84. Brueggemann's essay treats the relationship between Exod 1–15 and Exod 16–18. His perspective is informative for God's wilderness provisions in general.

2.4.4.3.1. From Mount Sinai to Hazeroth

The initial series of prophetic wilderness miracles, set at and shortly after the stay at Mount Sinai, responds to actions that disregard God's redemptive deeds. One of these actions is a flagrant violation of Israel's newly minted covenant; the rest reflect the people's contempt for God's treatment of the nation. The first relevant miracle occurs when the people worship a golden calf while awaiting Moses's descent from Sinai (Exod 32:1–6). This stunning offense occurs soon after the prohibition of idolatry (32:7–8; see 20:4–6, 22–23). As this prohibition was based on God's redemptive actions (20:2),²²⁴ Israel's calf worship reflects a flagrant disregard for its rescue from bondage. God consequently "strikes" the people with an unspecified affliction and, presumably, kills many of them (32:35). This punishment occurs despite Moses's pleas for leniency (32:31–32). The behaviors in this episode adumbrate the remaining period: Israel will persist in obstinate acts, and God will respond with judgment.

The offenses that appear in a cycle of stories after the departure from Sinai (Num 11–12) also display heedlessness of God's redemptive acts. The people's disregard is implicit in Num 11:1 as the people are shown "grumbling [$\gamma\omicron\gamma\gamma\acute{\upsilon}\zeta\omega\nu$] evil things before the Lord." The nature of Israel's offense in this episode is vague. However, the use of $\gamma\omicron\gamma\gamma\acute{\upsilon}\zeta\omega$ —a term that elsewhere evokes severe displeasure in one's circumstances (see Exod 17:3; Num 14:27, 29)—together with the response of destructive fire (Num 11:1) indicates that the people's complaint is inconsonant with God's care.²²⁵

²²⁴ Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology*, 97–98.

²²⁵ The text does not state that this miracle harms any people or animals. However, destruction seems to be implied given this episode's inclusion in the cycle of stories in Num 11–12. A focus on opposition to God and/or Moses unites these stories. The other texts in the cycle feature evident punitive miracles.

The idea that grumbling constitutes disobedience is explicit in the following story (Num 11:4–34). The people express a longing to eat meat, comparing their diet of manna with the cornucopia of food available in Egypt (11:4–6). God responds by flooding the vicinity with birds (11:31) and striking “a very great blow among the people” (11:33). The fault in this episode is the people’s unrestrained desire that prompts them to long for Egypt over God’s provision. God characterizes this attitude as disobedience (11:20). Obedience entails the grateful acceptance of divine provision.

The concluding episode of this cycle concerns Miriam and Aaron’s charge that Moses has arrogated divine authority to himself (Num 12:1–2).²²⁶ God answers the siblings’ challenge with a rebuke: Miriam and Aaron have failed to recognize that the relationship between God and Moses makes the latter a divine agent greater than a prophet (12:6–8). When God departs, Miriam is afflicted with leprosy (12:9–15). The relationship between the offense and redemptive obligations is less evident here than in previous cases. However, the import of the rebuke and affliction is clear: God’s favor to Moses—and by implication, Moses’s role in God’s plan—should cause the siblings to mute their opposition.

2.4.4.3.2. From Kadesh to Moab

Like the events surveyed above, the punitive miracles following Israel’s refusal to enter the promised land reflect a disregard for redemptive acts. However, these miracles also fall under the

²²⁶ The text also mentions a complaint about Moses’s Ethiopian wife (Num 12:1). The passage does not explain how this complaint relates to the claim that Moses arrogated authority (12:2).

purview of a judgment that God issues in Num 14.²²⁷ The context of this judgment appears in Num 13:1–14:10 as the people receive a negative report about Canaan and plan a return to Egypt. God views the Israelite response as sheer faithlessness and decrees that everyone twenty years old and above will die in the wilderness (Num 14:21–23, 28–35; cf. vv. 24, 30). This declaration looms over the remaining wilderness miracles. These miracles have a twofold purpose: proximately, to punish specific faithless acts, and ultimately, to implement the judgment of Num 14.

God's declaration in Num 14 is followed by a plague that kills the spies who discouraged the people (Num 14:36–38; see 13:31–33). The sudden demise of the spies initially seems anecdotal. However, the placement of this event after the divine pronouncement against Israel (14:20–35) suggests that the spies are the first to fall victim to the national punishment. The death of the spies prefigures the nation's fate.

Korah's uprising comes shortly after this initial judgment.²²⁸ The relevant portion of this text relates the stories of Dathan and Abiram, Israelites who support Korah against Moses (Num 16:1–2, 12–14). Dathan and Abiram's abrasive response to a summons enrages Moses (16:12–15). Consequently, they are wiped off the map: the earth opens, and the members of their households descend bodily to Hades (16:32–33). Moses's announcement of this event suggests God's reasoning. Moses stakes his prophetic reputation on the fact that these men will perish in a

²²⁷ Dennis T. Olson, *The Death of the Old and the Birth of the New: The Framework of the Book of Numbers and the Pentateuch*, BJS 71 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 148.

²²⁸ As I have already considered the priestly dimension of Korah's uprising (see "2.4.4.2. Priestly Punitive Miracles in the Wilderness"), I focus here on prophetic aspects of the passage.

novel manner (16:28–30). Events transpire accordingly, showing that opposition to Moses equals opposition to God. To use Moses’s words, “these men provoked the Lord” (16:30).²²⁹

The last episode in this period concerns Israel’s most blatant offense. The Israelites commit sexual sin with women from Moab and become initiates of a Moabite mystery religion (25:1, 3).²³⁰ With the possible exception of the golden calf incident, no other event in this period constitutes such a flagrant violation of Israel’s obligations. In response, God sends a plague that takes 24,000 lives (25:9)—the largest tally of deaths reported up to this point. Judging by this episode’s proximity to the second wilderness census (26:1–2)—which includes none of the people from the first census who were covered by the wilderness death sentence (26:64–65)—the miracle in Num 25 concludes the divine judgment announced in Num 14.²³¹ A miraculous judgment initiated the divine decree against the wilderness generation (14:35–36), and another such miracle brings matters full circle by wiping out this generation’s last members. By ending the wilderness wanderings with Israel’s most blatant act of disobedience, the narrative shows that this generation’s rejection of God is thoroughgoing. Israel is intransigent despite God’s deeds on its behalf. Accordingly, God eliminates this generation, planning to work with the next toward the fulfillment of divine promises.

²²⁹ The people prove oblivious to this lesson as they soon commit an error like Dathan and Abiram’s by charging Moses and Aaron with the murder of “the Lord’s people” (Num 17:6). Like Dathan and Abiram, the people fail to recognize the correspondence between the words and deeds of Moses, on one hand, and God, on the other hand. God’s response to the people’s charge is severe: a plague kills nearly 15,000 individuals (17:7–15). For a similar popular assault on Moses that results in a punitive miracle, see Num 21:5–6. I omit this miracle from the discussion above because of its similarity to other stories and its incidental nature.

²³⁰ Gilles Dorival, *Les Nombres*, BA 4 (Paris: Cerf, 1994), 173–74: “La LXX, elle, utilise le verbe *teleîsthai*, qui renvoie à l’initiation aux mystères de la religion grecque. Il est clair qu’elle n’a pas voulu donner une traduction littérale de l’hébreu : elle propose un équivalent grec de de la religion moabite ; elle actualise pour des lecteurs grecs un terme hébreu.” The Israelites become initiates into a Moabite mystery religion.

²³¹ Olson, *The Death of the Old*, 139–40.

2.4.5. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

The prophetic storyline began in the last period as a response to threats against God's creative purposes. The numerical growth of Abraham's descendants at the beginning of this period suggests this approach is working. However, Pharaoh now comes onto the stage as a new threat. God uses punitive miracles that shake creation to its core, loosening Pharaoh's grip and delivering the people into the wilderness.

The remarkable change in this period is the course of Israel's history after Pharaoh. Pharaoh's defeat at the Red Sea is an inflection point. This event introduces a new subtype of the punitive miracle, the war miracle. The bifurcation of the prophetic and priestly storylines follows Pharaoh's defeat. The priestly storyline gives birth to the priestly mode of miracle. The prophetic storyline turns inward with the establishment of a covenant between God and Israel, causing prophetic punitive miracles to afflict members of God's people.

The inward turn of the prophetic storyline is this period's most significant development. God rescued Israel from rulers who opposed the divine plans for creation. God's care for the people in the wilderness reflects the restoration of creation's bounty. Despite this providence, the nation fights God. Israel replaces Pharaoh as the chief antagonist to God's purposes. This stubbornness proves to be too much. God decrees that the wilderness sojourn will last until the exodus generation has passed. Israel is gradually reduced until only those untainted by the wilderness conflicts remain.

Characterization. Punitive miracles are operative in Moses's characterization as the prophet par excellence. Moses is remembered as an unrivaled prophet due to his "signs and wonders" (Deut 34:10–12). The scope of these signs and wonders is broader than what I have considered in this section. Some such miracles are beneficent. Regardless, the Deuteronomist

cites “all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent [Moses] to do” (34:11) as Moses’s chief miracles. The performance of punitive miracles is part and parcel of Moses’s prophetic identity. This shift reflects an advance since Abraham’s time. Henceforth, performing miraculous judgments will be fundamental to being a prophet.

The development of prophetic topoi. The punitive miracles in this period develop the topoi of injustice, divine action through a select individual, the people’s rejection of the prophet, and the hardness of people’s hearts. First, injustice is the salient feature of Pharaoh’s treatment of Israel. God responds to Pharaoh with the most decisive series of punitive miracles in the LXX thus far. This response reiterates the divine *modus operandi* of Gen 18–19 and establishes the expectation of future deliverance in the face of oppression. Second, divine action through a select individual appears in God’s calling of Moses. God energizes Moses’s prophetic task through miraculous judgments.²³² Third, the people’s rejection of the prophet is a recurrent theme of the wilderness wanderings. The punitive miracles occasioned by this rejection rescue Moses, reaffirming his status as a divine agent. Fourth, the hardness of people’s hearts is observed on many occasions. The nation’s refusal to heed God’s signs and wonders leads to the exodus generation’s death in the wilderness. God’s disapproval of this generation is reflected in the structure of Numbers: one punitive miracle initiates the divine sentence with the death of the spies, and another such miracle wipes out the last of this generation upon their induction into the mystery cult of Baal-Peor. The outcome of Israel’s stubbornness is destruction.

The thematic development of God’s kingdom. Events before Mount Sinai follow a direct trajectory from the Abrahamic promises. God’s kingdom grows from the few members of Abraham’s family who went to Egypt to the hundreds of thousands in the wilderness. Punitive

²³² For Moses’s prophetic task, see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 232, 235, 242.

miracles facilitate the movement of this growing body from Egyptian bondage to the wilderness and en route to the promised land. The establishment of a covenantal relationship between God and Israel complicates the development of God's kingdom because the people are now subject to covenantal stipulations. The punitive miracles in the wilderness reflect this new wrinkle by taking an inward turn. The dominance of punitive miracles with an internal orientation (targeting God's people) indicates that the development of the divine kingdom stalls in the wilderness. Israel's failure is not fatal since a new generation is poised to enter the land. Regardless, this experience indicates that God will not brook rebellion for long.

2.5. The Kingdom in Canaan: Joshua and Judges

2.5.1. Introduction

With Moses's death, Israel enters a new phase of its history centered on the occupation of Canaan. This era marks the point at which the Abrahamic land promises come to fruition. Joshua succeeds Moses as the leader of God's people and establishes Israel in the land. He is followed by judges whom God appoints to deliver the people from hegemonic powers. Punitive miracles show up in several episodes in this period. Much as these miracles reappeared with Moses to promote the development of God's kingdom at a decisive moment, they now enable the occupation of the land. Most miracles in this period are external (targeting foreign opponents). God's efforts focus on fulfilling promises concerning the land, and foreigners who oppose this project fall victim to judgment.

This period lacks a single prophetic figure associated with the relevant punitive miracles. These events are now dispersed across a broad swath of history, punctuating moments of divine concern for the nation. That said, several miracles accompany figures who perform prophetic tasks. Barak and Gideon neither bear the title “prophet” nor speak on God’s behalf, yet they carry out tasks to reestablish peace in the land. In contrast, Joshua,²³³ Deborah,²³⁴ and Samuel²³⁵ are prophetic through and through: these figures are prophets, and they perform prophetic tasks.²³⁶ As punitive miracles accompany these figures, an unmistakable link to the prophetic storyline is maintained.

The catalogs of blessings and curses in Lev 26 and Deut 28 provide a grid for interpreting the miracles in this period.²³⁷ These catalogs describe how God will respond to the people’s covenantal observance in the land.²³⁸ We can briefly consider Lev 26 to understand these catalogs’ contents. On the blessings side of the ledger, God promises the following in consequence of obedience: the productivity of the land (Lev 26:4–5), safety from enemies and

²³³ Joshua is not described as a *προφήτης*, yet he concludes his life with a prophetic speech (*Τάδε λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ*; Josh 24:2). For Joshua as a prophet in this passage, see Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*, NVBS (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 32.

²³⁴ Deborah is described as a prophet (*προφῆτις*), and she speaks for God (Judg 4:4–7).

²³⁵ Samuel is described as *προφήτης* in 1 Sam 3:20–21; see also 19:18–24. He delivers messages from the deity several times (e.g., see 1 Sam 3:1–18; 8:10–18).

²³⁶ The miracle associated with Samuel does not accompany a specific task. It takes place as Samuel fulfills his prophetic obligation of leading the people back to God.

²³⁷ Many scholars identify specific miraculous outcomes as instantiations of the covenantal curses. I have developed this common observation into the interpretive framework described above.

²³⁸ See Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, JPSTC (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 275; Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula*, 18.

animals (26:6–8),²³⁹ numerous offspring (26:9–10),²⁴⁰ and the divine presence among the people (26:11–12).²⁴¹ On the curses side of the ledger, God promises the opposite:²⁴² an unproductive land (26:19–20), danger from enemies and animals (26:16–17, 22, 25), a reduced population (26:22), the withdrawal of the divine presence (26:30),²⁴³ and dispossession of the land (26:33).²⁴⁴ Enjoyment and retention of the land depend on covenantal observance.

Most punitive miracles from this period onward instantiate the divine commitments stated in these lists. Miracles that cause the defeat of enemies are blessings of the sort described in Lev 26:7–8. Miracles that afflict members of God’s people are curses like those found in

²³⁹ The phrase *καὶ πόλεμος οὐ διελεύσεται διὰ τῆς γῆς ὑμῶν* (Lev 26:6) introduces the promise about safety. This phrase appears at the end of Lev 26:6 MT. Milgrom explains the progression of 26:6–8 MT in terms of peace on the domestic front (v. 6) and peace on the foreign front (vv. 7–8) (*Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3B [New York: Doubleday, 2001], 2289, 2295–97).

²⁴⁰ The coupling of Lev 26:9–10 depends on Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, 2289, 2297–99. He writes, “This verse [Lev 26:10] constitutes with the preceding one a single ... blessing: even though you will be numerous, there will be food in abundance (Ibn Ezra)” (*Leviticus 23–27*, 2298).

²⁴¹ The Greek text reads, *καὶ θήσω τὴν σκηνὴν μου ἐν ὑμῖν ... καὶ ἐμπεριπατήσω ἐν ὑμῖν*. Milgrom holds that the interpretation of *נִפְשִׁי* reflected in the Greek *τὴν σκηνὴν μου* is wrong, and he provides “my presence” as a better translation of the Hebrew. His reasoning is convincing: “The verb *wēnātattī* [on the traditional reading] would testify that there is no sanctuary building at the moment, which patently is not the case; the blessings and curses, promises and admonitions, directed to the future, presume that the sanctuary exists ... Thus *miškānī* cannot refer to the Tabernacle or any other sanctuary building” (*Leviticus 23–27*, 2299). Milgrom’s argument highlights a problem: since the LXX converts a promise about the divine presence into a prediction about a tent, is the reader’s perception of the promise altered? In my view, this change is not consequential. First, the *σκηνή* looms as the locus of God’s presence due to the description of this tent in Exodus. OG Exodus seeks to downplay the notion that God dwells in a specific location (Wevers, *Greek Text of Exodus*, 487–88; see also 395), yet this notion persists. The *σκηνή* anticipates the temple on Mount Zion, an edifice meant to house the divine presence (Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 127–28). If the temple in its capacity as a sanctuary (*ἁγίασμα*; Exod 15:17) is equated to God’s “prepared dwelling place” (*ἔτοιμον κατοικητήριόν σου*; 15:17) (Wevers, *Greek Text of Exodus*, 234–35), it follows that the *ἁγίασμα* taking the form of a *σκηνή* (25:8–9) is also divine dwelling place. Second, the promise that God will walk in Israel’s midst (Lev 26:12) removes all doubt that the divine presence is in view. The LXX simply makes the relationship between vv. 11 and 12 less coherent: the former verse locates God’s presence in a single location, while the latter presupposes that the deity is not thus restricted (Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, 2301).

²⁴² Levine, *Leviticus*, 185, 276.

²⁴³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, 2320. Milgrom observes that *נִפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם* (Lev 26:30 MT; Gk. *καὶ προσοχθεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ὑμῖν*) reverses the phrase that follows the blessing of the divine presence, *אֶתְכֶם אֶתְנַפְשִׁי* (26:11 MT; Gk. *καὶ οὐ βδελύξεται ἡ ψυχὴ μου ὑμᾶς*). Leviticus 26:30 envisions the withdrawal of God’s presence.

²⁴⁴ I have simplified Lev 26 to display the correspondence between the blessings and curses.

26:14–39. Most faithless acts will not be met with a miraculous response. However, acts that receive such a response reaffirm the covenant’s force. Punitive miracles now become vehicles of covenantal affirmation and enforcement.

2.5.2. The Conquest

2.5.2.1. Prophetic Punitive Miracles in the Conquest

I must review Deut 7:17–19 to set the stage for the conquest miracles. This passage takes up the question of how Israel will defeat the Canaanites. According to Moses, God used “trials,” “signs,” and “wonders” to defeat the Egyptians (Deut 7:18–19). Israel can expect the same in Canaan (7:19). The conquest will be an exodus-like event.²⁴⁵ The conquest miracles are of the same order as those of the exodus; an organic relationship unites these sets. This relationship is less a matter of shared motifs than one of function. Just as punitive miracles previously set in motion a series of events that ended in Pharaoh’s defeat and the restoration of creation’s bounty, such miracles now blaze the path toward the capture of Canaan.

The vital role of punitive miracles in the conquest is visible in the outline of the main events. If we isolate the campaigns in which Israel engages in military activity, a pattern appears:

1. A miracle enables Israel to capture Jericho (Josh 6)
2. Israel captures Ai (Josh 8)
3. A miracle permits Israel to defeat a coalition of kings (Josh 10)
4. Israel defeats a second coalition (Josh 11)

²⁴⁵ Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology*, 91–92.

The initial campaigns are against cities, with the first account containing a notable miracle in the collapse of Jericho's walls and the second having an ordinary character. Likewise, the latter campaigns are against coalitions of kings, with the first account exhibiting a display of divine might and the second bearing a mundane profile. God is credited for the success in each case (6:2; 8:1; 10:8; 11:6), but it is essential to observe the effect of this sequence. The narrative emphasizes God's role in leading the nation by including dual accounts—one miraculous, the other not—of Israel's experience in distinct forms of engagement (taking a city; a pitched battle). Punitive miracles permit initial successes, and the nation follows up with traditional tactics (8:19: ambush; 11:7: surprise attack). God does not intervene in every conquest narrative, but the accounts that contain punitive miracles highlight the divine initiative.

The first sign of divine initiative appears with the collapse of Jericho's walls (Josh 6). Jericho has loomed as the point of entry into the promised land since the time of Moses (see Num 33:50–56). Peculiar details found in the account of the city's destruction reveal that this event performs a unique function. It is noteworthy that Jericho is anathematized (6:17). The Deuteronomist previously made the Canaanite nations anathema but allowed the preservation of possessions and cities (Deut 20:16–18).²⁴⁶ Joshua ups the ante with his anathema: living things will be killed (Josh 6:21), precious metals will be surrendered to the Lord (6:19, 24), other objects will be destroyed (6:24), and the site of the city will remain desolate (6:26). The purpose of Joshua's anathema is twofold. First, the anathematization sets aside the entire city for God.²⁴⁷ Since Joshua's anathema appears in the context of the collapse of Jericho's walls, the transference

²⁴⁶ For evidence that this anathema only pertains to people, see Deut 6:10–12; Josh 24:13.

²⁴⁷ The transference of precious metals to God in this story suggests the general function of the anathema. Most things are “transferred” to God through destruction (as in Exod 13:11–16), but precious metals are deposited in the Lord's treasury (Josh 6:24), presumably because they are not readily destroyed by fire (see Num 31:21–23).

to God of everything in Jericho takes on the quality of an allotment of spoils in recognition of the divine assistance rendered. Second, Jericho's destruction and the prohibition against rebuilding the city have the paradoxical effect of preserving Jericho in a condition of annihilation. The destruction is sensible enough on Deuteronomic logic: Jericho is annihilated because of its "godlessness" (see Deut 9:4). The paradox emerges with the introduction of the prohibition. By prohibiting reconstruction, Joshua ensures that the city will be preserved: not as a functioning municipality but as an example of divine faithfulness.²⁴⁸ The anathema illuminates God's role in this episode. As an allotment of spoils, the anathema recognizes the collapse of Jericho's walls as God's way of initiating the conquest. As a prohibition that arrests the city in an annihilated condition, the anathema reveals that the capture of Jericho is a potent example of divine faithfulness to the covenant.

The next sign of divine initiative appears with the defeat of a coalition of Amorite kings (Josh 10).²⁴⁹ These kings besiege Gibeon when they learn of this city's alliance with Israel (10:1–5). If, as seems likely, these kings are included among those mentioned in 9:1–2,²⁵⁰ their offense is twofold: the coalition has designs of fighting Israel (9:2) and is presently campaigning

²⁴⁸ On the positive side, Jericho plays a role like that of the pile of stones gathered from the Jordan (Josh 4:8, 20; see also 4:9): both testify to the Lord's deeds on the nation's behalf (4:21–24). On the negative side, Jericho offers a warning: God may do to the Israelites what has been done to this city in the event of disobedience (see Deut 8:19–20). My understanding of these events' function builds on Henning, "Niedergestreckt und zerstört."

²⁴⁹ The description of this coalition as "Amorite" (Josh 10:6, 12) recalls the divine statement in Gen 15:16: οὐπω γὰρ ἀναπεπλήρωνται αἱ ἁμαρτίαι τῶν Ἀμορραίων ἕως τοῦ νῦν. That Israel now finds itself engaging in combat with the Amorites confirms that the time has come to enter the promised land. That said, the designation "Amorite" is not limited to the kings confronted here. Amorites live east of the Jordan (Num 21:13, 21–32), and Amorites also join the subsequent coalition (Josh 11:1–5). The defeat of the Amorites in Josh 10 is part of a more extensive campaign that, taken as a whole, marks the end of divine passivity vis-à-vis this group.

²⁵⁰ A. Graeme Auld, *Joshua: Jesus, Son of Nauē, in the Codex Vaticanus*, SEPT (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 151, 159. Auld describes the king of Jerusalem's initiative in Josh 10:1ff. as "a particular example of what was stated in general terms in 9:1–2." Compared to the MT, the LXX forges a closer association between the Canaanite response in 9:1–2 and the Amorite campaign against Gibeon (see Josh 10:6, 12) by making "the kings of the Amorites" (οἱ βασιλεῖς τῶν Ἀμορραίων; Josh 9:1; Heb. כְּלִי-הַמִּלְחָמָה) the primary Canaanites to learn about Joshua's conquests.

against a city Israel must protect (10:5; see 9:15). The divine response to this opposition comes in a series of miracles that ensure Israel's victory. Two aspects of these miracles deserve attention. First, the miracles belong to the punitive war miracle subtype. Just as the miracles at the Red Sea represented God's intervention at the point of Israel's need in war, the same correlation between need and miracle underlies Josh 10.²⁵¹ Second, these miracles exhibit motifs reminiscent of the exodus event. The Lord's act of driving the Amorites out of their senses (10:10) recalls how God threw the Egyptian army into confusion (Exod 14:24). The hailstones that kill the fleeing Amorites yet spare the pursuing Israelites (Josh 10:11) evoke the hail that afflicted Egypt but bypassed Goshen (Exod 9:25–26). The stalling of the sun in the sky (Josh 10:13) reflects a blurring of created boundaries,²⁵² as was observed in the plagues of frogs and darkness (Exod 8:2; 10:22–23). The type of miracle and the motifs present in this event cooperate to make the defeat of the Amorites an exodus-like event in Canaan.

The significance of Israel's victory over the Amorites becomes apparent in the aftermath. The Israelites follow up on their victory with a rapid campaign against several cities (Josh 10:28–39), resulting in the nation's control of a large portion of Canaan (10:40–41). The narrator reveals that this campaign was possible because the Lord participated in the fighting (10:42). This statement immediately refers to the divine favor evident in the follow-up campaign. However, the formulation of this claim also evokes the Lord's initial victory over the Amorite

²⁵¹ The text does not address the sizes of the opposing forces. However, the fact that Israel is pitted against five kings may indicate a numerical imbalance. More to the point, Joshua later declares that God's help enabled Israel to prevail over superior nations (Josh 23:9) to the extent that a single Israelite was more than a match for thousands of opponents (23:10). The Israelites would not have been equal to the task of conquest absent God's help.

²⁵² Zakovitch, *The Concept of the Miracle*, 26.

kings (10:14 // 10:42).²⁵³ Israel's victory over the Amorite coalition catalyzed a period of rapid conquest. Much as the defeat of Pharaoh's army was a decisive event that ended one phase of Israel's history, the defeat of the Amorite coalition enables Israel to complete much of the conquest in short order.

The effect of the conquest miracles is to cast the invasion of Canaan as an exodus-like event that initiates a period of peace and prosperity (see Josh 21:43–45; 22:8; 24:13). That said, there is one respect in which the conquest miracles differ from those of the exodus. Whereas the exodus miracles were sheer expressions of divine faithfulness to Abraham, those of the conquest are conditioned by the Mosaic covenant.²⁵⁴ This development has not yet proven consequential since Israel remains faithful (cf. Josh 7:1). Regardless, the possibility looms that faithlessness may provoke a shift on God's part—from the blessings to the curses portion of the covenant catalogs. This possibility is realized after Joshua's death.

2.5.3. The Occupation

2.5.3.1. Prophetic Punitive Miracles in the Occupation

Israel enjoys peace in Canaan at the end of Joshua's life (Josh 11:23; 21:43–45), yet the possibility looms that this blessed state will be short. The problem is that Joshua does not

²⁵³ Just as the narrator interprets the successes of the follow-up campaign as a sign of divine participation (κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ συνεπολέμει τῷ Ἰσραὴλ; Josh 10:42), the narrator similarly interpreted the stalling of the sun (κύριος συνεπολέμησεν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ; 10:14). The use of similar phrases associates these events.

²⁵⁴ The fact that divine favor in the conquest is contingent on obedience appears most clearly in God's rebuke of Achan's sin (Josh 7:11–12).

conclude the conquest. He secures a foothold in Canaan and instructs the tribes to carry out conquests of their own (23:4–5), yet he does not “take the whole land” (11:23) in the sense of eliminating all Canaanites. That these survivors are a cause for concern becomes manifest in Joshua’s penultimate speech. According to Joshua, the danger exists that the Israelites might marry the Canaanites (23:12). Intermarriage will have severe consequences: divine assistance in the conquest will disappear, the Canaanites will become a source of trouble, and Israel will “perish from the land” (23:13). Mixing with the Canaanites is seen as a one-way ticket to worshipping other gods (23:7, 12–13; see also Deut 7:1–4). Joshua’s ultimate concern is covenantal observance. Faithfulness depends on completing the conquest and maintaining the purity of Israel’s relationships.

The opening of Judges reveals that matters unfold according to Joshua’s worst expectation.²⁵⁵ Most tribes fail to eliminate the Canaanites in their territories (Judg 1:18–34), leading to a divine declaration that God will henceforth abstain from the work of conquest (2:1–3; fulfilling Josh 23:13). According to the divine messenger, the Canaanites will now dominate the nation,²⁵⁶ and their gods will be a source of temptation (Judg 2:3). Subsequent events unfold according to these predictions. Israel starts worshipping foreign gods after Joshua’s generation passes away (2:8–13), initiating repetitive cycles of foreign domination and deliverance.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Quotations and translations of Judges are based on the A text in Rahlfs-Hanhart. According to Philip Satterthwaite, “Rahlfs’s B text usually stands furthest from the OG and closest to the MT ... Rahlfs’s A text stands closer to OG, but still contains many examples of *kaige* revision and Hexaplaric contamination” (“Judges,” in *T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint*, ed. James E. Aitken [London: Bloomsbury, 2015], 105).

²⁵⁶ Gk. ἔσονται ὑμῖν εἰς συνοχάς. See *GELS*, s.v. “συνοχή” on Judg 2:3: “a group of individuals bent on denying others freedom of movement.”

²⁵⁷ See the epitome in Judg 2:11–19: faithlessness (vv. 11–13) → foreign domination (14–15) → repentance (18; out of order) → deliverance (16, 18) → faithlessness (19).

To appreciate the punitive miracles in these cycles, we must observe how these events now assume a covenantal dimension absent in earlier periods. The miracles involving Abraham and the plagues in Egypt were expressions of God's faithfulness rooted in the ancestral promises. The implementation of these miracles was unconditional. The conquest miracles were similar: God promised Canaan to Abraham's descendants, and nothing could prevent the deity from delivering up the land through "signs and wonders" (Deut 7:19).²⁵⁸ We come closer to the present miracles in the wilderness period. The prophetic wilderness miracles targeted participants of the covenantal arrangement at Sinai and were conditioned by the nation's response to God. Yet the wilderness miracles were ad hoc, arising sporadically to meet exigent circumstances and largely ungrounded in particular covenant stipulations. Only with the advent of the judges do we encounter what I describe as the "covenantal function" of punitive miracles. This function consists in the ability of punitive miracles to instantiate the blessings and curses of the covenantal catalogs (Lev 26; Deut 28), either by harming Israel's enemies (a blessing to Israel) or Israel itself (a curse on the nation). The remaining miracles in this period and most of those in the next implement covenantal retribution.

The covenantal function of punitive miracles comes to the fore in the era of the judges because these miracles have been pressed into the service of Deuteronomistic historiography. Deuteronomistic historiography, by which I mean the overarching effort to shape and give meaning to the events of the Deuteronomistic History (DH; Joshua–2 Kings),²⁵⁹ operates on a conception of history amenable to punitive miracles. Hans Walter Wolff states this

²⁵⁸ Achan's sin (Josh 7) delayed the conquest, but there was never any reason to suspect that this or any similar offense would void the ancestral promises concerning the land.

²⁵⁹ See Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981).

understanding well: “History [in DH] is understood as the accomplishment of the word of God which prophets had proclaimed, and more especially as the fulfillment of the words of Moses that stand at the beginning of the whole work in Deuteronomy.”²⁶⁰ Deuteronomistic historiography elucidates the correlation between Moses’s words in Deuteronomy and succeeding events in Israel’s history. Punitive miracles have been incorporated into this endeavor for two reasons. First, punitive miracles instantiate the covenantal blessings and curses. These miracles are not the only means of indexing God’s covenantal posture, but they facilitate a particularly vivid demonstration of divine pleasure or, alternately, displeasure. Second, punitive miracles are conducive to the theological structuring of time. Wolff notes that one way DH conveys its “kerygma”—namely, restoration is possible after the Southern Kingdom’s collapse—is by emphasizing a pattern in Israel’s history that consists of the phases disobedience → punishment → repentance → restoration.²⁶¹ Punitive miracles, in their capacity to instantiate covenantal retribution, give expression to the second (punishment) and fourth (restoration) phases of this sequence, which I will henceforth describe as the “covenantal pattern.” For now, we will only encounter punitive miracles that operate in the latter capacity (denoting restoration). Miracles that punish members of God’s people become prominent in the next period.

The intersection of punitive miracles and the covenantal pattern is readily observed in relevant episodes from the judges’ time. The episodes requiring attention involve Deborah and

²⁶⁰ Hans Walter Wolff, “The Kerygma of the Deuteronomistic Historical Work,” in *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville, trans. Frederick C. Prussner, SBTS 8 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 64.

²⁶¹ Wolff, “The Kerygma,” 64, 66–67, 69.

Barak (Judg 4–5), Gideon (6–8), and Samuel (Judg 13–1 Sam 7).²⁶² It is expedient to consider the constellation of motifs that unites these stories:

1. Israel's sin (Judg 4:1; 6:1; 13:1)
2. Divine allowance of foreign hegemony (Judg 4:2; 6:1; 13:1)
3. Foreign oppression (Judg 4:3; 6:2–6; 14:4)²⁶³
4. Israel's renewed reliance on God (Judg 4:3; 6:6; 1 Sam 7:2–9)
5. Divine appointment of a judge (Judg 4:4–7; 6:11–16; 1 Sam 3:1–21)²⁶⁴
6. Punitive miracle (in concert with the judge) (Judg 4:15; 7:22; 1 Sam 7:10)
7. Statement of liberation (Judg 4:23–24; 8:28; 1 Sam 7:13–14)
8. Peace and rest in the land (5:31; 8:28; 1 Sam 7:13)²⁶⁵

These motifs readily map onto the covenantal pattern:

1. *Disobedience*: Israel's sin
2. *Punishment*: Divine allowance of foreign hegemony; foreign oppression
3. *Repentance*: Israel's renewed reliance on God
4. *Restoration*: Appointment of a judge; **punitive miracle**; liberation; peace and rest

Punitive miracles in the era of the judges appear in the restoration phase of the covenantal

pattern. Israel has realigned itself with the covenant at this point. Israel's repentance provokes a

²⁶² The miracle in 1 Sam 7 concludes a period of Philistine hegemony that begins at Judg 13:1. There are several reasons to trace the period of hegemony back to this point. First, the book of Judges does not record a statement of liberation after Philistine domination begins (as in Judg 4:23–24; 8:28; 11:33). This domination effectively continues until the formula appears in 1 Sam 7:13–14. Second, the book of Judges does not mention national repentance after 13:1. Israel does not display remorse until 1 Sam 7 (see n. 281), meaning the nation is unrepentant at the end of the book of Judges. Third, Philistine domination is not introduced in 1 Samuel; it is simply a given (e.g., 1 Sam 4:9). The narrator's failure to articulate the origin of this domination invites readers to locate this datum in the chronologically previous book. The problem that arises when Judg 13:1 is associated with the Samuelic miracle is the presence of Samson in the intervening chapters. Samson's birth is narrated immediately after the introduction of Philistine hegemony (Judg 13:2ff.); he is clearly a judge whom God appoints to oppose this threat. In response to this problem, I would emphasize the angel's prediction before Samson's birth: *αὐτὸς ἄρξεται σῶζειν τὸν Ἰσραὴλ ἐκ χειρὸς ἀλλοφύλων* (13:5). Samson will begin Israel's deliverance, but he will not necessarily complete it. That this deliverance is incomplete at the time of Samson's death is precisely the situation in Judges. The miracle in 1 Sam 7 builds on Samson's deeds and concludes this period of domination.

²⁶³ The statement of Philistine oppression does not appear at the beginning of Judg 13, where we would expect it. There is only a passing reference to the Philistines' role as overlords in 14:4. It is revealed after the fact that the Philistines captured Israelite cities (1 Sam 7:14).

²⁶⁴ For Samuel as a judge, see 1 Sam 12:11.

²⁶⁵ First Samuel 7 lacks the formula found in Judges (*ἡσύχασεν ἡ γῆ ... ἔτη*; 5:31; 8:28). However, the import of 1 Sam 7:13 is the same: Israel enjoyed peace with the Philistines for the rest of Samuel's life.

shift on God's part back to the blessings side of the covenantal catalogs, and God now appoints judges who deliver the nation through miraculously enhanced deeds. The occurrence of punitive miracles testifies that God has been reconciled and is disposed to treat the nation per the catalogs of covenantal blessings.

Despite this era's innovations, we are still dealing with miracles whose internal logic is rooted in the exodus event. This dynamic becomes apparent if we consider the expectation of such miracles in this era and their character. The occasion of the second and third motifs (divine allowance of foreign hegemony; foreign oppression) makes the memory of the exodus event palpable in the stories of this period. The people's bondage in Egypt is the nation's most immediate experience of foreign oppression. This event has nourished the expectation that God will meet oppression with signs and wonders. What is startling about this era is that such deliverance is not forthcoming. This failure provokes a crisis, revealing that God opposes the nation. The evocation of the conditions that occasioned the exodus event and the absence of exodus-like miracles signals that the relationship between God and Israel has changed. What has changed in this relationship is the conditional element introduced via the covenant.²⁶⁶

Notwithstanding the covenantal arrangement, the miracles after the requisite display of repentance confirm that Israel remains in a relationship with the God of the exodus. This

²⁶⁶ The above observations emerge from the account of Gideon's commission (Judg 6). When an angel visits Gideon to commission him with a prophetic task, the future judge responds to the angel's appearance with an interrogation. In response to the greeting, "the Lord [is] with you" (6:12), Gideon voices an exasperated outburst that queries the coherence of the salutation. First, Gideon questions whether Israel's troubles under Midianite hegemony are consistent with the notion that God supports the nation ("If the Lord is with us, why have all these evils found us?"; 6:13). Second, Gideon wonders whether Israel's troubles are consistent with the nation's experience of the exodus event ("Where are all his [the Lord's] wonders [*θαυμάσια*] that our fathers told us all about?"; 6:13; see Exod 10:2). Gideon decides that the inconsistency between the nation's present experience and the memory of the exodus event is insoluble, and he interprets Israel's experience as a sign that God has "rejected" the nation and relegated it to Midianite control (Judg 6:13). Gideon does not have the last word in this matter. However, his response demonstrates that the cycles in the time of the judges make the exodus event felt—in this case, through its apparent failure.

dynamic is evident in the character of these miracles. God defeated Pharaoh at the Red Sea with a series of punitive war miracles (Exod 14:24–28). This occasion marked the first appearance of such miracles, causing it to become the paradigmatic expression of divine intervention in battle. Every punitive miracle in the era of the judges is a war miracle. These events recapitulate the divine victory at the Red Sea. Moreover, the affinity between God’s intervention in Exod 14 and the miracles in this period is visible on the level of motifs. Just as God defeated Pharaoh, in part, by throwing the Egyptian army into confusion (Exod 14:24; see also Josh 10:10), God now defeats the foreign hegemons by driving the opposing armies out of their senses and bringing them to heel in battle (Judg 4:15; 7:22; 1 Sam 7:10).²⁶⁷ The miraculously enhanced leadership of the judges makes it abundantly clear that the God of the exodus fights on Israel’s side.

The covenant conditions the punitive miracles under the judges. Hence, these miracles have a “covenantal function.” Nevertheless, these events display sufficient continuity with previous periods to confirm that God has not fundamentally changed course with the nation. God intends to bless and preserve Israel, just as during the exodus event. The salient difference from earlier periods is that these miracles do not come on demand. God must be in a posture of covenantal blessing, occasioned by covenantal obedience, for miraculous judgments against Israel’s enemies to occur.

²⁶⁷ The affinity between four passages cited above (Exod 14:24; Josh 10:10; Judg 4:15; 1 Sam 7:10) is more apparent in the MT than in the LXX. These passages use *מַחֲדֵּף* to describe the Lord’s act of driving opponents out of their senses. The LXX obscures this relationship by using different verbs to translate the term: *συνταράσσω* (Exod 14:24); *ἐξίστημι* (Josh 10:10; Judg 4:15); and *συγχέω* (1 Sam 7:10). The remaining passage, Judg 7:22, is a special case. The LXX states, *ἔθετο κύριος μάχαιραν ἀνδρὸς ἐν τῷ πλησίον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ παρεμβολῇ*. Despite the absence of terms that denote mental incapacitation, this passage is similar to the others: the text presupposes that the Lord suspends the Midianites’ ability to discern between friend and foe, enabling a rout.

2.5.3.2. Priestly Punitive Miracles in the Occupation

The events of 1 Sam 4–6 deserve special attention because they contain priestly miracles, which I last observed in the wilderness wanderings. The account of the Philistines’ seizure of the ark is essentially priestly in its outlook. However, this account also includes overtones of the prophetic storyline. While these overtones do not drown out priestly concerns, the prophetic motifs in 1 Sam 4–6 suggest that the priestly storyline serves the prophetic one.

The priestly outlook of 1 Sam 4–6 consists of this section’s focus on the ark of the covenant. Of all the objects Moses had constructed, the ark is most associated with the deity’s presence.²⁶⁸ The ark requires the same degree of care as the sanctuary. This holy object threatens the nation in the event of carelessness (Lev 16:2, 13; Num 4:15, 17–20). The significant development in this period is the ark’s threat to the Philistines, who seize it in battle (1 Sam 4:11) but cannot manage it. The Philistines first deposit the ark in Ashdod,²⁶⁹ resulting in the Ashdodites developing hemorrhoids (5:3),²⁷⁰ damage to their ships (5:6),²⁷¹ the appearance of destructive mice in the country (5:6),²⁷² and a “confusion of death” in the city (5:6).²⁷³ The ark is

²⁶⁸ This fact emerges from the ark’s placement in the innermost part of the tabernacle (Exod 26:33–34).

²⁶⁹ Although the subject of ἐπάταξεν is χεῖρ κυρίου, the entreaty in 1 Sam 5:11 makes it clear that the Philistines conceive of the ark as the immediate agent of destruction. This observation applies to other verbs that take χεῖρ κυρίου as their subject as well (esp. 1 Sam 5:6: ἐξέζωσεν; 5:9: ἐπάταξεν [2x]).

²⁷⁰ Michael Lestienne, *Premier livre des Règles*, BA 9.1 (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 96–98. Lestienne suggests rectal prolapse as an alternate diagnosis of this condition.

²⁷¹ Lestienne, *Premier livre des Règles*, 174.

²⁷² Keith Bodner, “Mouse Trap: A Text-Critical Problem with Rodents in the Ark Narrative,” *JTS* 59 (2008): 646–47. Bodner primarily construes the mice as the source of “economic destruction” but speculates that these creatures are also “responsible for the *internal* threat of haemorrhoids and physiological discomfiture” (emphasis original). I find it more natural to understand the hemorrhoids and the appearance of mice as distinct afflictions, following John B. Geyer, “Mice and Rites in 1 Samuel V–VI,” *VT* 31 (1981): 294.

²⁷³ Gk. ἐγένετο σύγχυσις θανάτου μεγάλη ἐν τῇ πόλει. The meaning of σύγχυσις θανάτου can be clarified by the use of the same phrase in 1 Sam 5:11. The latter passage states that a σύγχυσις θανάτου occurred when the ark

next sent to Gath. The Gittites also develop hemorrhoids (5:9). The Philistines then convey the ark to Ekron, causing another “confusion of death” (5:11) and leading the Ekronites to develop hemorrhoids (5:12). The ark’s final destination is the Philistine countryside,²⁷⁴ where its seven-month sojourn again results in the appearance of destructive mice (6:1). These afflictions exhaust the Philistines’ patience. They decide to return the ark “to its place” (6:2). This decision represents the climax of these chapters. The Philistines recognize they cannot keep the ark and acknowledge that the Israelites are better positioned to handle it.

Ironically, the ark next causes even greater destruction among the Israelites. The offense of the Beth-Shemites upon the ark’s return (1 Sam 6:19) is ambiguous.²⁷⁵ However, the fact that

came into Ekron (5:11) and then refers to some individuals as οἱ ζῶντες καὶ οὐκ ἀποθανόντες (5:12). The fact that there are survivors presupposes that some Ekronites died. Since no other action in vv. 10–12 accounts for these deaths, it is reasonable to infer that the σύγχυσις θανάτου caused their demise. The confusion causes or attends an imminent death.

²⁷⁴ Lestienne, *Premier livre des Règles*, 177.

²⁷⁵ The situation in the MT is straightforward: God kills some Beth-Shemites “because they looked in the ark of the Lord” (1 Sam 6:19). Matters are more complicated in the Greek text due to the presence of the “sons of Jeconiah.” The members of this group differ with the Beth-Shemites at the time of the ark’s return. Divine judgment follows this disagreement. The most plausible interpretation is to construe the miracle as a judgment on the Beth-Shemites for looking at the ark. First, the victims of punishment are described as ἄνδρες. It is natural to identify these men as the inhabitants of Beth-Shemesh, who received a similar description (ἀνδράσιν Βαιθσαμυς) at the beginning of the verse. Second, the response of the surviving Beth-Shemites in 6:20 is premised on priestly logic, revealing that they interpret the miracle as a consequence of viewing the ark. This response would be incomprehensible if we adopted a reading of 6:19 along the lines of the NRSV (“The descendants of Jeconiah did not rejoice with the people of Beth-shemesh when they greeted the ark of the LORD; and he killed seventy men of them”). The NRSV construes Jeconiah’s descendants as both the offenders and victims of punishment—a depiction implying that God killed them for failing to display a celebratory attitude. It is not inconceivable that God would act this way, but such an action would indicate prophetic rather than priestly logic. If God punished the sons of Jeconiah for an attitudinal offense, then no vital connection links their offense and the cultic object. God might as well have killed this group’s members for failing to celebrate the visit of a ruler or prophet; such a change would not alter the dynamics of the episode on this reading. However, the first question in 6:20 (Τίς δυνήσεται διελθεῖν ἐνώπιον κυρίου τοῦ ἁγίου τούτου;) indicates that the ark’s presence poses a threat to Beth-Shemesh, while the second question (καὶ πρὸς τίνα ἀναβήσεται κιβωτὸς κυρίου ἀφ’ ἡμῶν;) reveals the survivors’ expectation that this threat can be mitigated by removing the cultic object from their midst. The survivors are not afraid they will replicate the attitude of the sons of Jeconiah and suffer judgment, which could happen even if the ark were physically remote. Instead, they are afraid they might commit an offense against the holy object in their midst and be annihilated. The survivors’ fear and solution make sense only if their reasoning is informed by priestly logic. This logic is incongruous with a reading of 6:19 that construes the offense as anything other than a cultic one.

the Lord kills more than 50,000 people in this episode reveals that they have committed a grave offense against the ark. It is not sufficient for the ark to be in Israel's possession. The ark harms all who mishandle it. The Beth-Shemites recognize this fact and pass off responsibility for the ark to Kiriath-Jearim (6:21–7:1), where it will remain mothballed for now (see 7:2). The divine presence is beholden to no nation. The Philistines' seizure of the ark in no way strips the deity of power, and the Israelites' recovery of this object does not preclude disaster.

The prophetic outlook of 1 Sam 4–6 consists in the fact that these chapters sound clear overtones of the exodus event.²⁷⁶ These overtones are apropos in light of Philistine hegemony over Israel, a condition which even the Philistines acknowledge is akin to slavery (1 Sam 4:9). Our attention is drawn to these overtones with the Philistines' description of the "gods" who attend the ark: these are "the gods who struck Egypt with every plague" (4:8). Since the Philistines defeat the Israelites and seize the ark, their victory ostensibly reflects the victory of Dagon (see 5:1ff.) over the God of the exodus.²⁷⁷ However, subsequent developments make this interpretation untenable. God executes judgments that evoke the plagues against the Egyptians, showing that the Philistines and Egyptians stand together in their impotence before divine power.

The evocation of the exodus event occurs on the levels of structure and motifs. The basic structure of events follows the "affliction-release" pattern of the exodus: just as God once struck the Egyptians with miraculous afflictions that prompted Israel's release, the deity now strikes the

²⁷⁶ Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 177.

²⁷⁷ Cf. Lestienne, *Premier livre des Règles*, 164–65. Lestienne holds that the Philistines' victory is due to their reliance on Israel's God, whom they invoke in 1 Sam 4:7 (ἐξέλω ἡμᾶς, κύριε). It is more plausible that this is a rare case of κύριος denoting a deity other than Yahweh. Judging by 1 Sam 4:7–8, the Philistines believe that Israel worships a plurality of gods (Siegfried Kreuzer and Martin Meiser, "Basileion I: Das erste Buch der Königtümer / Das erste Buch Samuel," in *Septuaginta Deutsch: Erläuterungen und Kommentare zum griechischen Alten Testament*, ed. Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2011], 754).

Philistines with afflictions that spur the ark's release.²⁷⁸ As for motifs, critical details in the text find parallels in the exodus event: miraculous afflictions lead the Philistines to recognize divine activity (1 Sam 5:7, 10–11 // Exod 8:4, 21–24; etc.); enchanters (ἐπαοιδοί) attest to the reality of this activity (1 Sam 6:2–6 // Exod 8:14–15);²⁷⁹ the Philistine gods are punished (1 Sam 6:5 // Exod 12:12); and the ark “plunders” the Philistines at the time of its departure (1 Sam 6:2–5 // Exod 3:21–22; 12:35–36).²⁸⁰ These reminiscences put the lie to the view that the Philistines have been delivered “from the hand of these strong gods” (1 Sam 4:8).

Far from prevailing over the divine hand, the Philistines recognize that they have fallen victim to this power (1 Sam 5:7; 6:3). They are no better off than the Egyptians, whose fate they feared to share (4:8). The takeaway from this story in terms of prophetic concerns is that the divine identity remains unchanged despite Israel's faithlessness.²⁸¹ God is ready to intervene on the nation's behalf once it returns to covenantal observance.

²⁷⁸ God adumbrates the exodus event in Exod 3:20 by mentioning the actions of “striking” (πατάξω τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους) and “sending away” (ἐξαποστελεῖ ὑμᾶς). πατάσσω describes divine judgment in 1 Sam 5:3, 9; ἐξαποστέλλω denotes “sending away” in 1 Sam 5:11; 6:3, 8.

²⁷⁹ Lestienne, *Premier livre des Règles*, 177.

²⁸⁰ The advice of the Philistine religious specialists (Εἰ ἐξαπεστελέετε ὑμεῖς τὴν κιβωτὸν διαθήκης κυρίου θεοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, μὴ δὴ ἐξαποστείλητε αὐτὴν κενήν; 1 Sam 6:3) recalls God's instructions concerning the plundering of the Egyptians (ὅταν δὲ ἀποτρέχητε, οὐκ ἀπελεύσεσθε κενοί; Exod 3:21).

²⁸¹ There are two reasons for supposing that Israel stands in a condition of covenantal faithlessness in this episode. First, Israel has not repented of the sins committed in Judg 13:1. Second, Lestienne compares the people's contrasting responses to the Philistine threat in 1 Sam 4:1–4, on one hand, and in 7:2–4, on the other hand, and determines that the former is distinctly lacking (*Premier livre des Règles*, 161). He writes, “En 4, 1–4, le peuple envoie des émissaires à Sêlôm, là où se trouvent à la fois le coffre (3, 3) et un prophète digne de foi, accrédité pour tout Israël, Samuel (3, 20–21), et ceux-ci, au lieu de consulter le prophète, emmènent le coffre. Le désastre qui suit montre que la procédure était mauvaise. En 7, 2–4, en revanche, Israël consultera Samuel, se convertira à sa parole, et sera victorieux à l'endroit même où il avait été battu. La leçon est claire : le coffre n'est pas un palladium ... c'est l'obéissance à la parole divine transmise par le prophète qui est décisive dans les relations avec les Étrangers.” The people's sending for the ark is not an act of repentance; it is yet another way of avoiding the prophetic summons, à la 1 Sam 7:3, to return to covenantal obedience.

The distinction between priestly and prophetic concerns in 1 Sam 4–6 is subtle. The story of the ark's capture and return contributes to the priestly storyline by construing Israel's possession of the ark as a blessing ripe with danger. The prophetic overtones that populate this story affirm divine faithfulness by recalling the exodus event. These features point to the possibility of similar actions in the future. The contribution to the priestly storyline is direct, while the contribution to the prophetic storyline is allusive. Priestly miracles are independent of the prophetic storyline, but they are rarely without implications for this storyline.

2.5.4. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

The last period ended hopefully as a new generation was poised to enter the land. The present period shows that this optimism was well-founded. Punitive miracles now blaze the path toward the capture of Canaan, just as they previously set in motion a series of events culminating in Pharaoh's defeat and the restoration of creation's bounty in the wilderness.

Unlike the previous period, punitive miracles now operate within a covenantal framework. This development is inconsequential during the conquest, but it governs Israel's fortunes under the judges. Israel fails to observe its covenantal obligations after Joshua's death, causing the nation's repeated subjection to foreign hegemony. As Gideon's calling illustrates, the nation's memory of the exodus event makes it natural to expect signs and wonders under such conditions. However, this deliverance is not forthcoming. Only after national repentance does God deliver the nation, often by sending a judge whose actions are enhanced by a punitive miracle. The pattern of disobedience → punishment → repentance → restoration will become a mainstay of the nation's history. Punitive miracles will regularly enhance this segmentation of history by alternately manifesting divine punishment or rescuing Israel from its enemies.

Characterization. Most of the noteworthy figures in this period accomplish prophetic tasks. Punitive miracles enhance the deeds of the most prominent among these people. What is remarkable about these individuals is their remoteness from the punitive miracles. Moses's relationship to his signs and wonders was close; he performed many such miracles. In contrast, none of the figures in this period performs a punitive miracle; miracles simply attend their actions. This distance creates a sense of discontinuity from the last period. The prophetic figures in question are prophets of a lesser order.

The development of prophetic topoi. The punitive miracles in this period develop the topoi of injustice, divine action through a select individual, and blessedness. First, injustice is a feature of the relevant episodes in the book of Judges. God surrenders Israel to foreign hegemons in the event of disobedience. These hegemons oppress Israel, provoking the people's return to God. Israel's experience of injustice causes the nation to remember the exodus event and anticipate signs and wonders. The element of injustice in these episodes associates the eventual miracles with the exodus event. Second, divine action through a select individual is present in every episode discussed above. The relevant miracles attend the actions of a prophet, or at least a person accomplishing a prophetic task. These miracles are not freestanding. Third, the topos of blessedness comes into focus given the emerging covenantal pattern. Punitive miracles appear during seasons of covenantal blessedness, when the people are rightly oriented to the covenant. This concurrence affirms the paradox that punitive miracles are a blessing for God's people.

The thematic development of God's kingdom. The development of the divine kingdom resumes at the beginning of this period as a new generation enters the promised land. On cue, punitive miracles facilitate the transition from the wilderness to Canaan. However, Israel's adherence to the covenant wanes after Joshua's generation dies. Israel's disobedience does not

result in punitive miracles targeting the people, as in the wilderness. Instead, Israel experiences the palpable absence of exodus-like miracles during seasons of foreign oppression and the return of these miracles upon repentance. These miracles' repeated disappearance and reappearance convey instability in the prophetic storyline. The prospects for God's kingdom were promising at the beginning of this period. The kingdom's development is stunted by the end of this period.

2.6. The Integrity of the Kingdom: Kings and Prophets

2.6.1. Introduction

The establishment of monarchy in Israel is the solution to two endemic problems in the judges' time. First, the book of Judges paints a picture of pervasive covenantal faithlessness. The refrain that punctuates this book's concluding chapters—"In those days there was not a king in Israel" (Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25)—reveals that the moral anarchy into which the nation has descended is a consequence of the lack of centralized authority (see esp. 17:6; 21:25). Second, the appointment of judges on an ad hoc basis fails to establish lasting peace (2 Sam 7:10–11). Israel reverts to covenantal faithlessness after each judge dies, leading to renewed subjection to foreign hegemons. Against this background, the kings step in to uphold the covenant and put forward a consistent national defense.²⁸²

²⁸² This is not the sole perspective on kingship in the Bible. God and Samuel criticize Israel's request for a king (1 Sam 8:4–18; 10:17–19; 12:6–19). Samuel's speech in 1 Sam 12 is illustrative. Samuel recounts events in Israel's history that establish a normative pattern (foreign oppression → petitioning of divine help → divine assistance via a human deliverer; vv. 8–11) and implies that the request for a king violates this pattern (v. 12). This speech presupposes that the Ammonite threat (v. 12; see 1 Sam 11) should have led the nation to petition God.

The monarchy is not an unmitigated blessing. The institution of kingship does not necessarily coincide with God's earthly kingdom, the goal of the prophetic storyline. On one hand, God's rule can be focalized through human rulers whose actions institute divine justice.²⁸³ The kings' adherence to the covenant moves the monarchy toward the point of coincidence with God's kingdom. On the other hand, the disparity between the institution of kingship and God's kingdom is thrown into relief when the nation has kings who neglect the covenant. The problem with such kings is not merely their disregard for divine requirements. Instead, their harm consists in the obstacle they pose to the realization of God's plans vis-à-vis Israel.²⁸⁴ Israelite kingship is distinct from God's earthly kingdom. This institution can instantiate or impede God's rule.

The latter circumstance—kingship as an impediment—explains the prominence of prophets in this period. Prophets have appeared in previous periods, but they come into their own at this point as agents appointed to press God's claims against rebellious kings.²⁸⁵ To the degree that the kings veer from their covenantal obligations, the prophets step in to embody covenantal faithfulness and thus indirectly represent God's rule.²⁸⁶ The faithfulness of Israel's kings is negatively correlated to prophetic activity. As kings exacerbate the disparity between the monarchy and God's kingdom, prophets arise as divine ambassadors who advance the prophetic storyline.

There has been a discernible, if at times faint association of punitive miracles and prophetic figures thus far in the prophetic storyline. The salient development in this period is that

²⁸³ See Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 233–34.

²⁸⁴ See Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 233.

²⁸⁵ See Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 233–34.

²⁸⁶ See Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 233–34.

this association becomes manifest and consistent. The lion's share of this change is due to the growing disparity between the institution of kingship and God's kingdom. Punitive miracles play a constructive role in David's ascent to the throne, contributing to his characterization as a paradigmatic monarch. However, these miracles become the prerogative of prophets after David's reign. From this point forward, punitive miracles routinely appear in connection with prophetic figures, either fulfilling their declarations or affirming their status as divine agents. This shift casts the prophets as protagonists and their royal opponents as antagonists in the prophetic storyline. Prophets step into the limelight because of their association with punitive miracles. This development is a consequence of the failure of Israel's kings to live up to their covenantal obligations.

2.6.2. The United Monarchy

2.6.2.1. Prophetic Punitive Miracles in the United Monarchy

Israel enters a new phase of its history when Samuel anoints Saul as king (1 Sam 10:1–8).²⁸⁷ Yet the groundwork for this development was laid long before by Moses. Anticipating the people's request for a king (Deut 17:14),²⁸⁸ Moses circumscribed the role of Israelite rulers with a series of injunctions (17:15–20). The positive injunctions (17:18–20) reveal Moses's conception of

²⁸⁷ Abimelech serves as king during the time of the judges (Judg 9:1–6, 22), but his reign is a false start.

²⁸⁸ Wevers observes that OG Deuteronomy avoids designating Israel's leader as βασιλεύς since the kingly role is reserved for God (*Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, SCS 39 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 286). Regardless, it is clear that Moses's instructions about the ἄρχων in Deut 17:14–20 apply to future Israelite kings.

kingship. Per Moses's instructions, the king must make a copy of the law and read it daily (17:18–19). Moses's rationale emerges in the clauses that follow these commands. The king's acquaintance with the law will have a threefold effect: the king will adopt a posture of fear and obedience vis-à-vis God (17:19), he will remain humble (17:20), and his dynasty will endure (17:20). Underlying these statements is the presupposition that the king is subordinate to the covenant. Kingship is not an institution unto itself; it retains its vitality to the degree that the king hews close to divine commandments.

The covenantal dimension of kingship explains the uneven distribution of punitive miracles in the lives of Israel's inaugural monarchs. Despite his ostensible qualifications for the role of king, Saul is never the beneficiary of a punitive miracle.²⁸⁹ In contrast, David seems eminently unqualified for this post, yet two such miracles mark his early career. The critical quality that differentiates these individuals is their attentiveness to divine commandments. Saul fails to obey God when his back is up against the wall. In contrast, David is "a person according to [the Lord's] heart" (1 Sam 13:14). David matches the Mosaic desiderata for kingship, and punitive miracles naturally attend his replacement of Saul.

²⁸⁹ Saul's son, Jonathan, is at the center of an episode that recalls the punitive miracles in the era of the judges. In the context of Philistine hegemony (1 Sam 13:19–22), Jonathan leads an attack that, in coordination with a punitive miracle, sets the stage for an Israelite victory (14:13–23). During this conflict, God drives the Philistines out of their senses, sapping them of the will to fight and causing them to attack one another in battle (14:15, 20). This miracle casts Jonathan as a judge-like figure who could fill the void left by Saul's deposition. Jonathan never attains kingship, but the fact that this episode enhances his status makes his support of David's bid for kingship (23:16–18) all the weightier.

2.6.2.1.1. David's Early Career

Hannah's speech in 1 Sam 2 orients my discussion of Saul and David. The claims of this speech exceed Hannah's experience of pregnancy after barrenness (1 Sam 1), and her statements function as a programmatic declaration when read in light of the ensuing narrative. Most significant are the juxtaposed pairs in this speech (2:4–5). According to Hannah, God's rule reverses the fortunes of the strong and the weak, the well-fed and the hungry,²⁹⁰ and the fertile and the barren woman. The speech is apropos of Hannah given the last pair. However, it anticipates Saul and David's experiences given the reversal theme and the juxtaposition of strong/weak. This speech "programs" us to read the following narrative as a story of God's rule achieving stunning reversals. Accordingly, I will consider how the punitive miracles in 1 Samuel are implicated in transferring power from Saul to David.

First, a word about the characterization of these kings is in order. Saul is a natural candidate to become Israel's first king, while David is his opposite. Saul is introduced as the son of Kish, a "powerful man" (1 Sam 9:1; see 2:4, 9–10),²⁹¹ and he has an imposing physical stature (9:2; 10:23–24) that makes him ideally suited to fulfill the desideratum of a king who can lead the nation into battle (8:20). As if to affirm Saul's job fit, the narrative recounts a successful campaign against the Ammonites as Saul's first act as king (11:1–15). David, for his part, lacks outward suitability for kingship. We first encounter David as "the small one" (16:11), the son of Jesse whom Samuel anoints only after receiving divine instructions to overlook a more obvious candidate (16:6–7). David is unprepared to lead the nation into battle. He cannot take up Saul's

²⁹⁰ According to Lestienne, οἱ πεινῶντες παρήκαν γῆν (1 Sam 2:5) likely means that "ceux que étaient affamés sont maintenant dans une telle abondance qu'ils n'ont plus besoin de travailler la terre" (*Premier livre des Règles*, 140). The fact that the once hungry now neglect the land reflects their present satiety.

²⁹¹ Gk. ἀνὴρ δυνατός. Kish is the first person to appear with the adjective δυνατός since Hannah's speech.

sword when offered to him (17:39), and his success against Goliath reflects his facility with shepherds' tactics rather than military preparedness (17:34–37, 40, 49).

Nevertheless, the characterization of these figures is an unreliable predictor of success. David wholeheartedly relies on God, which more than makes up for his deficiencies. Whereas Saul opts for personal initiative over obedience to God (13:8–15; 15:1–3, 8–34), David is “a person according to [the Lord’s] heart” (13:14), both in description (16:7, 12) and deed (17:34–37, 45–47). The latter half of 1 Samuel explores the consequences of these characterizations. Saul’s career follows a downward trajectory from his *de jure* deposition as king (13:13–14; 15:22–23, 26, 28–29) to his *de facto* removal from office at death (31:3–6). David’s career follows an upward trajectory from his appointment as king (16:11–13) to his attainment of office (2 Sam 2:4; 5:1–5). The fortunes of Saul and David are reversed because David “understands” and “knows” God (1 Sam 2:10), while Saul does not. Matters unfold just as Hannah predicted.

Two miracles place the divine imprimatur on David between his appointment as king and accession to the throne. The first miracle appears amid Saul’s attempts to extinguish David’s rising star. David strikes Saul as a threat (1 Sam 18:9, 12–15, 28–29), and Saul tries to kill the young upstart on several occasions (e.g., 18:25; 19:1, 9–11, 15). A punitive miracle facilitates one of David’s most memorable escapes from these attempts. In the episode in question, David takes refuge with Samuel (19:18) after Saul has made two quick attempts to kill him (19:9–17). David survives a third attempt because the royal messengers and the king are miraculously incapacitated (19:20–24).²⁹² Unlike previous cases of incapacitation, the subjects here cannot carry out their designs because they are overcome by the urge to prophesy. Saul’s incapacitation

²⁹² This event is miraculous because the opponents suddenly lose control of their mental faculties before encountering David. It is punitive due to the opponents’ intention of capturing David.

is the most thoroughgoing: when the king arrives where David and Samuel are staying, he disrobes and spends the day lying naked on the ground (19:23–24). This type of protection has previously been the prerogative of Israel at large. God has frequently incapacitated Israel’s opponents in battle, but the deity has never protected an individual in this manner. God’s concern for David approaches the degree of divine concern for the nation. Saul’s punishment indicates that Israel’s future is bound to the young shepherd.

The second miracle in this period likewise affirms God’s preference for David over Saul, albeit indirectly. After David breaks with Saul, he gathers a group of followers who operate as a paramilitary force (1 Sam 22:2). Among other things, David’s band protects Nabal’s shepherds and flock at pasture (25:7, 15–16). David views this act as a favor he can call in when necessary. However, trouble ensues when Nabal refuses his attempt to do so (25:4–11). Nabal’s slight enrages David, and the latter proposes to destroy Nabal’s household (25:12–13, 21–22, 34). David is only prevented from following through on his vengeful plan because Abigail, Nabal’s wife, presents David with gifts (25:18–20, 23–35). Regardless, Nabal receives his just deserts: he is suddenly paralyzed when he learns of Abigail’s actions (25:37),²⁹³ and God kills him shortly after that (25:38).

Nabal’s demise illuminates David’s dealings with Saul. David’s encounter with Nabal separates two episodes in which David spares Saul’s life (1 Sam 24:1–23; 26:1–25). This account shares critical motifs with these surrounding episodes: the “repayment” of “evil for good” (24:12 // 25:21 // 26:18–20), the deferral of vengeance (24:4–8 // 25:32–35 // 26:7–12), and the anticipation of divine justice (24:13, 16 // 25:26, 29 // 26:10). Nabal’s fate distinguishes

²⁹³ Gk. ἐναπέθανεν ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, καὶ αὐτὸς γίνεται ὡς λίθος. The description of Nabal “becoming like a stone” suggests the inability to speak or move. This condition is a result of the “death of his heart.”

these episodes: Nabal dies from a miraculous punishment after mistreating David, whereas Saul does not. Since Nabal's story resembles Saul's in crucial respects other than this one, his death foreshadows Saul's doom.²⁹⁴ Saul may have escaped his close calls with David, but Nabal's fate affirms that God will complement David's rejecting vengeance with divine justice.

2.6.2.1.2. David's Regnal Period

The upward trajectory of David's career continues into his regnal period, reaching its apogee with the Davidic covenant. The salient aspect of this covenant is God's paternal relationship with David's son (2 Sam 7:14). God commits to disciplining David's son yet forswears rejecting the son's dynasty (7:14–15). Two aspects of this commitment require amplification. First, the condition that prompts discipline ("if his unrighteousness should come ..."; 7:14) should be understood in light of the covenantal dimension of Israel's monarchy. "Unrighteousness" does not merely consist of evil deeds and unjust acts. The king is liable to discipline for his covenantal faithlessness and disregard for Moses's injunctions.²⁹⁵ Second, although God raises the possibility of punishing David's son through human intermediaries (7:14), this statement need

²⁹⁴ Abigail says as much in her petition. She wishes that David's enemies would "be like Nabal" (1 Sam 25:26), including in this group "the person who rises up to closely pursue you and seek your life" (25:29). Since Saul is the only person who fits this description (23:25; 24:15; 26:18, 20), Abigail wishes Nabal's fate on the king.

²⁹⁵ First Kings makes it clear that the violation of Moses's injunctions invites discipline. It does so by showing how Solomon disregards these injunctions and is punished. Solomon amasses gold and other possessions (1 Kgs 10:14–22, 25, 27 // Deut 17:17), horses (1 Kgs 10:26, 28–29 // Deut 17:16), and wives (1 Kgs 11:1–2 // Deut 17:17), and he later engages in the worship of foreign gods (1 Kgs 11:4–8). God responds by raising up a series of individuals to oppose the king (11:14–40; fulfillment of 2 Sam 7:14). The king's worship of foreign gods is the immediate cause of God's anger (1 Kgs 11:9–10), and this is admittedly a topic that Moses's injunctions fail to address. That said, Moses's commands presuppose a causal relationship between the taking of many wives and the altered disposition of the king's heart (Wevers, *Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, 289). This presupposition is replicated in the analysis of Solomon's reign in 1 Kgs 11 (see esp. vv. 1–2, 4), albeit with an emphasis on the wives' foreign status. First Kings demonstrates that Solomon is "disciplined" by human opponents because he has neglected Moses's royal injunctions—particularly the injunction against numerous marriages.

not be read as excluding miraculous punishments. Punitive miracles that affect David's household can fulfill this discipline clause, as do punishments that come by natural means.

David is the first king to fall victim to the Davidic covenant's discipline clause, and this on two occasions (2 Sam 11–12; 24).²⁹⁶ These incidents bookend the chaotic latter portion of David's reign, emphasizing the king's sins as the source of Israel's troubles. The former account relates David's acts of adultery and murder, while the latter describes the king's census. It is unnecessary to rehash the details of these familiar accounts. It suffices to reflect on the salient motifs shared by these accounts:

1. David sins (2 Sam 11:2–4, 14–17; 24:2–4);²⁹⁷
2. A prophet announces judgment (12:1–14; 24:11–13);
3. David acknowledges his sin (12:13; 24:10);
4. Someone other than David is punished (12:15, 18; 24:15; see 24:17);²⁹⁸
5. David attempts to mitigate the punishment (12:16–17; 24:17, 19–25);
6. The judgment explains an Israelite institution (12:24–25;²⁹⁹ 24:25).³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ Strictly speaking, the discipline clause concerns Solomon and his successors. However, two considerations support the decision to read the miracles involving David in light of this clause. First, these miracles accord with 2 Sam 7:14–15: the miracles discipline the king for his faithlessness, yet not so severely as to void the promise of divine mercy. Second, these miracles are narrated after God has committed to disciplining future Davidic kings. David is the Davidic king par excellence. His experience of discipline in the context of this promise is paradigmatic.

²⁹⁷ The fact that David has sinned by ordering a census is evidenced by Joab's reaction (2 Sam 24:3), David's remorse (24:10, 17), and the severity of the judgment that follows (24:15).

²⁹⁸ It is natural to focus on God's instigating the census (2 Sam 24:1) as a salient theological difficulty in this passage. However, the judgment of someone other than David is an equally pressing problem. It is beyond the scope of my study to resolve this problem. However, a word is in order concerning the implications of this incongruity for classifying the miracle in this passage and its analog in 2 Sam 12. Absent other considerations, the lack of coordination between the fault and the afflicted person(s) makes these miracles maleficent. The consideration that causes me to include these miracles in the present discussion is that 2 Samuel construes these events as punishments for David's sins. The unvoiced assumption in these episodes is that God decrees that the death of a third party is condign punishment for David's sins (see esp. 12:14; 24:10–13).

²⁹⁹ The death of David and Bathsheba's son sets the stage for Solomon's line (2 Sam 12:24–25).

³⁰⁰ The plague that results from David's census is checked when the king erects an altar and offers sacrifices at Araunah's threshing floor (2 Sam 24:18–25). That this altar becomes the site of the temple is made manifest in 2 Sam 24:25 with a detail absent in the MT: *καὶ προσέθηκεν Σαλωμων ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον ἐπ' ἐσχάτῳ, ὅτι μικρὸν ἦν ἐν πρώτοις* (Philippe Hugo, "The Jerusalem Temple Seen in 2 Samuel according to the Masoretic Text

The appearance of this pattern shortly after the establishment of the Davidic covenant and again near the end of David's reign depicts the king as a flawed individual. However, this depiction must be contextualized in terms of the running contrast between Saul and David. Saul also sinned (1 Sam 13:8–9; 15:8–9), but unlike David, Israel's first king responded to prophetic indictments by shifting blame onto others (13:11–12; 15:15, 20–21). David acknowledges his sins. His admission of guilt after Nathan's indictment is concise and without excuse (2 Sam 12:13). His acknowledgment of sin following the census is similarly concise and, in this case, unprompted (24:10).³⁰¹ Moreover, David's piety endures despite his failure to stave off judgment. David worships God following his son's death (12:20) and obeys Gad's instructions to halt the plague afflicting the nation (24:18–25). Just as David proved to be “a person according to [the Lord's] heart” (1 Sam 13:14) in his early career by relying on God, he fits this description in his later career given his readiness to turn away from sin.³⁰²

David's experience of punitive miracles is far from typical, as the reigns of succeeding kings will make clear. No future king will be the individual beneficiary of this type of miracle. Instead, these kings will primarily experience miraculous punishments as vehicles of covenantal enforcement. Their responses to discipline will fall short of David's. David's experience of punitive miracles sets him apart from his predecessor and successors.

and the Septuagint,” in *XIII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies Ljubljana, 2007*, SCS 55 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008], 190–92).

³⁰¹ The second and third motifs are reversed in 2 Sam 24: David acknowledges his sin (2 Sam 24:10), and then a prophet announces judgment (24:11–13). This reversal shows development in David's character.

³⁰² For another event in David's reign that might be considered a punitive miracle, see 2 Sam 21:1–14. This text recounts a famine that afflicts Israel on account of Saul's treatment of the Gibeonites. I exclude this episode from the discussion above because of its tenuous connection to the prophetic storyline. Here Israel is punished for violating an agreement with another nation (see Josh 9) rather than the Mosaic covenant. God expects Israel to honor this agreement, but the agreement is not integral to the covenant.

2.6.2.2. Priestly Punitive Miracles in the United Monarchy

The era of Israel's united monarchy contains a single priestly miracle. This miracle occurs when David tries to bring the ark to his new capital. The ark last figured in the biblical storyline when it was implicated in the deaths of more than 50,000 Israelites in Beth-Shemesh (1 Sam 6:19). At that point, it was siloed in Kiriath-Jearim (7:1). Much as the Beth-Shemites learned that the possession of the ark is a blessing ripe with danger, David now discovers that unlike his recent accomplishments (see 2 Sam 5), the seat of the deity's presence is not so easily managed.

The trouble stems from David's unfamiliarity with the ark. When the king arrives in Kiriath-Jearim, he loads the ark onto a wagon and lets a man named Uzzah oversee its conveyance to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:3–4). The journey goes well until Uzzah makes contact with the ark to prevent it from falling (6:6). This contact causes God to kill Uzzah (6:7). Terrified by this development, David scuttles his plan to bring the ark to Jerusalem (6:8–10). That David bears responsibility for this turn of events emerges from his handling of logistics. Whereas the law prescribes that the Kohathites ought to transport the ark—and this by using poles to carry it (Num 3:31; 4:5–6, 15)³⁰³—David places the ark on a “new wagon” as the Philistines had done (2 Sam 6:3; see 1 Sam 6:7) and entrusts its conveyance to Uzzah, a man of unknown origins.³⁰⁴ The king's conduct reflects a mixture of ignorance and self-reliance. David's knowledge of the procedure for transporting the ark fails to surpass that of the Philistine religious specialists.

³⁰³ The notion that David poorly manages the logistics of the ark's transportation is supported by the presence of attendants carrying this holy object during David's second attempt to bring it to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:13).

³⁰⁴ Uzzah is the son of Aminadab (2 Sam 6:3), a resident of Kiriath-Jearim whose ancestry is never described (see 1 Sam 7:1). Uzzah's lineage is less of a problem than his touching the ark. The book of Numbers claims that even a non-Aaronic Levite would die if he touched or saw one of the holy objects (Num 4:15, 20).

Indeed, the Philistines are more confident in God's ability to protect the ark than Israel's king.³⁰⁵ David would have been the victim if prophetic logic had informed this episode. As it stands, the story is informed by priestly logic. Uzzah's reason for touching the ark is inconsequential. This man commits a cultic offense that exposes him to God's presence and dies immediately.³⁰⁶

The revelation of the ark's indomitability persuades David to divert the ark from his new capital (2 Sam 6:10). David will later fulfill his plan to bring the ark to Jerusalem (6:12–15, 17) when he becomes convinced that the blessings that attend the ark's presence outweigh its threat (6:11–12). However, he never mitigates the risk at this episode's heart. The divine presence associated with the ark is an unstable force in Israel's midst. David brings this force into his new capital. Over time, the ark will fade as the locus of the divine presence in the biblical storyline, but the problem of how Israel can coexist with the God depicted in this episode will persist.

2.6.3. The Divided Monarchy

The division of Israel's monarchy into Northern and Southern Kingdoms introduces a shift from what I observed with David. Whereas punitive miracles played a role in David's ascent to the throne and contributed to his status as Israel's paradigmatic king, these miracles now become the prerogative of prophets. David's death leaves a void that his successors do not fill. The prophets now embody covenantal faithfulness, and punitive miracles attend their rise to prominence.

³⁰⁵ The Philistines trust that Israel's God can overcome the instincts of the cows pulling the ark and bring it to Beth-Shemesh (1 Sam 6:7–9). David thinks the ark needs guardians in a similar situation.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, 129–30. Knohl dissociates this event from priestly theology given the anthropomorphisms in 2 Sam 6:7. In my view, these anthropomorphisms indicate that Uzzah's punishment blends the prophetic and priestly modes of miracle (see "1.4. Methodology" for the "blending" of rhetorolects).

The origins of this shift are found in the reign of David's son, Solomon. Solomon provokes a change in the nation's fortunes by systematically violating Moses's negative injunctions in Deut 17.³⁰⁷ The most consequential of Solomon's actions is his marriage of numerous women (1 Kgs 11:1). As Moses predicted, Solomon's marriages change the king's heart (11:4; see Deut 17:17).³⁰⁸ However, in a departure from Moses, the problem is not the number of Solomon's wives, but the presence of foreigners among these women (11:4).

Solomon's experience recalls Israel's after the death of Joshua:

1. Disregard for the ban on intermarriage (Judg 3:5–6 // 1 Kgs 11:1–2);
2. Worship of foreign gods (Judg 3:6 // 1 Kgs 11:4–8);
3. Divine shift to a posture of cursing/discipline (Judg 2:1–3 // 1 Kgs 11:11–40).

In Israel's case, faithlessness caused God to abstain from further conquest (Judg 2:1–3). In Solomon's case, faithlessness activates the Davidic covenant's discipline clause, resulting in the appearance of three individuals who oppose the king (1 Kgs 11:14–40). The last of these three is Jeroboam, whom God appoints to lead the Northern Kingdom after Solomon dies (11:29–38).

The analogy between Israel and Solomon explains the character of punitive miracles in the divided monarchy. A critical consequence of Israel's post-Joshua faithlessness was the disappearance of exodus-like miracles. It is reasonable to interpret the disappearance of “constructive” punitive miracles from the careers of Israel's kings along similar lines. Solomon's worship of foreign gods puts the institution of kingship at odds with God's earthly kingdom. Israel's experience after the death of Joshua has primed us to expect that this course of action

³⁰⁷ See n. 295 for an analysis of Deut 17:16–17 as the intertext of 1 Kgs 10:14–11:8.

³⁰⁸ The injunctions in Deut 17:17 presuppose a causal relationship between the taking of many wives (οὐ πληθυνεῖ ἑαυτῷ γυναῖκας) and the altered disposition of the king's heart (οὐδὲ μεταστήσεται αὐτοῦ ἡ καρδία) (Wevers, *Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, 289). As Wevers puts it, “The use of οὐδέ instead of καὶ οὐκ used for all the other limitations is clearly intended to tie it [the clause about the king's heart] to the preceding as part of a single statement, and the interpretation of the clause as a result or purpose clause seems warranted.”

will cause divine favor to disappear. Since punitive miracles become the prerogative of the prophets from this point forward, it is reasonable to view Solomon's failure as a moment when divine attention shifts from the kings to the prophets.

2.6.3.1. Prophetic Punitive Miracles in the Northern Kingdom

Almost every punitive miracle in the era of the divided monarchy occurs in the Northern Kingdom, which I will henceforth refer to as "Israel." I will first pursue the role of these miracles in the Northern Kingdom's history before considering the two episodes set in the Southern Kingdom, "Judah."

2.6.3.1.1. Under Jeroboam

The role of punitive miracles in Jeroboam's reign indicates that the near coincidence of human kingship and the divine kingdom, last seen under David and the early Solomon, will not be a feature of this breakaway state. Jeroboam's prospect of success is initially high. Jeroboam cannot lay claim to the promises of the Davidic covenant, yet his call to royal service (1 Kgs 11:29–38) evokes this covenant and raises the prospect that he will receive his own pact with the deity.³⁰⁹ David's example makes it reasonable to expect that Jeroboam's career will include punitive miracles that benefit the king. However, these miracles fail to materialize, meaning Jeroboam is

³⁰⁹ See 1 Kgs 11:38. In the event of Jeroboam's faithfulness, God promises, ἔσομαι μετὰ σοῦ καὶ οἰκοδομήσω σοι οἶκον πιστόν, καθὼς ᾠκοδόμησα τῷ Δαυίδ. This promise evokes Jonathan's prediction about David's house (ποιῶν ποιήσει κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου οἶκον πιστόν; 1 Sam 25:28) and David's prayer about the Davidic covenant (κύριε παντοκράτωρ θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ, ἀπεκάλυψας τὸ ὥτιον τοῦ δούλου σου λέγων Οἶκον οἰκοδομήσω σοι; 2 Sam 7:27).

no David *redivivus*. Instead, punitive miracles appear during Jeroboam's reign as symbols of divine opposition.

Israel's "original sin" occasions God's opposition to Jeroboam.³¹⁰ In an act revealing a spectacular failure to heed the past, Jeroboam makes golden heifers for Israel to worship and parrots Aaron's words of institution over the nation's original bovine idol (1 Kgs 12:28 // Exod 32:4).³¹¹ Jeroboam's heifers, visual representations of the "gods" of the exodus, are meant to obviate the need for travel to Jerusalem (1 Kgs 12:26–29). However, the erection of these idols recapitulates the nation's first full-scale rebellion (Exod 32). Jeroboam and his subjects are bent on repeating the errors of the wilderness generation.

Jeroboam's establishment of a rival cultic system is met with a pair of miracles that signal unflagging divine opposition. First, Jeroboam's hand is paralyzed (1 Kgs 13:4) when he stretches it out to order the seizure of a prophet who predicts the desecration of the new altar in Bethel (13:1–3). The paralysis serves, together with the breaking of the altar (13:5), to depict the inviolability of the prophetic word against the cultic site. Second, the prophet himself falls victim to death by lion mauling (13:24) after eating and drinking in Bethel in contravention of a divine command (13:19; see 13:9, 17, 22).³¹² The text does not explain why it is wrong for the prophet

³¹⁰ This event is Israel's original sin because it is an initial faithless act that haunts the nation throughout its history (see 2 Kgs 17:16, 21–23).

³¹¹ 1 Kgs 12:28: ἰδοὺ θεοί σου, Ἰσραὴλ, οἱ ἀναγαγόντες σε ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου // Exod 32:4: Οὗτοι οἱ θεοί σου, Ἰσραὴλ, οἵτινες ἀνεβίβασάν σε ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου. Whereas Aaron's creation is a μόσχος (Exod 32:4), Jeroboam's creations are described as δαμάλεις (1 Kgs 12:28). Muraoka defines the former term as "*the young of cattle, calf*" and the latter as "*young cow*" (gloss: "heifer") (*GELS*, s.vv. "μόσχος," "δάμαλις"). Despite the difference in terminology, the similar words of institution secure the comparison between Aaron and Jeroboam.

³¹² There is nothing miraculous about mauling as such. This death is miraculous because of details that suggest providence as its cause (see Zakovitch, *The Concept of the Miracle*, 52): 1. The lion remains beside the corpse and the donkey (1 Kgs 13:24, 28); 2. The lion does not consume the corpse (13:28); 3. The lion does not harass the donkey (13:28); 4. The donkey does not flee from the lion. Both animals act contrary to nature, which indicates that God has orchestrated the event.

to dine in Bethel; his actions are blameworthy simply because they violate the word of the Lord. As such, the prophet's death adds credibility to the prophecy against Bethel.³¹³ Just as the prophet's message against the altar is confirmed by damage to the altar and Jeroboam's paralysis (13:5–6), this message is doubly confirmed by the fulfillment of his second set of instructions (concerning his own conduct). The fulfillment of this prophetic word is inexorable.³¹⁴ Since Jeroboam and Israel disregard this message (13:33–34), the nation casts its lot with Bethel and faces judgment.³¹⁵ Punitive miracles appear in Jeroboam's reign as signs of divine opposition. These miracles index the growing distance between Israelite kingship and the divine kingdom.

2.6.3.1.2. Under Ahab and Sons

The record of Israel's history focuses on the succession of rulers and dynasties after Jeroboam's death. Punitive miracles are absent until the time of Ahab. These miracles' recurrence reflects the nation's accelerated decline under Ahab. The northern kings who immediately succeed Jeroboam

³¹³ First Kings 21 records a mauling similar to this one. The accounts share several elements: 1. The Lord requires unusual acts from a person (1 Kgs 21:35 // 13:9, 17, 22); 2. The individual refuses to heed the word of the Lord (21:35 // 13:19; see 13:22); 3. A prophet indicts and announces judgment to the guilty person (21:36 // 13:20–22); 4. The individual dies by lion mauling (21:36 // 13:23–24). In addition, both accounts contribute little to the broader narratives in which they appear. The mauling in 1 Kgs 21 seems to perform a function similar to that in 1 Kgs 13. The individual's death depicts the judgment that results when the word of the Lord is disregarded, anticipating the fate of Ahab, who refused to strike the person whom God delivered into his hands (21:30–34, 42).

³¹⁴ The narrative's development reinforces this point. The account of the prophet's death and burial culminates in the reaffirmation of his prophecy (13:24–32). The prophet's death adds support to his prophecy.

³¹⁵ Taken in isolation, this episode characterizes Jeroboam and explains the cause of his dynasty's downfall (see esp. 1 Kgs 13:33–34). However, the episode becomes paradigmatic when read in context. Jeroboam is the first king of Israel, and this episode recounts his first substantive act as king. His calf and altar will remain in Bethel for the duration of the Northern Kingdom's history, and they will not be removed until Josiah (2 Kgs 23:15–18). This episode and the narrative of Josiah's desecration of the altar bookend the Northern Kingdom's history, emphasizing the deleterious effects of Jeroboam's innovations. Since punitive miracles appear in this paradigmatic episode, they likewise take on a paradigmatic quality. These miracles denote divine opposition to the breakaway tribes' efforts apart from God.

emulate his faithlessness and lead Israel to do the same.³¹⁶ However, these kings do not exceed Jeroboam's reforms. Matters change when Ahab reaches the throne. Ahab marries Jezebel, a corrupting foreign princess (1 Kgs 16:31; see 20:25), introduces the worship of Baal in Samaria (16:31–32), and makes an idolatrous grove in the manner of the Canaanites (16:33; see Exod 34:13; Deut 7:5; 12:3). Ahab establishes a new measurement of faithlessness. Future kings will be judged according to two standards: that of Jeroboam³¹⁷ and that of Ahab.³¹⁸ The second measure is the more damning of the two, revealing that Ahab's reign is the nadir of Israelite history thus far. Since punitive miracles appeared in Jeroboam's reign and now occur with greater intensity in Ahab's reign, it is natural to correlate the recurrence of these miracles with Ahab's cultic innovations. These innovations exacerbate the disparity between Israel and the divine kingdom. This disparity, in turn, prompts the appearance of Elijah and Elisha.³¹⁹

The miracles of Elijah and Elisha are numerous and multifarious. Practicality requires that I focus on the salient contributions of these miracles to the prophetic storyline. The following categories provide a heuristic for analyzing these contributions: 1. miracles that

³¹⁶ Nadab (1 Kgs 15:26), Baasha (15:34), Zimri (16:19), and Omri (16:26) repeat Jeroboam's error. The reign of Baasha's son, Elah, is not accompanied by a statement that records the king's involvement in Jeroboam's sin. However, the interpretation of Elah's death presupposes his guilt in this matter (16:12–13; see 16:1–4, 7).

³¹⁷ See 1 Kgs 22:53 (Ahaziah); 2 Kgs 3:3 (Jehoram); 10:29, 31 (Jehu).

³¹⁸ See 1 Kgs 22:53 (Ahaziah); see also 2 Kgs 21:3 (Manasseh).

³¹⁹ The first punitive miracle in Ahab's reign concerns the deaths of Hiel's sons (1 Kgs 16:34). The placement of this episode at the end of the king's introduction (16:29–33) reveals the nation's condition under Ahab. In brief, Hiel undertakes the rebuilding of Jericho in contravention of Joshua's anathema (Josh 6:17). He succeeds in this effort, yet two of his sons die, fulfilling Joshua's prophecy (Josh 6:26). The significance of this episode rests in the violation of the anathema. As I argued previously (see "2.5.2.1. Prophetic Punitive Miracles in the Conquest"), the purpose of Joshua's anathema was twofold: it set aside the city as spoil for God in consequence of the divine initiation of the conquest, and it preserved the city in a condition of annihilation as a testimony to the deity's faithfulness. Hiel's rebuilding of Jericho amounts to the repossession of divine spoils, and it effaces a monument to divine fidelity. This episode reveals the extent to which the nation has degenerated "in his [Ahab's] days" (1 Kgs 16:34). Ahab promotes covenantal faithlessness (16:30–33), and the king's attitude has worked its way into the nation's fabric.

instantiate covenantal curses; 2. miracles that accentuate the faithfulness of the prophets; 3. miracles that instantiate covenantal blessings. These categories are artificial, particularly given that some miracles fit multiple categories. However, this approach is appropriate since the categories in question are native to the prophetic storyline.³²⁰

The first miracles to consider are those that instantiate the covenantal curses. In the wilderness, God committed to a specific course of action in the event of Israel's covenantal faithlessness. That the deity now pursues this course is confirmed by two events in the reigns of Ahab and his sons. Elijah's drought during the time of Ahab (1 Kgs 17:1) fulfills the threat to withhold rain from the land (Lev 26:19–20; Deut 28:23). Ahab's cultic innovations are the immediate cause of the drought, but the nation is complicit in Ahab's faithlessness (see 1 Kgs 18:21, 37) and suffers with the king. The affinity between this miracle and the covenantal curses appears in the structure of the narrative. The drought (17:1) occurs because of covenantal faithlessness (16:30–34), and it results in national repentance (18:39–40) and the restoration of rain (18:41–45).³²¹ This sequence reproduces the covenantal pattern (disobedience → punishment → repentance → restoration), indicating that the drought is a divine response to the nation's faithless condition. The drought is not a panacea. However, this event is effective as an opening salvo in the campaign against Baal worship, which Jehu concludes (2 Kgs 10:18–28).

³²⁰ Gehazi's leprosy (2 Kgs 5:20–27) is an outlier in terms of the categories delineated above. Gehazi's punishment (5:27) is not an instantiation of covenantal blessings. It would be a stretch to describe this event as an instantiation of the covenantal curses given the apparent pettiness of his offense (5:21–24). At most, this episode resembles miracles that accentuate the prophets' faithfulness. Gehazi, in his avarice, serves as a foil for Elisha (see 5:15–16). The detachment of this episode from covenantal concerns makes it anecdotal rather than integral to the development of God's kingdom.

³²¹ The outcome of Elijah's contest with the false prophets (1 Kgs 18:17–38) is the immediate cause of the nation's repentance. The drought is the condition that makes the contest possible.

Another event under this heading is the death of a group of children by bear mauling following Elisha's curse (2 Kgs 2:23–24). This mauling fulfills the divine threat to unleash wild animals in the land (Lev 26:22).³²² Regardless of the meaning of the children's opaque taunt (2 Kgs 2:23), Elisha's curse (2:24) is indicative of a grave offense to the prophet. This offense should be interpreted in light of the group's origin in Bethel (2:23). Bethel remains the site of one of Jeroboam's heifers (see 1 Kgs 12:28–29), and the children's taunt attests to the city's enduring hostility to God.³²³ Elisha's curse and the ensuing mauling indicate divine opposition to Bethel and what it symbolizes. The city arrays itself against God and the prophets, and this opposition results in the transformation of the land into a source of destruction.

The second set of miracles consists of those accentuating the prophets' faithfulness. Much as David's early career was marked by miracles that signaled the deity's approval, the Elijah-Elisha cycle of stories contains miracles that promote these prophets as the embodiment of covenantal faithfulness. Elijah's summoning of fire from heaven (2 Kgs 1:10, 12) is exemplary in this regard. This miracle occurs in two stages as Elijah encounters successive groups sent by Ahab's son, Ahaziah, to seize the prophet (1:9, 11). In each encounter, Elijah stakes his reputation on the consumption of the opposing faction by fire from heaven, which immediately ensues. The event is conspicuous because of its Mosaic hue. During Korah's uprising, Moses staked his reputation on the destruction of Dathan and Abiram's households in a novel manner (Num 16:28–30). Events transpired according to Moses's prediction, making it apparent that opposition to Moses equaled opposition to God. Elijah's riposte to the king's emissaries is

³²² My association of this miracle with Lev 26:22 depends on Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary*, trans. Douglas W. Stott, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 416–17.

³²³ Brian P. Irwin, "The Curious Incident of the Boys and the Bears: 2 Kings 2 and the Prophetic Authority of Elisha," *TynBul* 67 (2016): 29–32.

predicated on the same equation. Elijah emerges from this encounter as an attested divine emissary. Moreover, this event takes up a thread largely absent from the prophetic storyline since Moses: miracles in defense of a prophet. Except for the unnamed prophet from Judah (1 Kgs 13:4), no prophet since Moses has been the individual beneficiary of a punitive miracle. The deity's intervention elevates Elijah to membership in a class consisting of Abraham (Gen 20), Moses (Num 12; 16; 21), and now himself. Elijah embodies faithfulness to the deity (1 Kgs 19:10, 14), and God attests to this faithfulness by a miracle in defense of Elijah's person.

Also included under this category is the mauling of the children of Bethel (2 Kgs 2). As I argued above, this miracle instantiates a covenantal curse due to the means of punishment. It is appropriate to add here that the occasion and purpose of this miracle contribute to Elisha's profile as a faithful prophet. In terms of occasion, the placement of the mauling immediately after Elisha's curse reinforces the authority of his prophetic word. In terms of purpose, the miracle defends Elisha, ranking him among the small group of luminaries on whose behalf the deity has miraculously intervened.

The last set of miracles includes those instantiating covenantal blessings. These miracles fit the punitive war miracle subtype, fulfilling the promise of success in battle (Lev 26:7–8 // Deut 28:7). While it might be surprising to find such divine assistance in the era of Ahab, God's assistance in Israel's defense has never disappeared.³²⁴ However, the relevant episodes involving Elisha are unique because they are the only fully-fledged punitive miracles performed for the Northern Kingdom's benefit.

In the first instance, Elisha arouses the ire of Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, due to his clairvoyant ability to locate Syrian troops (2 Kgs 6:8–12). When Ben-Hadad sends a contingent

³²⁴ See 1 Kgs 21:13–14, 22, 28; 2 Kgs 3:16–19.

to capture Elisha, God blinds and neutralizes this search party at Elisha's request (6:13–18). This event plays a role in the nation's defense. Israel has been fighting Syria since Ahab's time (see 1 Kgs 21–22). The present episode produces a shift in the enemy's tactics. After this event, there will be no more incursions of "lightly armed men from Syria" (2 Kgs 6:23; see 5:2). Elisha's actions produce a moment of respite that Jehoram, the current king, has failed to provide.

This episode is followed by another conflict that receives a miraculous resolution. After the plot to capture Elisha, Ben-Hadad besieges Samaria and reduces the city to starvation and cannibalism (2 Kgs 6:24–29). Jehoram blames Elisha for this turn of events and tries to kill him (6:31–32), at which point the prophet predicts a reversal of economic conditions (7:1). An auditory miracle accomplishes this reversal: God causes the Syrians to hear an (imagined) opposing army, causing them to abandon camp and flee (7:6–7). With the enemy's departure, the residents of Samaria plunder the Syrian camp and produce the predicted reversal (7:16). This miracle's auditory character is unprecedented. However, the event's function is identical to previous war miracles. Since Pharaoh's defeat at the Red Sea, God has routinely intervened in battle by incapacitating enemies' mental faculties. Opponents in this state flee, being unable to gauge battle conditions. The miracle in 2 Kgs 7:6–7 matches this description. The divine intervention in this episode recalls previous war miracles, particularly the events at the Red Sea. Elisha's relationship to this miracle is more remote than in the previous case, yet he still oversees an exodus-like deliverance at an unlikely moment.

Ahab's innovations exacerbate the disparity between human kingship and God's earthly rule. Elijah and Elisha's ministries produce an alternate expression of this rule. The activities of Elijah and Elisha countervail the malignant influence of Israel's kings. The appearance and

miracles of these prophets show that God is not beholden to the vicissitudes of human kingship. God can accomplish divine purposes apart from Israel's rulers.

A partial reintegration of Israelite kingship and God's kingdom occurs with Jehoram's death at the hands of Jehu (2 Kgs 9:16–26). After gaining power, Jehu eliminates Baal worship from Israel and reverses Ahab's worst innovations (10:18–28). Nevertheless, Jehu persists in worshipping Jeroboam's heifers (10:29, 31). His reforms are a return to the pre-Ahab status quo. With Jehu's reforms comes the disappearance of punitive miracles. Just as the period between Jeroboam and Ahab was conspicuous for its lack of miracles, the annals of Israel's history henceforth lack these events. Jehu's reforms produce limited yet lasting change. Israel will never again so blatantly flaunt God's covenant. Jehu's reforms eliminate the exigencies that occasioned Elijah and Elisha's miracles.

2.6.3.1.3. The End of the Northern Kingdom

Israel's remaining history is a period of stasis that concludes with a sudden judgment. Jehu and nearly every king after him persist in Jeroboam's sin.³²⁵ These rulers neither exacerbate the disparity between Israel and the divine kingdom nor mend the enduring rift. This persistent faithlessness proves too much for God to bear. The sporadic application of the covenantal curses has failed to produce repentance, raising the prospect that the deity will make good on the most severe threat, exile (Lev 26:33–39; Deut 28:63–68). This threat is finally realized in Hoshea's reign as the Assyrians conquer Israel and displace its inhabitants (2 Kgs 17:6; see also 15:29).

³²⁵ The list of kings who participate in Jeroboam's sin is nearly comprehensive: Jehu (2 Kgs 10:29, 31); Jehoahaz (13:2, 6); Jehoash (13:11); Jeroboam II (14:24); Zechariah (15:9); Menahem (15:18); Pekahiah (15:24); and Pekah (15:28). Only Shallum and Hoshea are missing from this list. Shallum's reign is so brief that it does not receive an evaluation (see 15:10, 13–15). I address Hoshea's case in n. 326.

Two details in the account of Israel's exile illuminate the meaning of this event. First, the setting of the Assyrian deportation in the reign of Hoshea, a ruler deemed less wicked than his predecessors (2 Kgs 17:2), suggests that God's forbearance toward the Northern Kingdom has simply run its course. Hoshea is evil, but he is the only king to be free from the charge of complicity in Jeroboam's sin.³²⁶ The exile occurs during the reign of Israel's most "innocent" king, meaning this event results from generations of faithless conduct rather than Hoshea's misdeeds. Israel's disregard for the covenant has caused God to set a timer, as it were, on the duration of divine forbearance. This period expires under Hoshea.

Second, the description of God that introduces the justification of the exile (2 Kgs 17:7–23) invites an interpretation rooted in the exodus event. According to 2 Kgs 17:7, the exile results from the Israelites' offenses "against the Lord their God who brought them up from the land of Egypt, from beneath the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt." The author has activated a divine profile that maximizes the disparity between national expectation and present experience. This juxtaposition casts the exile as the failure of "exodus expectation." As I have shown, God performed signs and wonders to rescue Israel from Egyptian bondage. This deliverance achieved a paradigmatic status in Israel's consciousness. Future instances of oppression aroused the expectation of an exodus-like deliverance. The nation has never been ultimately disappointed in this expectation until now. With the Assyrian exile, God utterly surrenders Israel to a foreign oppressor. Signs and wonders are nowhere in sight. This moment is when the exodus ceases to

³²⁶ The evaluation of Hoshea's reign (2 Kgs 17:2) consists of two statements: 1. "He did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord"; 2. He did not do what was evil "like the kings of Israel who were before him." The first statement is a stock judgment applied to almost all Israel's evaluated kings (cf. 1 Kgs 13:33–34; 16:8–14; 2 Kgs 10:29–31, 34–36). The second statement is more conspicuous. In the case of nearly every evaluated king, the initial statement of wrongdoing is followed by a description of the ruler's complicity in Jeroboam's sin (cf. 1 Kgs 16:8–14, on which see n. 316). Since Hoshea's evaluation features a declaration of the king's relative innocence in place of the expected statement of complicity, the narrative dissociates Hoshea from Jeroboam.

be a reality in Israel's experience. Punitive miracles were instrumental in creating the nation in the context of oppression, and they have defended the nation against foreign hegemony throughout its history. Since these miracles are now absent, it appears as if the effect of the exodus has run its course.

The Northern Kingdom's history is a tale of pervasive covenantal faithlessness and divine forbearance. Punitive miracles crop up at critical junctures to counteract Israel's worst kings and produce an alternate expression of God's rule through the prophets. However, these miracles fail to arrest the nation on its journey to exile. Israel winds up in captivity despite the deity's efforts. To make matters worse, we never read of any attempt on the nation's part to take advantage of the covenantal provisions of repentance and restoration. The rift between Israel and the divine kingdom is not indelible. Nevertheless, the prophetic storyline abandons the Northern Kingdom in exile and never returns to the subject. The prophetic storyline of the Northern Kingdom leads to a dead end.³²⁷ If there is hope for reconciliation between human kingship and the divine kingdom, it is to be found in Judah. It is to this subject that I now turn.

2.6.3.2. Prophetic Punitive Miracles in the Southern Kingdom

The role of punitive miracles in Judah's history is meager compared to Israel's. There are just two miracles set in the Southern Kingdom.³²⁸ This scarcity reflects the relative innocence of

³²⁷ A partial exception to this statement appears in 2 Kgs 17:25 when God punishes the people whom the Assyrians imported to Israel (see 2 Kgs 17:24) by lion maulings. This punishment stems from the immigrants' failure to worship God and results in the recall of a priest to instruct the newcomers (17:27–28). This event is only a partial resumption of the prophetic storyline because it has no lasting consequences (see esp. 17:29–41).

³²⁸ Azariah's leprosy (2 Kgs 15:5) initially appears to be a third such miracle. According to this text, "the Lord touched the king, and he was leprous until the day of his death." While Azariah indeed suffers an affliction like Miriam (Num 12:10) and Gehazi (2 Kgs 5:27), the leprosy is not punitive because this passage does not contain a fault. The motivation behind the miracle is absent, making it "maleficent."

Judah's kings. Simply put, the southern kings rarely attain the degree of covenantal faithlessness sustained by their northern counterparts until after Hezekiah's reign.

2.6.3.2.1. Under Hezekiah

Judah's worship at the high places forms the context for the first punitive miracle in the Southern Kingdom's history.³²⁹ From the beginning of Judah's existence, the nation makes illicit sacrifices and incense offerings at these cult sites.³³⁰ While not necessarily as censurable as Jeroboam's cult, this sin plagues Judah's history. That this practice is a cause for concern becomes evident with a refrain qualifying the evaluations of many "good" kings: "But he did not remove any of the high places; the people were still sacrificing and burning incense on the high places" (1 Kgs 22:44; 1–2 Kings *passim*).³³¹ Ruler after ruler tolerates the high places, and it is not until Hezekiah that this practice is challenged.

³²⁹ The depiction of Judah's worship at the high places in 1–2 Kings is a complex subject. Iain Provan explains that these high places are alternately depicted as the site of decentralized Yahweh-worship, in contravention of Deut 12:2–7 (see 1 Kgs 15:14), or the location of idolatrous worship (see 1 Kgs 14:22–24). In the former case, Judah's worship is benign. In the latter case, this worship is similar to the deeds of the Canaanites (*Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, BZAW 172 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988], 57–90, esp. 62–67, 70–77). It is beyond the scope of my study to explore the causes of this discrepancy. It is expedient to construe Judah's worship at the high places as a more or less blameworthy phenomenon, depending on the degree to which its idolatrous dimension surfaces.

³³⁰ The first instance of Judah's worship at the high places appears in 1 Kgs 14:22–24, where Rehoboam is condemned for participating in this activity. The formulation of the king's offense (Ροβοαμ ... παρεζήλωσεν αὐτὸν [τὸν κύριον] ἐν πᾶσιν, οἷς ἐποίησαν οἱ πατέρες αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις αὐτῶν, αἷς ἤμαρτον, καὶ ὠκοδόμησαν ἑαυτοῖς ὑψηλά) indicates that Rehoboam inherited this practice from David and Solomon, a statement that is likely the result of an editor's reworking of an older evaluation of Rehoboam's reign (Provan, *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings*, 75–76). The narrative is silent about when the Judahites begin to worship at the high places. Their worship at these sites is taken for granted (e.g., see 1 Kgs 22:44).

³³¹ A refrain appears in one form or another in 1 Kgs 15:14; 22:44; 2 Kgs 12:4; 14:4; 15:4, 35.

Hezekiah is initially likened to David (2 Kgs 18:3).³³² His first action as king reveals his Davidic piety: he carries out a reform that includes the removal of the high places (18:4).³³³ This reform earns Hezekiah an unparalleled reputation among Judah's kings (18:5–6; cf. 23:25). Moreover, Hezekiah's adherence to God is matched by God's adherence to the king. God endows Hezekiah with special understanding, emboldening the king to revolt from Assyria (18:7; see 16:7–9).³³⁴ Judah's worship at the high places sets the stage for Hezekiah's singular display of piety. This piety endows the king with the wisdom to revolt.

Hezekiah's revolt inevitably prompts an Assyrian invasion of Judah (2 Kgs 18:13). Critically, this invasion quickly becomes a referendum on Hezekiah's reforms and the God they aim to serve. This facet comes to light in the Assyrians' attempt to induce surrender. To sap the Judahites' determination, the Assyrian spokesman Rapsakes emphasizes the futility of resistance and the benefits of capitulation (18:19–25, 27–35).³³⁵ He makes two arguments for abandoning hope. First, he implies that Hezekiah's removal of the high places and altars has caused the Lord to side with the Assyrians (18:22, 25). The centralization of worship has purportedly angered the Lord. Second, Rapsakes contends that the Lord will fail to defend Judah, just like the gods of the

³³² The only kings thus far to be likened to David are Asa (directly; 1 Kgs 15:11) and Asa's son, Jehoshaphat (indirectly; 22:43). After Hezekiah's reign, Josiah will be the only king to receive this honor (2 Kgs 22:2). Since Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah happen to be the kings who purify Judah's worship (1 Kgs 15:12–13; 2 Kgs 18:4; 23:4–24), their cultic reforms stand out as the primary expression of Davidic piety in Judah's history.

³³³ Hezekiah's reforms (2 Kgs 18:4) address each of the illicit practices mentioned in 1 Kgs 14:23: he does away with the high places (ἐξῆρεν τὰ ὑψηλά // ὠκοδόμησαν ... ὑψηλά); the pillars (συνέτριψεν πάσας τὰς στήλας // ὠκοδόμησαν ... στήλας); and the groves (ἐξωλέθρευσε τὰ ἄλση // ὠκοδόμησαν ... ἄλση).

³³⁴ Second Kings 18:7 records three facts: God's presence with Hezekiah, Hezekiah's understanding, and Hezekiah's revolt. It is natural to read these facts as a sequence. God's presence with Hezekiah is made manifest in Hezekiah's understanding. This understanding, in turn, causes the revolt.

³³⁵ Contrary to my practice of substituting common English equivalents for the names of biblical characters, I transliterate Ραψακης as Rapsakes. Modern English translations differ by treating the Hebrew equivalent of this term as an official designation or a personal name. No commonly used term is available.

already conquered nations (18:32–35; see also 19:10–13). This point is at odds with the first one, functioning as a concession for argument's sake. Rapsakes's reasoning is as follows: supposing that Judah enjoys divine support, the Lord will do no better against Assyria than the gods of the subjected nations. These arguments make the outcome of the invasion a referendum on two questions: 1. Are Hezekiah's reforms legitimate? 2. If legitimate, can the Lord overcome the Assyrians? These questions strike at the heart of Judah's history and the divine identity. As such, this invasion will determine whether God is willing and able to uphold the covenant that Hezekiah has zealously defended.

Assyria's abrasive rhetoric naturally provokes the most spectacular punitive miracle in generations. Isaiah, speaking on behalf of the deity, announces God's intention to defend Jerusalem (2 Kgs 19:34). An angel then slaughters 185,000 people in the enemy's camp (19:35). This reversal forces the Assyrian king, Sennacherib, to withdraw to Nineveh (19:36). God's manner of intervening in this event puts the lie to Rapsakes's claims. The affirmative responses to Hezekiah's entreaties (19:1–7, 14–34) show that God has not stripped the king of divine favor, much less gone over to the Assyrians. The decimation of the Assyrian forces by sheer divine intervention (19:35) reveals that God can defend Judah. Finally, the conclusion of the invasion account drives the dagger into Rapsakes's rhetoric by dispatching with the Assyrian king in an ironic turn of events. Upon his return to Nineveh, Sennacherib is murdered by his sons while worshipping at Nisroch's temple (19:37; see 19:7). Sennacherib's god, rather than the Lord, cannot defend a devotee. The Lord's intervention in the Assyrian invasion dismantles the opponent's rhetoric, showing that Judah's God is without equal (see 2 Kgs 19:19).

The defeat of Sennacherib's army offers a counterpoint to Israel's fate. Assyria's conquest of the Northern Kingdom is rehearsed in 2 Kgs 18:9–12, despite its earlier narration in

2 Kgs 17. This restatement accentuates the contrast between Israel (18:9–12) and Judah (18:13–19:37). In Israel’s case, the Assyrian invasion was when the exodus ceased to be a living reality. God utterly surrendered Israel to a foreign oppressor. In Judah’s case, the outcome of the Assyrian invasion recapitulates the divine victory over Pharaoh.

This recapitulation is evident in Assyria’s defeat through a punitive war miracle. Since the angel’s decimation of the Assyrian camp represents divine intervention at the point of Judah’s need in battle, this act recalls Pharaoh’s defeat at the Red Sea. This miracle more closely resembles the Egyptian army’s destruction in terms of scale and execution than any other miracle I have explored. The scale of both events is monumental: overwhelming enemy forces are destroyed.³³⁶ Likewise, the two events share a means of execution: divine intervention without human participation.³³⁷ The destruction of Sennacherib’s army affirms that the God of the exodus remains with Judah.

A link to the exodus event is also perceptible on a more subtle level. The defeat of the Assyrians reveals God to the nations, just as the signs and wonders of the exodus event were instruments of divine revelation. This resemblance comes to the fore in Hezekiah’s prayer (2 Kgs 19:15–19). According to the king, the requested deliverance of Judah will result in the universal recognition of the Lord (19:19). Hezekiah’s appeal suggests that the issue at stake in the conflict with Sennacherib is the same as with Pharaoh. Like Pharaoh, Sennacherib fails to recognize the Lord as the sovereign of creation. Whereas Pharaoh could attribute this failure to ignorance

³³⁶ Whereas all of Pharaoh’s forces are destroyed (Exod 14:28; see also 14:17), there are survivors from Sennacherib’s army (see 2 Kgs 19:35). Regardless, Sennacherib’s army has been neutralized, as shown by his need to withdraw (19:36).

³³⁷ Most other war miracles are coordinated with human actions (see Josh 10:10–14; Judg 4:15–16; 7:22–25; 1 Sam 7:10–11). The exceptions to this rule are cases where enemies are diverted rather than destroyed (see 2 Kgs 6:18–19; 7:6–7). The miracles involving Pharaoh and Sennacherib are the only ones that lack human cooperation and destroy an enemy force.

(Exod 5:1–2), Sennacherib is familiar with the Lord but classifies Judah’s deity among other gods (2 Kgs 18:32–35; 19:10–13). The decimation of the Assyrian army corrects this perverse misclassification. This miracle shows that Judah’s God is the ruler of creation.

The affirmation of Judah’s God is salient considering the crisis precipitated by Israel’s recent fall. Israel’s exile raised the question of whether hope still exists for a reconciliation of human kingship and the divine kingdom. The defeat of Assyria’s army provides an affirmative answer. Israel’s faithlessness caused “the Lord ... who brought them up from the land of Egypt” (17:7) to surrender the Northern Kingdom into the hands of Assyria. The deliverance of the Southern Kingdom from the same oppressor shows that the God of the exodus is invested in Judah’s future.

2.6.3.2.2. Under Jeremiah

Hezekiah’s reign is arguably the apogee of Judah’s history. This dynamic becomes evident during the reign of Manasseh, Hezekiah’s son. Manasseh is the antithesis of his father. Whereas Hezekiah reformed the nation’s cult, Manasseh reverses course and surpasses Judah’s worst kings,³³⁸ earning him the distinction of being the only king of Judah or Israel to outdo the Canaanites (2 Kgs 21:9).³³⁹ Likewise, whereas Hezekiah’s trust in God produced an epochal

³³⁸ Manasseh’s first act is constructing high places to replace the ones Hezekiah removed (2 Kgs 21:3). His next act is to implement Baal worship and make an idolatrous grove in imitation of Ahab (21:3; see 1 Kgs 16:31–33). This act earns the king a spot alongside Jehoram (2 Kgs 8:18) and Ahaziah (8:27), Judah’s only rulers associated with Ahab’s sin. Manasseh’s final act is to surpass even these predecessors with a laundry list of lawless practices (21:3–9, 16). The most conspicuous of these practices are immolating children, divination, and augury (21:6)—acts identified by the Deuteronomist as the “abominations” of the Canaanites (Deut 18:9–12). These practices cement Manasseh’s reputation as Judah’s most faithless king.

³³⁹ Whereas Ahab merely imitates those notorious Canaanite sinners, the Amorites (1 Kgs 20:26), Manasseh makes Judah more wicked than the pre-Israelite inhabitants of the land (2 Kgs 21:9).

deliverance, Manasseh's faithlessness stimulates an epochal divine shift. God formerly declined to subject Judah to the full measure of divine judgment out of respect for David (8:19).

Manasseh's conduct goes so far beyond the pale that God commits to fulfilling the most severe covenantal threats: conquest and exile (21:10–15).³⁴⁰ Manasseh's reign sets the tone for the final phase of Judah's history. This phase is, with one exception, a period of decline culminating in disaster.

The divine threat to judge Manasseh's sins looms over his successors. The persistence of this threat is reasonable under Manasseh's son, Amon, who does "what is evil in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Kgs 21:20). It is more remarkable that this threat is reiterated during the time of Manasseh's grandson, Josiah. Josiah is the last good king (22:2; 23:25), and he oversees reforms broader than Hezekiah's, extending to the removal of Jeroboam's altar in Bethel (23:4–24; see esp. vv. 15–16). Despite these efforts, Josiah cannot deter God from judgment (22:15–17; 23:26–27). The king carves out a stay of judgment in his lifetime (22:18–20), but his efforts do not dispel the cloud hanging over Judah. Regardless, Josiah's successors show that his reforms were a one-off. Judah's last four kings do "what is evil in the eyes of the Lord" (23:32, 37; 24:9, 19), meaning Josiah did not produce lasting change. By the time of Judah's final king, Zedekiah, the hope for a reversal of judgment is gone.

The threat of judgment for Manasseh's sins occasions the second punitive miracle in Judah's history. This miracle is set in Jeremiah's ministry, which spans the reigns of Judah's final kings from Josiah to Zedekiah (Jer 1:1–3).³⁴¹ The event that precipitates the miracle is

³⁴⁰ For this point, see also 2 Kgs 22:15–17; 23:26–27; 24:3–4.

³⁴¹ Although the miracle under consideration appears in the book of Jeremiah, it is appropriate to discuss it here given its setting in the reign of Zedekiah (Jer 35:1) and the affinities between Jeremiah and Deuteronomistic ideology (see Walter Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, OTT [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 135–46).

Jeremiah's dispute with Hananiah, a prophet who contradicts Jeremiah's message about Babylon (Jer 35:1–4; see 34:16–22).

Babylon has attained hegemony over the Southern Kingdom since the time of Josiah. It has gone so far as to depose Jehoiachin and despoil the temple (2 Kgs 24:10–17).³⁴² Judah's response to this empire has become a point of contention among the prophets. Jeremiah denies that Jehoiachin and the temple vessels will return (Jer 22:24–30; 34:16–22) and declares that all nations, including Judah, must submit to Babylon's yoke or face disaster (34:4–15).³⁴³ To emphasize this point, Jeremiah makes bonds and collars, implements of servitude, and wears them as a sign of the nation's obligation to serve the Babylonians (34:2). In contrast, Hananiah announces the breaking of the Babylonian yoke and the return of the temple vessels, Jehoiachin, and other exiles (35:1–4). His prediction also features a prophetic demonstration. Hananiah publicly crushes Jeremiah's collars and declares on the Lord's behalf, "In this way, I will crush the yoke of Babylon's king" (35:11).

The dispute between these prophets concerns competing views of God's disposition. On one hand, Hananiah views Jehoiachin's deposition and exile as a minor setback: the event may reflect a fleeting moment of divine displeasure, but it has no bearing on Judah's relationship with God.³⁴⁴ On the other hand, Jeremiah understands this event as a sign of a fundamental divine

³⁴² According to LXX 2 Kings, the son of Jehoiakim is also named Jehoiakim (Gk. *Ιωακίμ*; 2 Kgs 24:6, 8, 12, 15). This son is named Jeconiah in Jeremiah (Gk. *Ιεχονίας*; see Jer 22:24; 24:1; cf. 44:1; 52:31). I use the standard transliteration "Jehoiachin" to refer to this ruler for the sake of clarity and consistency.

³⁴³ The book of Jeremiah differs from 2 Kings on the possibility of avoiding judgment. Whereas 2 Kings portrays Manasseh's sins as the cause of inexorable judgment (see 2 Kgs 21:10–15; 22:15–17; 23:26–27), Jeremiah presents submission to Babylon as a means of remaining in the land (Jer 34:4–15, esp. vv. 12–15) (see Christopher R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah*, BZAW 176 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989], 205–9).

³⁴⁴ Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 69.

shift.³⁴⁵ Jeremiah denies that the temple vessels will be restored (Jer 34:16–22) right after he exhorts the people to submit to Babylon (34:12, 14). The juxtaposition of these prophetic statements signifies that the seizure of the vessels—and by extension, the Judahites captured with them—was a divinely ordained consequence of Babylonian suzerainty. Babylon’s authority over Judah naturally results in events like this deportation. Submission to Babylon is preferable to the alternative—sword, famine, and exile (34:8, 10)—but it is a sign that Judah stands under judgment.³⁴⁶

This view of foreign domination coheres with passages in Jeremiah that speak of Judah’s “yoke.” These passages exhibit three distinct notions:

1. Judah rejected God’s yoke through its covenantal faithlessness (Jer 2:20; 5:5);
2. God is now imposing the Babylonians’ yoke on Judah (34:12, 14; 35:14);³⁴⁷
3. Restoration entails removing the foreign yoke and serving the Lord (37:8–9).

If we read the “yoke” texts of Jer 34–35 (#2 above) in light of these other notions, it emerges that Babylonian hegemony is a temporary punishment for Judah’s faithlessness. Judah rejected God’s rule and must live with foreign rule instead (see 5:19). Whether in the land or not, submission to a foreign power is a sign of judgment. Judah must endure this condition until the time of restoration arrives. Hananiah errs not because he hopes for restoration but by proclaiming its

³⁴⁵ Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 70.

³⁴⁶ Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 510. Jeremiah’s equation of foreign domination and divine judgment agrees with Deut 28:48. This passage construes service to a foreign hegemon as a covenantal curse. The likening of this hegemony to the implementation of an “iron collar” (ἐπιθήσει [ὁ κύριος] κλοιὸν σιδηροῦν ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλόν σου; Deut 28:48) resonates with Jeremiah’s reference to Babylon’s “iron collars” (κλοιοὶ σιδηροί; Jer 35:13) and his declaration that the Lord “placed an iron yoke on the neck of all nations” (Ζυγὸν σιδηροῦν ἔθηκα ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλον πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν; 35:14).

³⁴⁷ The exhortation to Zedekiah (Εἰσαγάγετε τὸν τράχηλον ὑμῶν καὶ ἐργάσασθε τῷ βασιλεῖ Βαβυλῶνος; Jer 34:12, 14) lacks the explicit reference to Babylon’s yoke found in the Hebrew (לְבַבְךָ לַיהוָה וְלַבַּיִת וְלַמֶּלֶךְ הַבָּבְלִי; Jer 27:12 MT). However, it is evident from the previous verse that the phrase εἰσαγεῖν τὸν τράχηλον refers to taking a yoke on oneself (τὸ ἔθνος, ὃ ἐὰν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τὸν ζυγὸν βασιλέως Βαβυλῶνος ...; 34:11).

imminence.³⁴⁸ The swift return of the exiles would mean that the deportation was a fluke or temporary expedient. In Jeremiah's view, this deportation points to a fundamental shift: Judah's sins have caused God to go over to the Babylonians. Opposing Babylon means opposing God.

The conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah demands a resolution. Accordingly, Jeremiah predicts Hananiah's death (Jer 35:16). As Jeremiah tells it, God will remove Hananiah from the earth within the year because he has misled the people. The account then concludes with the terse report, "[Hananiah] died in the seventh month" (35:17). The evident function of Hananiah's death is to validate Jeremiah's prophecies. The false prophet's demise confirms that Jeremiah's prophecies about Babylon will come to pass.

It is worth pondering how this death provides a fitting conclusion to the narrative. A partial answer emerges from the dating of Hananiah's death "in the seventh month" (Jer 35:17). Aside from confirming Jeremiah's accuracy,³⁴⁹ this dating impinges on another prophecy: Hananiah's prediction of restoration (35:1–4). Hananiah claimed that the temple vessels and exiles would be restored within two years (35:3–4), causing Jeremiah to advocate a "wait-and-see" approach (35:7–9). According to Jeremiah, his opponent's prophecy contradicted the longstanding prophetic convention of predicting war. The prediction had to prove true to verify Hananiah's credentials (35:8–9). Against this background, Hananiah's death obviates the need for waiting. Hananiah did not survive two months—much less two years—to see his prophecy fulfilled. His demise attests that opposing Babylon leads to destruction.

³⁴⁸ Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 70.

³⁴⁹ Jeremiah predicts his opponent's death within the year (Jer 35:16), which has up to seven months remaining (see 35:1), and this death occurs within two months (35:17).

Hananiah's death also provides a fitting conclusion to this narrative given its alteration of a critical intertext. Jeremiah's view that a prophecy must be judged according to its fulfillment comes from Deut 18:21–22. The Deuteronomist here responds to the problem of judging prophecies by establishing a criterion of fulfillment. A prophecy in the Lord's name should be evaluated based on its fulfillment or lack thereof. In the event of non-fulfillment, the people must execute the offending party (Deut 18:22).³⁵⁰ Jeremiah 35 alters this intertext by proposing the criterion of fulfillment and shifting the responsibility for punishment to God. Jeremiah's proposal of this criterion raises the expectation that Hananiah will face death at the hands of the people. Hananiah's miraculous death shatters this expectation by returning the prerogative of punishment to God. Hananiah's sin is so grievous that the deity must handle it directly.

Jeremiah and Hananiah's conflict is filled with significance for Judah's future. Hananiah's death indicates that God will not rescue the Judahites from Babylon as God once delivered them from Assyria.³⁵¹ The deliverance under Hezekiah put the lie to the claim that God had gone over to the Assyrians. It becomes evident with Hananiah's death that the Assyrian claim has come true, only now concerning Babylon.

This divine shift becomes consequential when the Babylonians besiege Jerusalem (Jer 21:2, 4; see 2 Kgs 24:20). In this beleaguered state, Zedekiah inquires of Jeremiah whether he

³⁵⁰ The phrase οὐκ ἀφέξεσθε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ (Deut 18:22) means "you will not keep yourselves at a distance from him." NETS renders this phrase as "you shall not spare him"—that is, as a euphemism for execution. I agree that the phrase connotes the death penalty, but its potential ambiguity calls for a defense of this interpretation. The strongest support for taking οὐκ ἀφέξεσθε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ as a reference to execution appears in the Deuteronomist's prior statements about false prophets. In Deut 13, the Deuteronomist addresses the topic of a prophet or "dreamer of dreams" who uses the fulfillment of a predicted sign or wonder to introduce new gods (13:2–3). Such a prophet must die by the people's hand (13:6). Since the only prior case of a faithless prophet is resolved through the death penalty, it is reasonable to interpret the phrase οὐκ ἀφέξεσθε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ in 18:22 along similar lines. This prophet must also die (18:20). God bars the people from remaining at a distance (18:22) to preserve the prophet's life.

³⁵¹ Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 70.

can count on the Lord to act “according to all his wonders” (Jer 21:2) against Babylon. The prophet answers in the negative. Whereas Zedekiah hopes for exodus-like “wonders” (21:2) to deliver the nation,³⁵² God intends to subdue Jerusalem in an exodus-like manner: God will make war against Jerusalem “with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm” (21:5).³⁵³ Just as the Northern Kingdom’s fall represented the failure of “exodus expectation,” the same is true here. However, Jeremiah’s rhetoric suggests an intensification. Whereas the deity’s involvement in Israel’s fall might be considered passive, Jeremiah tells Zedekiah that the same divine effort that brought about the exodus will accomplish Jerusalem’s fall. Reflecting on Hananiah’s death would have alerted Zedekiah to the futility of resisting Babylon. As it is, Zedekiah disregards Hananiah’s demise, provoking the deity to adopt an exodus-like posture against the nation.

2.6.3.2.3. The End of the Southern Kingdom

The siege of Jerusalem inexorably leads to the end of the Southern Kingdom. The Babylonians make short work of Judah once they enter Jerusalem: the city is destroyed (2 Kgs 25:4, 8–10), most of its inhabitants are deported (25:11), and the remaining sacred objects are plundered (25:13–17; see Jer 34:19–21). To worsen matters, a cabal assassinates Gedaliah, the Babylonian-appointed governor of those left in the land (2 Kgs 25:25), leading the remaining Judahites to flee to Egypt (25:26). The latter development is ironic because Egypt is where God’s people

³⁵² Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 49–50. For the role of τὰ θαυμάσια in the exodus, see Exod 3:20 (ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα πατάξω τοὺς Αἰγυπτίους ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς θαυμασίοις μου); Deut 34:12 (τὰ θαυμάσια τὰ μεγάλα καὶ τὴν χεῖρα τὴν κραταίαν, ἃ ἐποίησεν Μωυσῆς ἐναντι παντὸς Ἰσραὴλ).

³⁵³ William L. Moran, “The End of the Unholy War and the Anti-Exodus,” *Bib* 44 (1963): 338, cited in Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, 50–51. The standard formulation of this phrase is ἐν χειρὶ κραταιᾷ καὶ ἐν βραχίονι ὑψηλῷ (Deut 4:34; see also Jer 39:21).

were once oppressed and whence they fled. The return of Judah's remnant to Egypt reverses the exodus. Whether in Babylon or Egypt, the physical separation of the Judahite survivors from Canaan reflects their estrangement from God. Judah's covenantal faithlessness has returned God's people to their condition before the exodus.

The punitive miracles in Judah's history tell a different story than those in Israel. There are superficial resemblances between the two sets of miracles.³⁵⁴ However, these sets have different consequences. First, punitive miracles stand in no meaningful relationship to Judah's worst kings. Manasseh is the most wicked king of Judah, yet his reign is untouched by the kind of divine judgments that proliferated under Ahab. Second, punitive miracles do not facilitate an expression of God's rule apart from the Judahite monarchy. Whereas several miracles in the Northern Kingdom established an alternative locus of God's earthly rule through the prophets, the Jeremiahic miracle is the only one in the Southern Kingdom that performs a similar function.

The differences between these miracles affect the composite images of the two kingdoms. The dearth of punitive miracles in the Southern Kingdom causes the Davidids to seem innocent compared to their northern counterparts. When wicked kings like Jehoram and Ahaziah arise (2 Kgs 8:18, 27), their deeds are left unrecompensed by miraculous judgments that might highlight their faithlessness. Such kings appear as anomalies rather than barometers of the nation's condition. Further, the absence of miracles that promote the prophets as the embodiment of covenantal faithfulness preserves the bond between the divine kingdom and the Judahite monarchy. This bond is stretched at times, but Judah never witnesses the appearance of prophets like Elijah and Elisha, who function as an alternate locus of God's rule over the people.

³⁵⁴ Like the miracles in Israel, those in Judah appear at timely junctures, sadly failing to stop Judah on its journey to exile.

Due to these differences, the vitality of the ruling house is much more evident at the end of Judah's history than Israel's. Hoshea was dismissed from Israel's history without further ado. Judah's history concludes with Jehoiachin's exaltation in the royal household of Babylon (2 Kgs 25:27–30). The prophetic storyline of Judah leads up to this conclusion, and miraculous judgments have contributed to its appropriateness. Jehoiachin's exaltation raises more questions than answers, yet it invites the continuation of Judah's story.

2.6.4. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

The prophetic storyline reaches a high point with David, a “person according to [the Lord's] heart.” Under David, the kingdom that stands as the prophetic storyline's goal reaches a point of near coincidence with Israelite kingship. Punitive miracles attend David's ascent to the throne, demonstrating God's preference for David over Saul. David is far from perfect, but even the miracles that chastise David reveal his piety.

The constructive role of punitive miracles in David's career proves to be an outlier. After David, punitive miracles resume their covenantal function. The use of punitive miracles to instantiate the covenantal curses appears multiple times in the Northern Kingdom's history. In contrast, the pair of miracles in the Southern Kingdom is mixed, with one denoting blessing (under Hezekiah) and the other punishment (under Jeremiah). This divergence leaves the Southern Kingdom looking like the more righteous of the two. Regardless, both segments of God's people end up in exile.

The most significant development in this period is the strengthened association of punitive miracles with the prophets. The prophets emerge as an alternate locus of God's rule as

the kings fall short of David's example. Punitive miracles attend these prophets' rise to prominence, casting them in the role of Moses in his opposition to Pharaoh.

Characterization. The period of Israelite monarchy provides the only occasion to consider the role of punitive miracles in characterizing kings. The results are evident in David's case. Punitive miracles cause David to emerge as a paradigmatic monarch, standing above his predecessor and successors. No future king is the immediate beneficiary of a punitive miracle like David. Jeroboam's commission, which resembles David's, makes it seem like the Northern Kingdom's first ruler might enjoy similar miracles. However, Jeroboam's conduct at Dan and Bethel voids this possibility. The miracle under Hezekiah approaches the Davidic miracles since it is bound up with Hezekiah's piety, but this miracle has more to do with Judah's wellbeing than Hezekiah as such. The absence of punitive miracles from the lives of kings after David indicates that they lack David's status and importance.

There is now a more evident association between towering prophets like Elijah and Elisha and punitive miracles than I observed previously. This association is not true of every prophet. Isaiah appears in the account of the Assyrian army's destruction, yet he is distant from the performance of the associated miracle. Regardless, the growing association of punitive miracles and prophets like Elijah and Elisha indicates that the ministry of the prophets has become a preeminent site of divine activity. The kings' abdication of their responsibilities causes the prophets to take on the Mosaic mantle. The bearing of this mantle entails the performance of the miracles that Moses performed.

The development of prophetic topoi. The punitive miracles in this period develop the topoi of divine action through a select individual, the people's rejection of the prophet, the hardness of people's hearts, and blessedness. First, divine action through a select individual is a

feature of most accounts in this period. Few punitive miracles do not accompany a prophetic task, whether closely or remotely.³⁵⁵ Second, the people's rejection of the prophet appears in several texts discussed above. This theme is most prominent in the Elijah-Elisha cycle of stories. It also surfaces in the account of the unnamed prophet's visit to Bethel. God responds to threats against the prophets with divine judgment. Third, the hardness of people's hearts and blessedness are associated with the covenantal pattern in this period. This pattern is now more diffuse and less schematic than under the judges. Nevertheless, discernable movements from disobedience to punishment (e.g., Ahab's reign) and repentance to restoration (e.g., Hezekiah's reign) occur. Punitive miracles evidence the hardness of people's hearts in the movement from disobedience to punishment. These miracles deliver blessings in the movement from repentance to restoration.

The thematic development of God's kingdom. Punitive miracles in the era of the Israelite monarchies track the coincidence of human kingship and the divine kingdom. At moments of coincidence, these events bolster the nation's rulers and contribute to their characterization as servants of the covenant. In times of divergence, punitive miracles act as mile markers, measuring the growing distance between covenantal expectation and royal conduct. The latter function gradually replaces the former, corresponding to the Deuteronomistic view that the nation's history is a slow slide into rank faithlessness.

This period should not be assessed solely in terms of the monarchy. The prophets come into focus in this era, and the elevation of their profiles is partly a function of their association with punitive miracles. During the reigns of "good" kings, the prophets function as the mediators of miracles that support or admonish the monarchs. In this capacity, the prophets are effectively

³⁵⁵ For the prophetic task of prophets confronting kings, see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 232.

court prophets who appear under exigent circumstances and retreat when crises are averted. The prophetic profile is only marginally increased in such times. The prophets come into their own during the reigns of “bad” kings. The prophets now step into a role similar to Moses’s in his opposition to Pharaoh. Like Moses, the prophets’ words are reinforced by divine power. The consequence of this opposition is the prophets’ emergence as an alternate site of God’s rule. The prophets produce hope for the advancement of the prophetic storyline despite the kings’ failures.

The conclusion of this period leaves the prophetic storyline open-ended. The Northern and Southern Kingdoms are estranged from God and exiled from the land. There is little indication of how long this condition will persist. The covenantal catalogs hold out the provision of restoration to the land in the event of national repentance, yet there is no hint of such repentance at the end of 2 Kings. The Deuteronomistic History merely concludes with an account of Jehoiachin’s exaltation in Babylon. This episode demonstrates that the Davidids have not exhausted their vitality, but it is far from a moment of national restoration. At the end of this period, loose threads invite the continuation of the prophetic storyline, while sufficient ambiguity exists to permit the development of this storyline in multiple directions.³⁵⁶

2.7. Conclusions

My purpose in investigating the Septuagint is to uncover the intersection of punitive miracles and the prophetic storyline. This investigation is not yet complete, but it is time to evaluate the

³⁵⁶ My claim that other Septuagintal writings continue the prophetic storyline adapts Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 226–27.

emerging results. First, I will consider how punitive miracles cohere with the prophetic storyline. Second, I will analyze relevant patterns and conventions in Genesis–2 Kings.

2.7.1. The Coherence of LXX Punitive Miracles and ECPR's Prophetic Storyline

Septuagintal punitive miracles are independent of the prophetic storyline. This storyline begins with Abraham, yet two miraculous judgments precede his calling. A punitive miracle is simply a harmful miraculous event that stands in an identifiable relationship to a blameworthy action. As such, this type of miracle can appear in any narrative genre. There is no necessary connection between punitive miracles and the prophetic storyline.

This being the case, the degree to which Septuagintal punitive miracles cohere with the prophetic storyline is remarkable. This storyline co-opts punitive miracles after Abraham's calling. A few accounts are not fully integrated into this storyline, like the anecdote about Lot's wife and priestly miracles. Regardless, these exceptions are few and far between. Most punitive miracles intersect with the prophetic storyline.

This coherence is a top-line finding of my analysis of characterization. Punitive miracles consistently characterize prophetic individuals by depicting them as the objects of divine concern (Abraham, David) or powerful divine agents (Moses, Elijah, Elisha). The association of figures who accomplish prophetic tasks and punitive miracles communicates that these characters are fundamental to the prophetic storyline.

The results from my examination of prophetic topoi are similar. Punitive miracles repeatedly intersect with themes that appear as topoi in prophetic discourse. The most prominent among these topoi are divine action through a select individual, blessedness, and injustice. Since the prominence of blessedness and injustice is a feature of emergent patterns in the Primary

History, I will reserve the discussion of these topoi for the next section. Suffice it to say that most Septuagintal punitive miracles attend prophetic tasks. Punitive miracles are neither freestanding nor ad hoc; these events enable select individuals to advance God's kingdom.

The significance of the coherence I envision becomes apparent if we consider the role of punitive miracles in the thematic development of God's kingdom. Punitive miracles relate to God's earthly kingdom in two distinct but sometimes overlapping ways. First, punitive miracles are integral to the fulfillment of God's promises, which have as their goal the formation of God's kingdom.³⁵⁷ The miracles involving Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and David are the most noteworthy in this regard. Second, punitive miracles preserve the integrity of God's kingdom. The miracles in the wilderness, during the time of the judges, and under the Israelite monarchies are prime examples of this category. Given their role in forming and preserving God's kingdom, punitive miracles conspicuously intersect with the prophetic storyline.

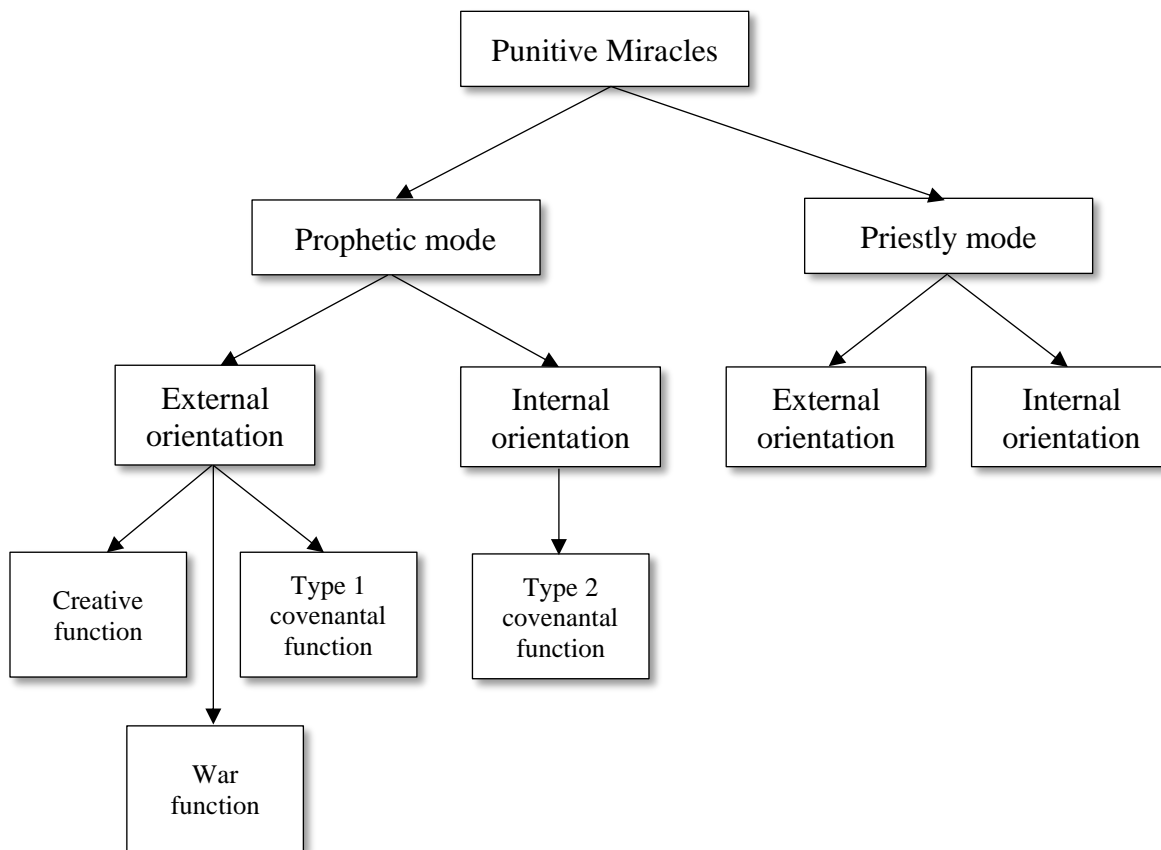
A natural fit exists between ECPR's prophetic storyline and punitive miracles in the Primary History. I am not claiming that the prophetic storyline offers the only valid framework for reading the LXX. Instead, early Christians who read the LXX through the prism of ECPR's prophetic storyline were likely to perceive that the punitive miracles in the Primary History are integral to this narrative.

³⁵⁷ For the general relationship of God's promises and God's kingdom, see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 237, 242.

2.7.2. The Emergence of LXX Patterns and Conventions

I will begin the analysis of Septuagintal patterns and conventions by displaying the categories that have emerged so far. The following chart provides a taxonomy:

Figure 1: Modes, Orientations, and Functions in Genesis–2 Kings



The primary division of punitive miracles is into the prophetic and priestly modes. Miracles in the prophetic mode operate on the logic that moral offenses merit punishment. Such miracles naturally participate in the prophetic storyline. Miracles in the priestly mode assume that cultic offenses leave one exposed to God's presence. These miracles generally contribute to the priestly storyline. The logic of the priestly mode causes this type of miracle to lack the distinguishing features of a punitive miracle. Nevertheless, I classify priestly miracles as punitive given scholarly convention, the close relationship between the prophetic and priestly storylines, and the blending of modes after the Pentateuch.

The next division concerns orientation. Externally oriented punitive miracles afflict those outside the divine kingdom, while internally oriented ones affect participants of this kingdom. Externally oriented prophetic miracles are two-sided: these miracles inflict woe on Israel's enemies and are a blessing for the nation. Internally oriented prophetic miracles are one-dimensional. These miracles afflict members of God's people for general disobedience or violating covenantal stipulations. Miracles in the priestly mode likewise display the two orientations. Internally oriented priestly miracles are predominant given the Israelites' proximity to the sanctuary and the holy objects. The Philistines' seizure of the ark creates the opportunity for an unusual series of externally oriented priestly miracles.

The final division is according to function. All of the functions included in the taxonomy are associated with prophetic miracles. The lacuna on the priestly side of the chart reflects the Primary History's failure to develop priestly miracles to the point that I can speak of discrete functions. A perusal of the prophetic functions reveals that these categories often overlap. I will consider these functions separately to highlight their distinct features.

The "creative" function of punitive miracles exploits this term's ambiguity. On one hand, I use this term to describe events that thwart threats against God's creative purposes, such as the flood, the proliferation of languages at Babel, and Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction. On the other hand, I classify events under this heading if they have a creative function in developing God's kingdom. The Abrahamic miracles, the judgments in Egypt, the miracles under Joshua, and those of David's early career belong here. These events can only be linked to God's creative purposes at a high level of abstraction. However, these episodes are creative in their own right since they generate momentum toward fulfilling divine plans.

The war function of punitive miracles is primarily a matter of setting. Nearly any miracle that occurs in battle performs this function. LXX war miracles generally share a common motif. Divine punishment in the relevant episodes consistently takes the form of God driving opponents out of their senses. In this condition, the enemy cannot gauge the conditions of battle and flees. The motif of confusion in battle associates war miracles with one another. Most importantly, this motif casts these miracles in the mold of God's victory at the Red Sea.

The covenantal function of punitive miracles reflects the ability of these events to instantiate covenantal blessings and curses. For the sake of precision, I describe the use of punitive miracles to instantiate blessings as the "type 1 covenantal function." The "type 2 covenantal function" denotes the instantiation of covenantal curses.

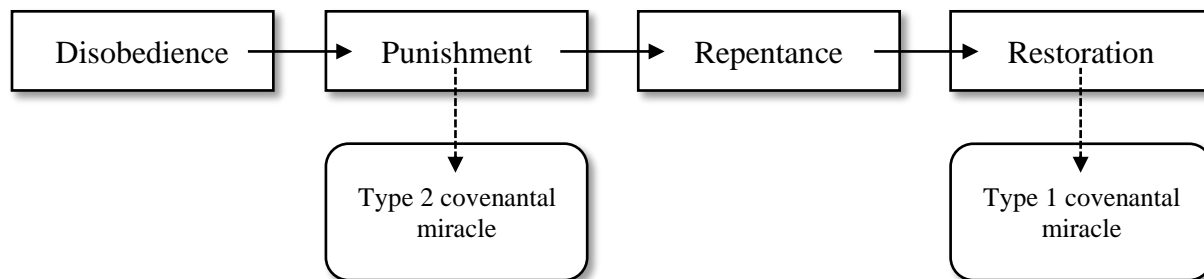
Punitive miracles with a type 1 covenantal function instantiate covenantal blessings. That blessing is made manifest is a feature of these miracles' external orientation. The only events that fit the type 1 description are miraculous judgments that afflict Israel's enemies for the nation's benefit. The judgment may manifest in battle or daily life. The leading example of the former situation is Pharaoh's defeat at the Red Sea. The latter case—a type 1 miracle in everyday life—will not appear until the books of Maccabees. However, something approaching this situation appears with Elisha's miracles thwarting the Aramean army in non-martial contexts.

Punitive miracles with a type 2 covenantal function instantiate covenantal curses. That curses are made manifest is a feature of the internal orientation of these miracles. The post-Sinai wilderness miracles form the prototype of type 2 covenantal miracles. Punitive miracles take an inward turn after the establishment of the covenant, reflecting that God now holds Israel accountable for behavior inconsistent with this new arrangement. However, unlike the type 2 miracles of a later period, the wilderness miracles are less schematic, arising on an ad hoc basis

and often apart from particular sanctions. Type 2 covenantal miracles do not appear until the period of the Israelite monarchy. At this point, God miraculously harms the nation per the terms of the covenantal catalogs. It is theoretically possible for a type 2 miracle to overlap with the war miracle, but this does not occur in the Primary History. God targets the weather cycle, afflicts individuals, or performs other deeds to instantiate the covenantal curses.

The covenantal function facilitates the incorporation of punitive miracles into emergent patterns. The basic pattern of interest is the covenantal pattern. The covenantal pattern produces a theological segmentation of history. The phases of this pattern are disobedience, punishment, repentance, and restoration. Punitive miracles readily integrate into this pattern:

Figure 2: The Covenantal Pattern in Genesis–2 Kings

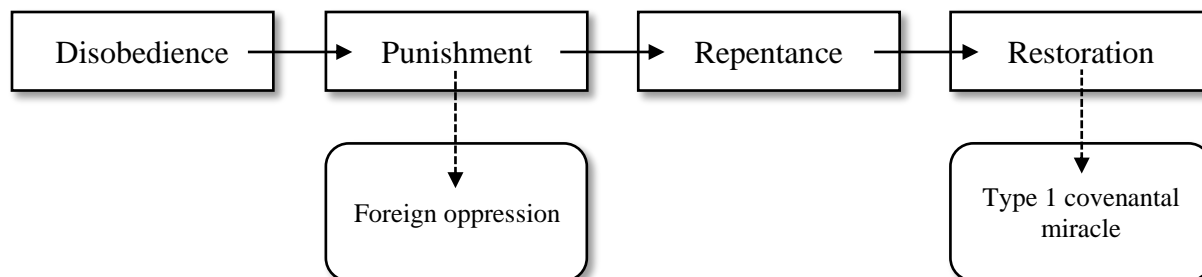


Type 1 and type 2 miracles never appear in the same expression of the covenantal pattern. Some instances of the covenantal pattern climax with a type 1 miracle that delivers the nation. Other expressions feature a type 2 miracle in the punishment phase and climax with something other than a miracle. Punitive miracles must not be interpreted as isolated incidents given their incorporation into this pattern. These miracles reveal God’s covenantal posture.

Using the type 1 miracle as the climax of the covenantal pattern produces spectacular results. Combining the covenantal pattern and a type 1 miracle potentially reproduces the exodus event. At its core, the exodus event displays a pattern of foreign oppression/injustice → miraculous affliction → release. The pattern of the exodus event is independent of the covenantal

pattern, as shown by the former pattern's appearance before Sinai. Regardless, the covenantal pattern mimics the exodus event if specific motifs are present:

Figure 3: The Pattern of the Exodus Event Mapped onto the Covenantal Pattern



The covenantal pattern evokes the exodus event if two things are true: divine punishment manifests as foreign oppression/injustice, and a type 1 covenantal miracle accomplishes the nation's release. The type 1 miracle confirms that the God of the exodus remains on Israel's side.

The conventions and patterns that emerge from the Primary History are clear. However, they are neither complete nor even. There is an emphasis on prophetic-external-creative, prophetic-external-covenantal/war, and prophetic-internal-covenantal miracles. The priestly branch of miracles never attains similar prominence or development. The development in this branch comes through blending the prophetic and priestly modes.³⁵⁸ The Primary History displays a definite, albeit uneven trajectory toward the proliferation of prophetic punitive miracles in their creative, war, and covenantal functions. These functions are elements of the Primary History that writers will naturally engage if they intend to continue the biblical storyline.

³⁵⁸ See n. 306.

CHAPTER 3. PUNITIVE MIRACLES IN THE LXX DIVERGENT VOICES

3.1. Introduction

In the last chapter, I investigated the Septuagint's Primary History from the vantage of the early Christian prophetic storyline. This investigation demonstrated the coherence of the prophetic storyline and punitive miracles in Genesis–2 Kings. Early Christians who read these books through the lens of the prophetic storyline were likely to perceive that punitive miracles are integral to this storyline. I built on this finding by isolating patterns and conventions in the Primary History. There is an emphasis on specific punitive miracle configurations over others in these books, resulting in the proliferation of prophetic punitive miracles in their creative, war, and covenantal functions.

The present chapter extends my analysis into other Septuagintal books (1–2 Chronicles, 1–4 Maccabees, Job, Jonah, Daniel). This chapter will differ from the previous chapter in one crucial respect. There is a natural fit between the Primary History and ECPR's prophetic storyline that the books in this chapter cannot match. The fit between the Primary History and the prophetic storyline is due to two factors. First, the Primary History presents an essentially continuous narrative from creation to exile. This narrative conduces to reading Genesis–2 Kings as the story of the emergence and development of God's kingdom. Second, the Primary History's main themes frequently overlap with the foci of ECPR's prophetic storyline.

Concerning the first factor, none of the books treated in this chapter offers an expansive narrative like Genesis–2 Kings. Nor do these books pick up after 2 Kings as a seamless

continuation of the Primary History. The relevant texts are freestanding, beginning at their points of interest rather than *in media res*, as in the transition from Deuteronomy to Joshua. The books in question are oriented to previous biblical history, but they stand at a distance from it. This distance makes it less natural to read books like Jonah, Daniel, and 1–4 Maccabees in light of the prophetic storyline.

Concerning the second factor, most books in this chapter develop themes that overlap with ECPR's prophetic storyline. This overlap justifies the analysis of the Septuagintal witnesses in question. The relevant episodes in 1–2 Chronicles, 1–4 Maccabees, and Daniel display the most intersection with the prophetic storyline. Jonah and Job are more removed from this storyline. However, even the latter books merit attention given their tangential development of this storyline (Jonah) or implicit critique of its assumptions (Job).

The nature of the books I examine in this chapter calls for a minor change to my method. Since these books do not present a continuous narrative, I must adjust my analysis of how God's kingdom develops, which I discussed in the "consequences for the prophetic storyline" sections of the last chapter. It was previously possible to trace the role of punitive miracles in developing the divine kingdom across multiple periods. Given the abandonment of the Primary History's continuous narrative at the end of 2 Kings, this analysis is no longer possible. I will change course in this chapter's "thematic development" sections. Instead of considering development within and across periods, I will analyze how punitive miracles facilitate the extension or reconfiguration of God's kingdom. The prophetic storyline remains open at the end of the Primary History. Punitive miracles provide subsequent authors with a means of developing this storyline in new directions. My analysis will now focus on how punitive miracles facilitate the continuation and/or alteration of God's kingdom in new contexts.

3.2. Chronicles

3.2.1. Introduction

The books of Chronicles retell Israel's history from Saul's death to Judah's exile. Given the overlap of these books with Samuel-Kings, they aim to supplement or supplant the latter portion of the Primary History. Which possibility is correct is immaterial to my investigation. What matters is that the Chronicler has produced a distinct portrait of Israel's history. The punitive miracles in this corpus reflect the Chronicler's interests and facilitate this historical revision.

As in the Primary History, prophets and kings play a prominent role in the unfolding of the Chronistic History. However, the Chronicler has attenuated the association between these figures and prophetic tasks. When kings and prophets appear in proximity to a punitive miracle, they are the victims or announcers of this type of event, respectively. The Chronicler pursues different goals in narrating punitive miracles.

The most expedient way to uncover the role of punitive miracles in 1–2 Chronicles is by comparing the Chronicler's historical product to its *Vorlage*, Samuel-Kings.³⁵⁹ Early Christian readers would not likely engage in this comparative exercise. That said, this approach provides a

³⁵⁹ For Samuel-Kings as the *Vorlage* of Chronicles, see Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 16–18; Gary N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 12 (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 66–68; Ralph W. Klein, *I Chronicles*, ed. Thomas Krüger, Herm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 30–37. Klein makes an important observation concerning the Chronicler's copy of Samuel-Kings: "It has become clear that the *Vorlage* used by the Chronicler, especially in the books of Samuel, was often different from the MT. Hence before one ascribes a change noted in Chronicles to the Chronicler, one needs to determine as far as possible whether a reading now in Chronicles may once have been in the Samuel textual tradition ... If the reading of Chronicles different from the MT of Samuel and Kings is found in one of the alternate Samuel textual traditions, it is obviously not a change made by the Chronicler" (*I Chronicles*, 26). Since I aim to understand Chronicles as a received text, I will not distinguish between changes attributable to the Chronicler and those attributable to a divergent *Vorlage*. When I speak of the "Chronicler," I am essentially denoting the implied author of this work.

shortcut to identifying the Chronicler's interests and aims, most of which could be discerned through a lengthier analysis of the Chronistic History on its own. I will first analyze the miracles the Chronicler has added to Samuel-Kings, then examine those taken over from the latter corpus.

3.2.2. The Chronicler's Addition of Punitive Miracles

The Chronicler's approach to divine retribution is the starting point for understanding punitive miracles in 1–2 Chronicles. As Sara Japhet has demonstrated, the Chronicler's redaction of Samuel-Kings was carried out under a rigid view of retribution, resulting in striking changes.³⁶⁰

Japhet summarizes this aspect of the Chronicler's redactional tendency as follows:

1. in the case of any [unrequited] transgression ... an appropriate punishment is added by the Chronicler;
2. whenever righteousness or piety is displayed with no mention of recompense, the Chronicler adds a fitting reward;
3. every difficulty, affliction, and defeat is automatically perceived as retribution. For this reason, when any incident which might be a punishment remains unexplained, the Chronicler adds a suitable sin;
4. every success, whether personal or public, is considered a reward. Whenever a possible reward is mentioned without the appropriate causes for it, the Chronicler provides the source of merit;
5. if two occurrences, one a possible sin, the other an apparent punishment, are described independently, the Chronicler makes a causal connection between the two.³⁶¹

The salient items in Japhet's summary are the first and third tendencies. The Chronicler adds three punitive miracles to Israel's history, each displaying certain of these trends.

The case of Jehoram belongs to Japhet's first category. In the Primary History, Jehoram is the first king of Judah to be linked to Ahab's sin (2 Kgs 8:18). He is never punished for this

³⁶⁰ Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*, trans. Anna Barber (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 117–39, esp. 129–31.

³⁶¹ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 130–31.

transgression. In the Chronicler's retelling, Jehoram participates in Ahab's sin (2 Chr 21:6),³⁶² yet he now suffers the desolation of the royal household (21:16–17; see 21:14) and a stomach disease that kills him (21:18–19; see 21:15). Since Jehoram is the first ruler in Chronicles who corrupts Judah's worship,³⁶³ his grotesque demise—"his stomach came out ... and he died in severe sickness" (21:19)—is a condign and necessary punishment.

The cases of Asa and Azariah belong to Japhet's third category. Both rulers experience adverse outcomes in the Deuteronomistic History—for Asa, a foot disease (1 Kgs 15:23); for Azariah, leprosy (2 Kgs 15:5)—and neither outcome is a consequence of the king's misdeeds. These "good" kings (1 Kgs 15:11; 2 Kgs 15:3) fall victim to bad circumstances. The Chronicler remedies this situation by transforming the adverse outcomes into punitive miracles. Chronicles suggests that Asa's foot disease is a punishment for his mistreatment of a prophet and his abuse of the people at large (2 Chr 16:10, 12; see 16:7–9),³⁶⁴ and it makes Azariah's leprosy a consequence of his arrogation of a priestly prerogative (26:16–21).

³⁶² The Chronistic Jehoram also commits fratricide (2 Chr 21:4, 13).

³⁶³ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 163. Japhet observes that the Chronicler makes Jehoram responsible for introducing "pagan practices" by rehabilitating certain predecessors. The omission of 1 Kgs 11 eliminates Solomon's idolatrous turn (2 Chr 9:13–31 // 1 Kgs 10:14–11:43), that of 1 Kgs 14:22–24 obscures the decline under Rehoboam (2 Chr 12:1–16 // 1 Kgs 14:21–31), and that of 1 Kgs 15:3 converts Abijah from a "bad" king into a "good" one (2 Chr 13:1–23 // 1 Kgs 15:1–8) (*The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 163, 163 n. 36). Given Jehoram's role in Chronicles, he is naturally the first king to fall victim to a punitive miracle.

³⁶⁴ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 131 n. 486: "Asa's double sin — his treatment of Hanani the seer (2 Chr 16:10) and his seeking help from physicians instead of YHWH (2 Chr 16:12) — explains why his feet became diseased and he ultimately died of this illness." Cf. Brian E. Kelly, "'Retribution' Revisited: Covenant, Grace and Restoration," in *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie, and Gary N. Knoppers, JSOTSup 371 (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 222, 226. Kelly holds that Asa's disease might be an unmerited affliction given the Chronicler's failure to link the king's abuse of Hanani to this disease. In my judgment, Asa's affliction indeed appears as an isolated datum. However, Kelly's interpretation is implausible. First, Asa's affliction in 2 Chr 16:12 appears in a retelling of Israel's history that maximizes the relationship between fault and punishment. The tendency of 1–2 Chronicles predisposes readers to associate Asa's foot disease with his misdeeds. Second, Raymond Dillard has observed that in Chronicles, "the retribution is usually in the following year [after the misdeed], as seen in the examples from the reigns of Rehoboam and Joash" ("The Reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14–16): An Example of the Chronicler's Theological Method," *JETS* 23 [1980]: 213 n. 25). Dillard makes this observation to explain why the LXX changes the date of the events in 2

The Chronicler does not pursue this redactional agenda solely by adding miracles. Non-miraculous additions to the Primary History complement the new miracles. Concerning the Chronicler's first tendency—the production of punishments to match unrequited sins—the examples of Jeroboam and Manasseh are illustrative. Jeroboam meets a punitive, yet non-miraculous death due to his rebellion against Rehoboam (2 Chr 13:20).³⁶⁵ Manasseh suffers Assyrian imprisonment because of his faithlessness (33:11). Concerning the Chronicler's third tendency—the production of transgressions to account for adverse outcomes—Amaziah and Josiah are cases in point. The Chronicler converts the assassination of Amaziah, once a “good” ruler (2 Kgs 14:3), into a punishment for the king's previously unknown fondness for Edomite gods (2 Chr 25:27; see 25:14).³⁶⁶ Likewise, Josiah's death at the hands of Pharaoh Neco becomes an outcome of the king's refusal to heed a prophetic summons to stand down from battle (2 Chr 35:20–24).³⁶⁷ The Chronicler's redactional agenda has been accomplished by adding miraculous and non-miraculous outcomes alike.

This fact pattern is consequential for understanding the Chroniclers' punitive miracles. Since natural events and miracles jointly contribute to an intensified depiction of history's divine

Chr 16:1–10 from Asa's thirty-sixth year (16:1 MT) to his thirty-eighth year (16:1 LXX). According to this view, the LXX forges a conspicuous relationship between fault and punishment by setting Asa's misdeeds in his thirty-eighth year (16:1–10) and his punishment in the thirty-ninth year (16:12). The Chronicler's tendency and the LXX dating of Asa's misdeeds are sufficient grounds for discerning a link between Asa's fault and his foot disease.

³⁶⁵ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 130 n. 484. For the illegitimacy of Jeroboam's secession in Chronicles, see Gary N. Knoppers, “Rehoboam in Chronicles: Villain or Victim?,” *JBL* 109 (1990): 423–40.

³⁶⁶ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 131 n. 486: “It is because Amaziah worships Edomite gods and silences YHWH's prophet that he is defeated by Joash king of Israel and killed by conspirators.” Amaziah's idolatry and defiance of the prophet result in the joint disaster of defeat and assassination.

³⁶⁷ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 131 n. 486.

regulation, the significance of the natural/miraculous binary diminishes.³⁶⁸ The Chronicler's God governs the world through retributive acts that are more or less miraculous. The character of these acts matters less than their regulative function. Consequently, the Chronicler's new punitive miracles are "ordinary" expressions of God's providence rather than, as in the Primary History, theologically laden events reserved for the apices and nadirs of the prophetic storyline.

3.2.3. The Chronicler's Transformation of Punitive Miracles

The character of punitive miracles in Chronicles will appear more clearly if we examine how this work transforms miracles from Samuel-Kings. The Chronicler has not reproduced every miracle

³⁶⁸ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 98–107, esp. 105–7. Japhet opposes the attempt to discern a "concept of 'double causality'" in Chronicles, which she describes as follows: "On the surface, events are the result of natural circumstances ... without any trace of the miraculous. In reality, however, everything has been brought about and controlled by God. The wise and sensitive person is able to perceive God's involvement; yet, to all intents and purposes, the course of events seems completely natural." Against the Chronicler's purported use of double causality, Japhet writes, "YHWH intervenes directly and immediately, and He alone is active. This view of divine intervention in the life of Israel lends history itself a special character — it becomes one long chain of miracles. God's action may take the form of natural and human phenomena, such as war or disease; however, because these phenomena are attributed to immediate divine intervention — at times, God even announces His intentions beforehand — they are transformed into miracles" (*The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 105–7). I believe it is better to speak of a diminishment of the natural/miraculous binary than to classify every act of divine intervention as a miracle. The Chronicler's incorporation of miracles into a strict system of retribution has blurred the distinction between miraculous and non-miraculous outcomes. However, as John Wright argues, the concept of double causality persists in at least two cases: the death of Saul (1 Chr 10:4, 14) and the foreign invasion against Jehoshaphat (2 Chr 20:22–23). According to Wright, "in these cases, it might be said that the narrator operates with a notion of double causation. God is not merely one agent among others. Rather, both an agent within the world and God simultaneously and completely cause an event" ("Beyond Transcendence and Immanence: The Characterization of the Presence and Activity of God in the Book of Chronicles," in *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein*, JSOTSup 371 [London: T&T Clark, 2003], 262). If humans are "completely" responsible for these events alongside God, then it is superfluous to dub them "miracles."

from the parallel portions of the Primary History.³⁶⁹ However, the miracles that have been retained evince a distinct interest in the priestly storyline.³⁷⁰

The Chronicler's interest in the priestly storyline is apparent in alterations that transform episodes in Samuel-Kings into watershed moments in the development of Israel's cult. This tendency first appears in the account of Uzzah's death (1 Chr 13, 15 // 2 Sam 6). In the Primary History, Uzzah's death convinces David of the ark's indomitability. David only overcomes his fear of the ark when he learns of its boon to Obed-Edom (2 Sam 6:12). In the Chronistic History, Uzzah's death sparks a revolution in David's understanding of Levitical duties. David never learns of Obed-Edom's good fortune (see 1 Chr 13:13–14; cf. 2 Sam 6:10–12). Instead, he realizes his initial attempt to relocate the ark failed because it excluded the Levites (1 Chr 15:2, 11–13).³⁷¹ What is surprising about this account is David's overhaul of the Levitical system. After charging the Levites henceforth to carry the ark (15:11–15), David instructs some of them to serve as musical attendants to this holy object (15:16–22, 27). David makes this appointment permanent when the ark reaches Jerusalem (16:4–5, 7, 37; see 16:41–42). Uzzah's death catalyzes a revolution in David's understanding of Levitical duties.

³⁶⁹ The books of Chronicles lack the death of David and Bathsheba's child (2 Sam 12:14–18; cf. 1 Chr 20:1) and all miracles set in the Northern Kingdom.

³⁷⁰ For the Chronicler's heightened interest in worship at the temple, see Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 175–77.

³⁷¹ The response of the Chronistic David to Uzzah's death manifests the Chronicler's interest. The Deuteronomistic David responds to this event by employing some people to carry the ark (2 Sam 6:13). It is not stated that these people are Levites. The fact that these people carry the ark (presumably on poles; see Num 4:5–6, 15) suggests that David attributes the disaster to using a cart, which allowed Uzzah to encounter the holy object (2 Sam 6:3–4, 6). The Chronistic David responds to Uzzah's death by instructing the Levites to carry the ark (1 Chr 15:2, 11–13). His charge in 15:13 indicates that the disaster resulted from Uzzah's status as a non-Levite. The disaster would have been averted if the Levites had conducted the ark. The offense is less a matter of contacting the ark and more of missing Levitical credentials.

The account of David's census and the resulting plague (1 Chr 21–22 // 2 Sam 24) displays a similar interest. In the Primary History, this episode plays a role in David's characterization as a "person according to [the Lord's] heart" (1 Sam 13:14), despite his faults.³⁷² In the Chronistic History, this account's characterizing function is reduced,³⁷³ and the plague's role in revealing the temple site is augmented.³⁷⁴ Three additions establish the link between this account and cultic concerns. First, David's inability to visit the tabernacle because of the plague (1 Chr 21:29–30) justifies his erection and use of a rival altar (21:26, 28).³⁷⁵ Second, the consumption of David's sacrifice by heavenly fire (21:26) makes him the forerunner of temple worship. Solomon's sacrifices upon the temple's dedication will be similarly consumed (2 Chr 7:1).³⁷⁶ Third, Chronicles explicitly states what is adumbrated by 2 Sam 24:25: the plague makes David aware of the divinely approved place of sacrifices (1 Chr 22:1; 2 Chr 3:1). Given the Deuteronomist's anticipation of centralized worship (Deut 12:5–7), the plague and its resolution

³⁷² The account of the census in 2 Samuel contributes to David's characterization in two ways. First, David's behavior contrasts with Saul's (2 Sam 24:10; cf. 1 Sam 13:11–12; 15:15, 20–21). Second, David's behavior contrasts with his own previous conduct. It formerly took a prophetic indictment to make David aware of his sin (2 Sam 12:13; see 12:1–12). He now acknowledges his fault without prompting (2 Sam 24:10).

³⁷³ The Chronicler introduces a divine punishment (1 Chr 21:7) after the census (21:4–6) and before David acknowledges his fault (21:8) (Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 148, 148 n. 560; Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 10–29: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 12A [New York: Doubleday, 2004], 753–54). The effect of this punishment is to make the Chronistic David less aware of his sin than his Deuteronomistic counterpart.

³⁷⁴ The plague's role in revealing this location is indicated in 2 Sam 24:25 LXX by the statement, καὶ προσέθηκεν Σαλωμων ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον ἐπ' ἐσχάτῳ, ὅτι μικρὸν ἦν ἐν πρώτοις (Hugo, "The Jerusalem Temple," 190–92). The Chronicler's version of this story is a substantial reworking of the Deuteronomistic account that maximizes the link between Araunah's threshing floor and Solomon's temple.

³⁷⁵ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 111.

³⁷⁶ The consumption of Solomon's sacrifices by heavenly fire (2 Chr 7:1) is another detail added by the Chronicler (cf. 1 Kgs 8:54–55). The Chronicler has forged a typological connection between these figures.

are God's means of making known the divine decision in this matter.³⁷⁷ David's cognizance of God's choice is attested by the king's preparations for the temple at his newly acquired threshing floor (1 Chr 22:1ff.). David has become the initiator of temple construction and worship.

The development of these stories in David's life is conspicuous given their episodic character in the Primary History. Neither Uzzah's death nor David's plague was consequential for future developments in Samuel-Kings. These episodes are now pivotal, indicating that the Chronicler has mined punitive miracles for their contributions to the priestly storyline and rewritten them to showcase these features.

This finding is supported by the Chronicler's development of another pair of miracles involving the defense of Israel's cult. The account of Azariah's leprosy (2 Chr 26 // 2 Kgs 15), briefly discussed above,³⁷⁸ is one such case. The Primary History offers no reason for Azariah's affliction (2 Kgs 15:5). In contrast, the Chronicler makes the king's disease a consequence of his arrogating a priestly prerogative (2 Chr 26:16–21). Azariah's accomplishments (26:6–15) delude him into thinking he can make an incense offering in the temple (26:16), which is an act reserved for the priests alone (26:17–18). Azariah's presumptuousness has a disastrous result: the king's forehead suddenly becomes leprous, he is escorted out of the temple, and he must spend his remaining days in isolation (26:19–21).³⁷⁹ The point of contention in this episode is the extent of

³⁷⁷ The Deuteronomist's description of the future cultic site (Deut 12:11) emphasizes the deity's prerogative in selecting this location.

³⁷⁸ Azariah's sudden degeneration is a punitive miracle that the Chronicler has added. There is no fully formed counterpart to this event in the Primary History. I discuss this episode here given its thematic coherence with the accounts treated in this section.

³⁷⁹ The occurrence of this miracle in the temple makes it necessary to consider whether its mode is priestly or prophetic. I would entertain the identification of Azariah's leprosy as a priestly miracle if its setting were the only relevant datum. As it is, other factors cause me to identify this miracle's mode as prophetic. First, Azariah never completes an act that would make him liable to a priestly miracle. The king intends to burn incense on the altar (2 Chron 26:16), which would presumably put him at risk of suffering like Nadab, Abihu, and Korah's followers (Lev

the king's authority. Azariah succeeds when he restricts himself to military matters and building projects. His reign effectively ends (see 26:21) when he steps into the priestly domain. The punitive miracle delineates the royal and priestly spheres of jurisdiction.

The destruction of Assyria's army (2 Chr 32 // 2 Kgs 18–19) has a similar cultic orientation. The Primary History presents the Assyrian invasion as a referendum on Hezekiah's removal of the high places. Hezekiah displays unrivaled obedience to the covenant, and the deity responds with an unparalleled national deliverance. The Chronicler has altered this account's purpose. The removal of the high places in Hezekiah's reign is no longer unprecedented. Similar reforms on the part of Asa (2 Chron 14:2) and Jehoshaphat (17:6) have anticipated the Hezekian closure of these sites.³⁸⁰ This cultic reform is now incidental,³⁸¹ occurring as a spontaneous action on the part of the people rather than a royal initiative (31:1). The salience of the Assyrian invasion emerges from a detail that the Chronicler has added to the reign of Hezekiah's father, Ahaz. Whereas the Deuteronomistic Ahaz alters the temple regime yet tolerates its continuance

10:1–2; Num 16:16–18, 35). However, Azariah is afflicted with leprosy before executing his plan (2 Chron 26:19). Second, Azariah's punishment is not death, which we would expect from a priestly miracle, but leprosy. Leprosy elsewhere is associated with prophetic miracles (Num 12:10; 2 Kgs 5:27). Third, the account construes Azariah's fault as a moral failure, not a cultic violation. The king's abortive incense offering is a symptom of his prideful turn after Zechariah's death (2 Chron 26:16; see 26:5). Azariah's pride presents itself in his attempted arrogation of a priestly prerogative. From this vantage, it is conspicuous that the onset of leprosy coincides not with the king's arrival at the incense altar or the moment of his offering but with his anger at the priests ("When he became angry with the priests, leprosy sprang up on his forehead," 26:19). The setting of this event in the temple is a red herring. It is more natural to interpret the miracle as prophetic (Azariah is punished for his presumption) rather than priestly (Azariah comes in contact with the divine presence and suffers the consequences).

³⁸⁰ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 172–73. Japhet demonstrates the inconsistent portrayal of Asa and Jehoshaphat: these kings remove the high places at the beginning of their reigns (2 Chr 14:2; 17:6), yet they are faulted for tolerating these sites at the end of their reigns (15:17; 20:33). Japhet explains, "The problem of logic inherent in the double comments may be explained — although not eliminated — by Chronicles' dependence on its sources in the book of Kings. References to high places [before Jehoram; 2 Chr 21:11] were deleted because of the special Chronistic view of Solomon and his successors; however, the desire to praise Asa and Jehoshaphat ... produced portrayals of these two kings as reformers who abolished the high places before Hezekiah and Josiah did so. No attempt was made to synthesize these two intentions in a new framework" (*The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 173).

³⁸¹ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 174.

(2 Kgs 16:10–18), the Chronicler’s Ahaz suspends YHWH’s cult altogether (2 Chr 28:24).³⁸² Hezekiah’s merit consists of resuscitating the Lord’s worship (29:3ff.).³⁸³ In this context, the Assyrian invasion threatens the revived temple operations. The destruction of this army (32:21) safeguards the temple, ensuring that Hezekiah’s efforts are not in vain. The decimation of Assyria’s forces is an instance of the deity’s defense of the newly resurgent cult.

The Chronicler’s use of punitive miracles to elevate the priestly storyline is conspicuous due to a simultaneous effort to decouple punitive miracles from the prophetic storyline. The Primary History coordinates most miraculous judgments with critical moments in the prophetic storyline. In the synoptic portion of this history, punitive miracles attend the reign of David, the ideal king, and then stand in proximity to the prophets, who emerge as a center of God’s rule alternate to the nation’s faithless rulers. This telling of Israel’s story maintains a robust association between the prophetic storyline and prophetic mode of miracle, on one hand, and the priestly storyline and priestly mode of miracle, on the other hand. In the Chronistic History, the link between punitive miracles of any sort and the prophetic storyline is tenuous. This diminishment is due to factors like the view of divine retribution operative in Chronicles and the omission of certain stories from Samuel-Kings.³⁸⁴ The association of punitive miracles with the priestly storyline increases as their association with the prophetic storyline decreases.

³⁸² Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 167.

³⁸³ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 183–84.

³⁸⁴ Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 399–400. Japhet observes the absence of “prophetical stories” in Chronicles and explains this phenomenon in the following way: “Chronicles exhibits a strong awareness of the relationship between prophets and history and yet does not make prophets the heroes of history. The Chronicler consciously confined himself to writing an historical work and refrained from literary genres [prophetical stories] that did not fit into this category” (*The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 400). The omission of miracles set in the Northern Kingdom entails the absence of stories in which the prophets function as operatives of an alternate expression of the divine kingdom.

What is surprising about this correlation is that the Chronicler's effort has not resulted in a complete inversion of the prophetic and priestly storylines and their attendant modes of miracle. Based on the association of these storylines with their respective modes in Samuel-Kings, it would be reasonable to expect priestly miracles to facilitate the Chronicler's promotion of the priestly storyline. Against this expectation, the Chronicler elevates the priestly storyline and does so, in part, with prophetic miracles.³⁸⁵

The Chronicler has demoted the prophetic storyline and produced an altered depiction of cultic history. The prophetic storyline persists in the books of Chronicles, yet it lacks the conspicuous miracles that once facilitated its interpretation. The depiction of cultic history, in turn, is affected by the Chronicler's use of prophetic miracles to elevate the priestly storyline. Since prophetic miracles elevate Israel's cult, the cultic system's numinous dimension fades. The nation's cult is less a system that protects the people from God's presence and more a series of observances conducive to worshipping God.

3.2.4. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

The books of Chronicles contain a small body of punitive miracles. The Chronicler only reproduces a handful of relevant episodes from Samuel-Kings and adds three miracles not found in the *Vorlage*. When transmitting episodes from the Deuteronomistic History, the Chronicler works these stories into the warp and woof of the priestly storyline. When supplying new miracles, the Chronicler demonstrates an interest in the regularity of divine retribution.

³⁸⁵ The Chronicler's only miracle in the priestly mode appears in the account of Uzzah's death (1 Chr 13, 15). For a healing that presupposes an unnarrated priestly miracle, see 2 Chron 30:20.

Characterization. Punitive miracles play less of a role in characterizing kings and prophets in 1–2 Chronicles than Samuel-Kings. In Samuel-Kings, these miracles facilitate David’s rise to the throne and contribute to his characterization as an ideal king. After David’s passing, miraculous judgments characterize the prophets as an alternate site of God’s earthly rule. None of this occurs in 1–2 Chronicles.

The punitive miracles in Chronicles cast the kings in a dimmer light. The Chronicler’s only Davidic miracle, the plague after the king’s census, makes David less ready to repent than in 2 Samuel. Likewise, the Chronicler’s view of divine retribution results in an iniquitous turn in the reigns of Asa and Azariah. These kings have become transgressors rather than victims.

Punitive miracles hardly enhance the profile of the prophets. At most, the prophets announce divine judgment. The examples of two prophets are telling. When Elijah pronounces judgment against Jehoram, it is by letter (2 Chron 21:12–15). The use of a letter distances the prophet from the miracle proper. Likewise, Isaiah no longer announces the divine sentence against Sennacherib but simply prays with Hezekiah (2 Chron 32:20 // 2 Kgs 19:20–34). We come closest to a miracle that enhances a prophet’s profile with Asa’s foot disease, which he suffers after imprisoning Hanani (2 Chron 16:7–10, 12). This punishment reflects the gravity of Asa’s sin. However, this miracle does not rescue Hanani, as punitive miracles once rescued Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. The miracle simply punishes the king’s misdeed. The characterizing function of punitive miracles in 1–2 Chronicles is less robust than in Samuel-Kings.

The development of prophetic topoi. The punitive miracles in Chronicles develop the topoi of injustice, the people’s rejection of the prophet, and the hardness of people’s hearts. Injustice surfaces in Asa’s oppression of the people (2 Chron 16:10) and Jehoram’s murders (21:4). The people’s rejection of the prophet appears in Asa’s imprisonment of Hanani (16:10).

The hardness of people's hearts is a feature of Azariah's reign (26:16). In one way or another, the Chronicler uses these topoi to create greater animosity between Judah's kings and the people than I observed in Samuel-Kings. In the Primary History, Judah's kings are generally good, albeit flawed rulers. This characterization often obtains in Chronicles as well. However, the Chronicler's use of these topoi provides the occasion for several kings to act out in ways redolent of their northern counterparts in Samuel-Kings. Judah's rulers pose a greater obstacle to divine purposes than in the Primary History.

The thematic development of God's kingdom. Since the books of Chronicles overlap with Samuel-Kings, it is out of the question to think of the Chronicler's work as a continuation of the Primary History. Instead, 1–2 Chronicles supplement or supplant the latter part of this history. It is irrelevant for my purposes which possibility is correct. The Chronicler has produced a new take on Israel's history and has done so, in part, by reconfiguring how punitive miracles work.

Punitive miracles relate to God's kingdom in two ways in the Primary History. First, these miracles are integral to the fulfillment of God's promises, which have as their goal the formation of God's earthly kingdom populated by people who reflect God's character. Second, these miracles preserve God's kingdom. Given these roles, punitive miracles conspicuously intersect with the prophetic storyline.

The Chronicler's punitive miracles only fulfill one of these roles. The miraculous judgments in 1–2 Chronicles play a prominent role in preserving God's kingdom, but they are no longer integral to fulfilling God's promises. However, I must note that the Chronicler's proliferation of retributive events, miraculous and non-miraculous alike, affects how punitive miracles preserve God's kingdom. Whereas the sparing use of these events in the Primary History allows them to mark the apices and nadirs of the prophetic storyline, the Chronicler's

multiplication of retributive events dilutes the salience of punitive miracles in this storyline. Punitive miracles cooperate with “normal” retributive events to reconfigure God’s kingdom into a highly regulated domain. The miraculous judgments in Chronicles no longer play a unique role in preserving God’s kingdom.

3.3. Maccabees

3.3.1. Introduction

We return to familiar territory with the books of Maccabees. Unlike the books of Chronicles, 1–4 Maccabees prioritize the prophetic storyline and prophetic mode of miracle, omitting priestly miracles altogether. However, this resurgence of prophetic concerns is something other than a simple continuation of the Primary History. The miracles in 1–4 Maccabees contribute to continuity and discontinuity with this history.

On one hand, the miracles in 1–4 Maccabees forge an evident bond between the Jews under the Hellenistic dynasts and the Israelites of old. Just as God cared for Israel during seasons of covenantal obedience by miraculously cowing its enemies, God now cares for the Jewish subjects of the Ptolemies and Seleucids. The punitive miracles in 1–4 Maccabees demonstrate the continuity of salvation history.

On the other hand, the miracles in 1–4 Maccabees create a sense of distance from the past. No Jewish prophet or king can be found in 1–4 Maccabees. The occurrence of punitive miracles in the absence of such individuals promotes the notion that the nation’s present differs from its past. To be sure, miraculous judgments attend and enhance some of Judas’s actions in 2

Maccabees, suggesting he performs a tacit prophetic task. Yet Judas's portrayal is the exception rather than the rule. Punitive miracles are generally unmoored from prophets and kings in the books of Maccabees. These miracles persist because God is faithful to the covenant. However, the dissociation of these events from prophetic individuals means we are dealing with a renewal of God's kingdom that is less than complete.³⁸⁶

I intend to treat the books of Maccabees together when considering their consequences for the prophetic storyline. I will evaluate each text in turn while reserving the discussion of "consequences" for the end of this section. The substantial overlap of these books warrants this decision. Salient differences between these texts will factor into the concluding discussion.

3.3.2. 1 Maccabees

3.3.2.1. *Introduction*

First Maccabees contains only two punitive miracles, but these events are integral to the story of the Maccabean insurgency. The relevant accounts feature a familiar trend from Genesis–2 Kings. These episodes promote a Deuteronomistic interpretation of history—in this case, the Antiochan crisis and its aftermath. Thanks to this feature, the punitive miracles in 1 Maccabees forge a connection between the ancient people of God and the Jews under Seleucid dominion.

³⁸⁶ My claim that God's kingdom "restarts" or is partially "renewed" in the divergent voices adapts Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 226–27.

3.3.2.2. Punitive Miracles and the Covenantal Pattern in 1 Maccabees

The salient feature of the miracles in 1 Maccabees is their coherence with Deuteronomistic theology. This coherence is rooted in the book's reproduction of the covenantal pattern.³⁸⁷ The unfolding of events in the opening of 1 Maccabees is predicated on the sequence that becomes prominent in the Primary History: disobedience → punishment → repentance → restoration.

Israel's disobedience surfaces in 1 Macc 1:11–15 as a group of Jews abandons the covenant in favor of a Hellenistic lifestyle. Like certain ancient Israelites, these Hellenizers “sell themselves to do evil” (1 Macc 1:15).³⁸⁸ The depiction of this apostasy evokes Moses's warning about idolatrous cities (Deut 13:13–19),³⁸⁹ suggesting that the Hellenizers incite divine wrath against the nation and merit destruction.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ Scholars generally fail to observe this pattern in 1 Maccabees. A noteworthy exception appears with Dongbin Choi, *The Use and Function of Scripture in 1 Maccabees*, LSTS 98 (London: T&T Clark, 2021), 165–67.

³⁸⁸ Gk. ἐπράθησαν τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ πονηρόν. This phrase calls to mind the wicked deeds of the Northern Kingdom in general (ἐπράθησαν τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ πονηρόν ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς κυρίου; 2 Kgs 17:17) and Ahab in particular (ἐπράθη ποιῆσαι τὸ πονηρόν ἐνώπιον κυρίου; 1 Kgs 20:25; see also 20:20).

³⁸⁹ Deuteronomy 13:14 is the evident intertext of 1 Macc 1:11. The statement of the Hellenizers' actions (ἐξῆλθον ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ υἱοὶ παράνομοι καὶ ἀνέπεισαν πολλοὺς λέγοντες ...; 1 Macc 1:11) evokes the Deuteronomist's description of a report about an idolatrous city (Ἐξήλθοσαν ἄνδρες παράνομοι ἐξ ὑμῶν καὶ ἀπέστησαν πάντας τοὺς κατοικοῦντας τὴν πόλιν αὐτῶν λέγοντες ...; Deut 13:14). Likewise, the Hellenizers' appeal (Πορευθῶμεν καὶ διαθώμεθα διαθήκην μετὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν τῶν κύκλῳ ἡμῶν) brings to mind the Deuteronomist's idolators (Πορευθῶμεν καὶ λατρεύσωμεν θεοῖς ἑτέροις). The Hellenizers are cast as the proponents of covenantal faithlessness. Also significant is the influence of Deut 31:17 on 1 Maccabees (Jonathan A. Goldstein, *1 Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 41 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976], 200). In this passage, the Lord predicts apostasy after Moses dies (31:16) and announces the intention to forsake Israel, at which point “many evils and afflictions will find it” (31:17). The nation will then declare, Διότι οὐκ ἔστιν κύριος ὁ θεός μου ἐν ἐμοί, εὗροσάν με τὰ κακὰ ταῦτα (31:17). The Hellenizers make a similar statement (ὅτι ἀφ' ἧς ἐχωρίσθημεν ἀπ' αὐτῶν [τῶν ἐθνῶν], εὗρεν ἡμᾶς κακὰ πολλά; 1 Macc 1:11). However, they twist the intertext by attributing adversity to religious and social isolation, making a travesty of the divine prediction to Moses.

³⁹⁰ Deuteronomy 13 provides a fitting model for 1 Maccabees given its two presuppositions: 1. The faithlessness of an Israelite city can incite divine wrath against the nation (Deut 13:18); 2. The solution to this threat is annihilating the guilty parties (13:16). By adopting the language of Deut 13, the author of 1 Maccabees offers a diagnosis and prescription for the nation's troubles. The nation experiences wrath due to the Hellenizers' apostasy. God will not be reconciled until the apostates are annihilated. These presuppositions explain the Maccabees' determination to eliminate the “impious” (ἀσεβεῖς; 1 Macc 3:8; 9:73; see also 14:14).

National punishment soon follows with Seleucid incursions into the Jews' religious and political affairs (1 Macc 1:20–24, 29–35, 41–64).³⁹¹ Among other acts, Antiochus IV Epiphanes tries to eliminate diverse national laws in his kingdom (1:41–42, 44–51)—an attempt that threatens to nationalize the Hellenizers' apostasy—resulting in the execution of many Jews who refuse to comply (1:60–63). That Antiochus's actions constitute divine punishment emerges from the remark concluding the description of Seleucid oppression: “there was very great wrath against Israel” (1:64).³⁹²

Israel's suffering prompts “repentance” through a grassroots insurgence.³⁹³ Mattathias, a priest, spearheads an uprising to preserve Israel's covenantal fidelity (1 Macc 2:27–28, 42–43). His militia sees early successes with attacks on the Hellenizing Jews (2:44)³⁹⁴ and enforced

³⁹¹ This division of 1 Macc 1 follows John R. Bartlett, *I Maccabees*, GAP (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 24. Bartlett identifies three incursions into Jewish affairs (1 Macc 1:20–24, 29–35, 41–64), each followed by an expression of lament (1:24–28, 36–40; 2:7–13).

³⁹² Gk. ἐγένετο ὀργή μεγάλη ἐπὶ Ἰσραὴλ σφόδρα. The phrase ὀργή μεγάλη potentially refers to human or divine wrath. The former possibility is supported by clear (1 Macc 2:44; 15:36) and possible (2:49) references to ὀργή as a human attribute in 1 Maccabees. The latter option is suggested by the use of ὀργή in 1 Macc 3:8, where Judas's annihilation of impious Israelites results in the turning away of evidently divine wrath (ἀπέστρεψεν ὀργὴν ἀπὸ Ἰσραὴλ). In my opinion, the latter possibility (ὀργή as divine wrath in 1:64) is indicated by the allusion to Deut 13 in the proposal of the Hellenizing Jews (1 Macc 1:11). These apostates lead the nation astray like the Israelites of Deut 13:14. It is reasonable to infer that the Hellenizers incite the kind of divine wrath presupposed by the anathema of Deut 13:18. Judas's merit is that he carried out an anathema against these Jews and extinguished divine wrath.

³⁹³ The association of this insurgence with “repentance” is a loose one given the innocence of Mattathias and his sons, on one hand, and the recalcitrance of the Hellenizers, on the other hand. Israel “repents” in the sense that some of its members express renewed zeal for the covenant.

³⁹⁴ First Maccabees uses ambiguous terms to denote the Maccabees' opponents. In the case of 1 Macc 2:44, Jonathan Goldstein argues that the ἁμαρτωλοί and ἄνδρες ἄνομοι are apostate Jews given the flight of their survivors to the Gentiles (*I Maccabees*, 237), taking “to the Gentiles” as a sign of ethnic distinction. In contrast, F.-M. Abel takes ἁμαρτωλοί as a reference to pagans and ἄνδρες ἄνομοι as a designation of the Jewish renegades (*Les livres des Maccabées*, ÉBib [Paris: Gabalda, 1949], 44). Few rules govern such terms, but some patterns obtain. The terms ἀσεβής and παράνομος refer almost exclusively to Jews. Most examples feature an explicit Jewish referent (ἀσεβής: 3:8; 6:21; 7:5, 9; 9:73; παράνομος: 1:11; 10:61; 11:21). The unclear cases (ἀσεβής: 3:15; 9:25; παράνομος: 1:34) are plausibly interpreted along the same lines. The reference to the ἄνδρες παράνομοι in the citadel in 1:34 is problematic due to the description of Jerusalem as a “dwelling of foreigners” (1:38). However, it is reasonable to assign this designation to Jews given the clarity of other uses of παράνομος and what Goldstein identifies as evidence of a Jewish presence in the citadel (4:1–2; 6:18; 11:20–21) (*I Maccabees*, 124, 124 n. 124). The term ἄνομος also

covenantal observance (2:45–46). Mattathias dies before seeing the nation’s restoration, yet his son, Judas, arises to pursue the same goal. Judas is eulogized for his persecution of “lawless” Jews (3:5–6), and his elimination of the “impious” from Judah’s cities is remembered as the event that pacifies the deity (3:8).³⁹⁵ The Maccabees will continue their struggle against recalcitrant Jews during the tenures of Judas’s brothers, Jonathan (9:73) and Simon (14:14).³⁹⁶ However, such persons will never again incite divine anger against the nation.

This brings us to Israel’s restoration. Judas enjoys a series of victories over Gentile opponents, signaling renewed divine support for Israel.³⁹⁷ Judas defeats Apollonius (1 Macc

tends to designate the Jews. The *ἄνομος* is certainly Jewish when this term appears with prepositional phrases like *ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ* (7:5; see also 11:25). Likewise, attention to literary context makes it plausible to assign this term to Jews in other cases (9:23, 58, 69; 14:14). It is reasonable to read less explicit uses of this term (e.g., 3:5–6) along similar lines in the absence of countervailing evidence. Finally, *ἁμαρτωλός* is a flexible word. The description of Antiochus Epiphanes as a “sinful root” (*ρίζα ἁμαρτωλός*; 1:10; see also 2:62) shows that this term can apply to Gentiles. However, the apposition of *ἄνδρας παρανόμους* to *ἔθνος ἁμαρτωλόν* in 1:34 indicates that *ἁμαρτωλός* can also apply to Jews. If, as I note above, the “lawless men” (*ἄνδρες παράνομοι*) in 1:34 are Jews, then the “sinful nation” (*ἔθνος ἁμαρτωλόν*) that this apposition describes must also be comprised of Jews. The flexibility of this term makes the determination of meaning dependent on context. Bringing these insights to bear on 2:44, *ἄνδρες ἄνομοι* almost certainly refers to Jews, and *ἁμαρτωλοί* may do so as well. The term *ἄνδρες ἄνομοι* appears in 7:5 as an explicit reference to Jews, and there is no reason to assign the phrase to Gentiles in 2:44. *ἁμαρτωλοί* is ambiguous given its applicability to Gentiles and Jews elsewhere. However, the probability that it refers to the latter group in 2:44 is marginally greater given the governance of *ἁμαρτωλούς* and *ἄνδρας ἀνόμους* by a single verb.

³⁹⁵ Gk. *ἀπέστρεψεν ὀργὴν ἀπὸ Ἰσραὴλ*. Judas’s aversion of *ὀργή* evokes the instructions to Moses at Baal-Peor (*ἀποστραφήσεται ὀργὴ θυμοῦ κυρίου ἀπὸ Ἰσραὴλ*; Num 25:4) and the Deuteronomist’s instructions concerning idolatrous Israelite cities (... *ἵνα ἀποστραφῇ κύριος ἀπὸ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ*; Deut 13:18). Judas’s killing of the Hellenizers averts divine anger from the nation. For the view that Mattathias pacifies divine wrath in 1 Macc 2:23–26, see George W. E. Nickelsburg, “1 and 2 Maccabees—Same Story, Different Meaning,” *CTM* 42 (1971): 518. I associate Judas with the pacification of divine wrath since 1 Macc 3:8 gives him credit for this accomplishment. Regardless, it is plausible that Mattathias and Judas cooperate in this task.

³⁹⁶ The enduring Maccabean struggle is best characterized as one against “recalcitrant Jews” rather than “Hellenizers” because the terms used to denote the Maccabean opponents do not consistently refer to the proponents of a Hellenistic lifestyle (Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 64–67, 330, 430). In the case of Alcimus, an individual dubbed *ἄσεβής* (1 Macc 7:9), Goldstein observes that the high priest “was a sinner but not an idolater or near-idolater” (*I Maccabees*, 73 n. 55). Context may indicate that an antagonist is a Hellenizer, but this book’s use of critical terms to denote these opponents is sufficiently vague to warrant caution.

³⁹⁷ The sure sign that God’s favor has been restored appears after the battle against Seron: *ἤρξατο ὁ φόβος Ἰούδου καὶ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ πτόη ἐπέπιπτεν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ κύκλῳ αὐτῶν* (1 Macc 3:25). This report resonates with passages that speak of divine favor toward the people by way of terrified enemies, including Gen 35:5; Exod 23:27; Deut 11:25; Josh 2:9; 1 Chr 14:17.

3:10–12), Seron (3:13–26), and the Seleucid regent, Lysias (2x: 3:38–4:27; 4:28–35), in quick succession. These victories open the way for Judas to recover and restore the temple (4:36–61). Bringing matters full circle, Lysias eventually reimplements the laws that Antiochus suspended (6:59; see 1:42, 44). These accomplishments reverse Antiochus’s oppressive acts and set the nation on the road to eventual independence (see 13:41–42).

This sequence of events is fundamental to appreciating the punitive miracles in 1 Maccabees.³⁹⁸ These are type 1 covenantal miracles (denoting blessing) because they appear in the restoration phase of the covenantal pattern. Like Israel’s experience under the judges, deliverance is withheld until the nation realigns itself with the covenant, at which point God intervenes against foreign oppressors. This deferral accentuates the message of the covenant catalogs: peace and rest in the land depend on obedience.

Divine assistance first comes with the death of Antiochus. While abroad, Antiochus learns of Lysias’s defeats and the Jews’ recovery of the temple (1 Macc 6:5–7). This news fills the king with grief so intense that it soon kills him (6:8–9, 13). Although God is not cited as the cause of Antiochus’s demise, the Seleucid ruler makes the retributive character of this event apparent when he attributes his deteriorating condition to his sacking of the temple and the

³⁹⁸ It is common for authors to assert that 1 Maccabees contains no miracles; see Robert H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times: With an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: Harper & Row, 1949), 494 n. 36, 495; Daniel R. Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews: Four Faces of Dichotomy in Ancient Jewish History*, KMTSJS (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 17. First Maccabees certainly lacks the conspicuous miracles of 2 Maccabees. However, there are compelling reasons to discern miracles in my selected texts. First is the issue of timing. The timing of an event can play a role in its identification as “miraculous.” That Antiochus’s deterioration is miraculous is indicated by the sudden onset of his death-dealing grief when he learns of the reversals in Judah (1 Macc 6:8). That Alcimus’s affliction is miraculous is indicated by the coincidence of his alterations to the temple and his paralysis (9:54–55). The second consideration is the lack of correspondence between apparent causes and retributive outcomes. Grief on its own, no matter how “great” (6:9, 13), is an insufficient cause of Antiochus’s death. As for Alcimus, 1 Maccabees mentions no circumstances that explain the priest’s demise. It merely states that he is “struck” (9:55). Both texts lack circumstances that explain these deaths. Such lacunae invite miraculous interpretations.

command to kill the Jews (6:12–13; see 1:21–23; 3:32–36). Antiochus’s death is punitive because it recompenses someone who harmed God’s people and prevents further suffering.

The king’s death also has a creative function. Antiochus formerly suspended the Jewish laws (1 Macc 1:41–42, 44–51) and implemented punishments for Jews who persisted in traditional practices (1:50, 57, 60–63). The result of the king’s death is a struggle between two would-be regents, Lysias and Philip (see 3:32–33; 6:14–17), which spurs the former to reimplement the Jewish laws in a bid for peace (6:55–61). Antiochus obstructed the Jews’ covenantal faithfulness, so he is eliminated to resolve the situation. God has shifted from the “curses” to the “blessings” portion of the covenant catalogs and now pursues Israel’s enemies.

The second case of divine intervention appears in the fate of Alcimus. Shortly after Antiochus’s death, Alcimus leads a band of “lawless and impious men” to turn a new Seleucid monarch, Demetrius I, against Judas and his supporters (1 Macc 7:5–7; see also 7:25). This group secures the appointment of Bacchides to assist them in their efforts, and Alcimus is given the high priesthood and charged to “take vengeance on the sons of Israel” (7:8–9). The new high priest quickly merits the designation “impious” (7:9) given his tenure in this office. Alcimus murders several Hasideans (7:13–18), assists Bacchides in the campaign that will claim Judas’s life (9:1, 18), and orders a sacrilegious renovation of the temple (9:54).³⁹⁹ This last act precipitates the priest’s downfall. Alcimus is “struck,”⁴⁰⁰ rendering him mute, paralyzed, and on the verge of an excruciating death (9:55–56).⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ The nature and purposes of this renovation are debated; cf. Abel, *Les livres des Maccabées*, 174; Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 391–93. It suffices that Alcimus tries to make an illicit alteration to the temple.

⁴⁰⁰ The voice of ἐπλήγη (1 Macc 9:55) is undoubtedly a divine passive given the lack of a potential human agent and the sacrilegious nature of Alcimus’s crime.

⁴⁰¹ It is natural to expect a priestly miracle here given Alcimus’s offense against the temple. Contrary to this expectation, Alcimus succumbs to a prophetic miracle. This discrepancy is fortuitous for my interpretation of

That Alcimus's death signals the restoration of divine blessings is manifest. The priest's death prompts Bacchides to return to the Seleucid court, inaugurating a period of peace akin to the rule of the judges (1 Macc 9:57).⁴⁰² Moreover, Alcimus's death creates a vacancy in the high priesthood that Jonathan will soon fill (10:18–21). Since holding this office is a prerequisite for Jonathan and his successors to exercise political power among the Jews,⁴⁰³ Alcimus's demise is necessary for the Maccabees' ascent to leadership. Alcimus threatens the nation's ability to live without fear and worship God with propriety. He is removed to restore peace and make way for worthier successors.

The deaths of Antiochus and Alcimus show renewed divine concern for the Jews after a period of apparent neglect. This sequence is in keeping with the Primary History's covenantal pattern. The consequences of this affinity are twofold: the Jews living under Seleucid dominion are associated with the ancient people of God, and the covenant's enduring force is affirmed.⁴⁰⁴ Despite the Jews' political subservience, the miracles in 1 Maccabees demonstrate the ancestral deity's solicitude for the people's wellbeing.

the passage. A priestly miracle might have allowed Alcimus to depart this life as an ignorant victim who exposed himself to God's presence, like Uzzah (2 Sam 6). As it is, Alcimus's affliction and death are a judgment of his impious act. It is reasonable to interpret this death as a punishment for the priest's impiety in toto. Alcimus's attempt to remodel the temple is the last in a series of deeds that merit divine punishment. When judgment occurs, it is the divine answer to all the priest's offenses, including his slandering of Judas (1 Macc 7:5–7, 25), murder of the Hasideans (7:13–18), participation in Bacchides's campaign (9:1), and alterations to the temple (9:54).

⁴⁰² 1 Maccabees 9:57: ἡσύχασεν ἡ γῆ Ἰούδα ἔτη δύο. For the phrase ἡσύχασεν ἡ γῆ ἔτη ..., see Judg 3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28; similarly, 1 Macc 7:50; 14:4.

⁴⁰³ For the political character of the Jewish high priesthood under the Ptolemies, Seleucids, and early Hasmoneans, see Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 58–59, 83–84, 87–88, 160–61, 236–40.

⁴⁰⁴ For the author's extension of biblical history, see Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times*, 485–86.

3.3.2.3. Summary

The punitive miracles in 1 Maccabees appear in the “restoration” phase of the covenantal pattern. These miracles have a type 1 covenantal function. The deaths of Antiochus Epiphanes and Alcimus instantiate the covenantal blessings as God defends the Jews against their opponents. These divine interventions punish the Jews’ principal antagonists, just as God formerly defended Israel during times of covenantal obedience. These events simultaneously generate momentum toward establishing an independent Jewish state. The miracles in 1 Maccabees create continuity with Israel’s past and propel the nation into a new season of prosperity.

3.3.3. 2 Maccabees

3.3.3.1. Introduction

Compared to 1 Maccabees, the punitive miracles in 2 Maccabees are common and conspicuous. This difference is surprising given the overlap of these books (1 Macc 1–7 \approx 2 Macc 4–15). It is also fortuitous since it produces distinct perspectives on a single era. The salient agreement between 1 and 2 Maccabees is the covenantal function of punitive miracles. Most miracles in 2 Maccabees are covenantal blessings (type 1 covenantal function). Yet this agreement is only half the story. The miracles in 2 Maccabees also reveal divine power. This revelatory dimension indicates that a fusion of Deuteronomistic theology and the memory of the exodus event has occurred. This fusion is not unprecedented, but it achieves such prominence in 2 Maccabees that this book must be considered a milestone in the evolution of punitive miracles.

3.3.3.2. *Punitive Miracles and the Covenantal Pattern in 2 Maccabees*

The appearance of punitive miracles at pivotal moments in 2 Maccabees indicates that Deuteronomistic theology is fundamental to these events, as in 1 Maccabees. These miracles are withheld until the “restoration” phase of the embedded covenantal pattern.⁴⁰⁵ The books of 1 and 2 Maccabees mostly agree on identifying specific moments in the Antiochan crisis with the phases of the covenantal pattern. Disobedience appears in 2 Maccabees when Jason gains the high priesthood and implements a program of Hellenization (2 Macc 4:7–17 // 1 Macc 1:11–15). Punishment follows as God surrenders the people to Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his subordinates (2 Macc 5:11–7:42 // 1 Macc 1:20–64).⁴⁰⁶ Repentance occurs in the martyrs’ pleas for God to heed their suffering and have mercy on the nation (2 Macc 7:37–38; cf. 1 Macc 3:8).⁴⁰⁷ Finally, restoration takes the form of renewed divine support for the Jews, particularly in battles against Seleucid aggressors (2 Macc 8:8–36 // 1 Macc 3:38–4:27).⁴⁰⁸ Second Maccabees withholds punitive miracles until the time of restoration, at which point these events dramatically appear with Antiochus’s death (2 Macc 9:1–29 // 1 Macc 6:1–17). The deferral and timely

⁴⁰⁵ For the covenantal pattern in 2 Maccabees, see Nickelsburg, “1 and 2 Maccabees,” 521–23.

⁴⁰⁶ A series of excursuses (2 Macc 4:16–17; 5:17–20; 6:12–17) construes these actions as divine punishment.

⁴⁰⁷ Nickelsburg, “1 and 2 Maccabees,” 523: “The obedient deaths of the brothers are a vicarious act of repentance, intended to give God cause to change His wrath against Israel to mercy and, on the other hand, to execute vengeance on the oppressor for his slaughter of the innocent.” As with 1 Maccabees, “repentance” loosely describes the act that modulates the deity’s stance from “cursing” to “blessing.”

⁴⁰⁸ Judas’s victory in 2 Macc 8 contains no miracles, yet there are many indications that this battle marks the restoration of divine favor. Before the battle, the author indicates that Judas has become an “irresistible” opponent due to God’s shift from “wrath” to “mercy” (2 Macc 8:5). This shift is God’s answer to the youngest martyr’s prayer in 7:37–38 (Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, CEJL [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008], 22–23). After the battle, the Jews recognize the day of their victory as “the beginning of mercy” (8:27). Finally, Nicanor chalks up the Jews’ victory to a divine defender who renders them “invulnerable” (8:36). With this comment, Nicanor becomes the first Gentile since Heliodorus (3:36–39) to testify to the deity’s defense of the Jews. Nicanor ironically announces that the period of divine abandonment is over.

restoration of miraculous judgments show that these events are a divine means of restoring covenantal blessings to the Jews. The miracles in 2 Maccabees are type 1 covenantal miracles.

One feature makes the miracles in 2 Maccabees more palpably Deuteronomistic than those in 1 Maccabees: the prefacing of the Antiochan crisis (2 Macc 4–7) with the Heliodorus episode (2 Macc 3). Whereas 1 Maccabees begins with a summary of Alexander and the Diadochoi's careers and rapidly proceeds to Antiochus (1 Macc 1:1–10), the central narrative of 2 Maccabees starts with the dilatory report of Heliodorus's attempted seizure of temple funds. This episode is memorable for its denouement. Following the Jews' supplications, several heavenly beings appear and beat Heliodorus to the point of death, stymying his plot (2 Macc 3:24–28). The Heliodorus episode exemplifies God's concern for the Jews under normal conditions.⁴⁰⁹ This account instills in readers a sense of God's commitment to the Jews and their holiest site.⁴¹⁰ When this commitment fails under Antiochus, readers are left searching for answers. Our author supplies these answers with the help of Deuteronomistic theology.

To roughly sketch the author's perspective, the Jews at the time of Antiochus stand under what I will call the "negative pole of covenantal existence" due to national disobedience. At this pole, divine intervention is absent when needed, and Antiochus can violate the temple with impunity (see 2 Macc 5:17–18, 20). Opposite to this stands the "positive pole of covenantal existence." The author expects the nation to return to this pole when God is reconciled. Here, the

⁴⁰⁹ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 5–6, 184. The excursus following Antiochus's plundering of the temple makes this function explicit: Antiochus would have received the customary "Heliodorus" treatment were it not for the Jews' sins (2 Macc 5:18)—an evident nod to Jason's program of Hellenization and its consequences (4:10–17).

⁴¹⁰ For the relationship between the miracles in 2 Maccabees and the temple in particular, see Robert Doran, *Temple Propaganda: The Purpose and Character of 2 Maccabees*, CBQMS 12 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981), 98–104.

Jews will enjoy divine benefits of the sort that frustrated Heliodorus (see 5:18, 20). This polarity implies that God, once reconciled, will again intervene on the nation's behalf.

The frontloading of the Heliodorus episode establishes the conspicuousness of divine absence in the Antiochan crisis, promoting the interpretation of post-crisis miracles as restored covenantal blessings. This episode prepends a period of blessing to the embedded covenantal pattern (blessing → disobedience → punishment → repentance → restoration/restored blessing). The events following God's reconciliation with the Jews are a return to the "status quo ante."⁴¹¹

3.3.3.3. *Punitive Miracles as Revelatory Manifestations*

The critical difference between 1 and 2 Maccabees is that punitive miracles in the latter book are not simply indices of God's covenantal posture but also "manifestations" (ἐπιφάνειαι). Most punitive miracles in 2 Maccabees manifest or reveal divine power in one way or another.⁴¹² This dimension is explicit in the Heliodorus episode. The appearance of the heavenly company that pummels the antagonist is an ἐπιφάνεια (2 Macc 3:24; see 3:30). This feature is also evident in one of Judas's victories over Timothy: an ἐπιφάνεια terrifies the opponents, causing them to flee (12:22). The "epiphanic" aspect of other episodes is less explicit given the absence of the key term (ἐπιφάνεια). Regardless, these accounts feature lexical items that contribute to the same profile. Antiochus's fall from his chariot and its aftermath makes God's power "visible" (φανερά; 9:7–8). Judas's victory over Timothy on another occasion is produced by heavenly horsemen

⁴¹¹ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 184.

⁴¹² The only miracle that does not stand out as a manifestation is the targeted death of certain Jews in battle (2 Macc 12:32–34, 39–40). For this episode, see "3.3.3.5. The Curious Case of the Providentially Fallen Jews."

who “appear” (ἐφάνησαν) and confound the enemy (10:29–30). The miracles in 2 Maccabees manifest divine power.

In their capacity as manifestations, punitive miracles are integral to a storyline that follows the contest between divine ἐπιφάνειαι and the arch-antagonist, Antiochus Epiphanes. The moniker “Epiphanes” (Ἐπιφανής) amounts to a blasphemous claim in 2 Maccabees.⁴¹³ Consequently, God produces ἐπιφάνειαι that put the lie to the king’s pretensions.

The proem to the narrative sets the stage for this contest. This section introduces the wars against the Antiochids (2 Macc 2:20) and the manifestations on behalf of the Jews participating in these struggles (2:21) as central themes.⁴¹⁴ The author does not overtly link these themes, yet the use of two ἐπιφάν- derivatives in quick succession (2:20: Ἐπιφανής; 2:21: ἐπιφάνειαι) hints at their association.⁴¹⁵

How the contest between divine manifestations and the Seleucid king will unfold is not immediately apparent due to the dissonance produced by the initial manifestations. The first manifestation—the appearance of a heavenly company to Heliodorus (2 Macc 3:24–26)—works in the Jews’ favor and establishes a standard of divine conduct, as I argued above. The next manifestation seemingly voids this standard. Heavenly armies “appear” (φαίνεσθαι) and do battle in the sky above Jerusalem at the time of Antiochus’s Egyptian campaign (5:2–3). This

⁴¹³ The mere application of Ἐπιφανής to Antiochus is not sufficient to establish that the king claimed divinity since this term can have a less exalted meaning, like “distinguished” (Arthur Darby Nock, “Notes on Ruler-Cult, I–IV,” *JHS* 48 [1928]: 40). Accordingly, the author of 1 Maccabees seems untroubled by Antiochus’s epithet, simply mentioning it in passing (1 Macc 1:10; see also 10:1). This title takes on a blasphemous hue in 2 Maccabees given the author’s depiction of divine manifestations. The resemblance between ἐπιφανής and ἐπιφάνεια makes it evident that the latter term is a riposte to the former. The ἐπιφάνειαι in 2 Maccabees make sense as condign responses to Antiochus’ Ἐπιφανής only if the reader supposes that the king claimed to manifest the divine.

⁴¹⁴ Strictly speaking, these themes are central to Jason of Cyrene’s history (see 2 Macc 2:23).

⁴¹⁵ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 172.

manifestation seemingly permits an optimistic interpretation (5:4), yet subsequent events show that the apparition portends disaster for Jerusalem (5:11ff.). The fulcrum on which the Jews' fortunes turn from the first story to the second—and thus, the factor determining the character of these manifestations—is covenantal observance.

The manifestations following God's reconciliation (2 Macc 8:5ff.) are naturally favorable. Antiochus's death is God's direct response to the king's pretensions, signaling a return to the divine *modus operandi* of 2 Macc 3. After voicing his intention to massacre the Jews of Jerusalem, Antiochus is struck by intestinal pains, thrown from his chariot, and left to endure a vile death (9:4–5, 7, 9–12, 18, 28). This episode subtly deviates from the pattern of other manifestations. Whereas manifestations elsewhere produce divine punishment yet are distinct from said punishment, the manifestation in 2 Macc 9 is coterminous with Antiochus's downfall.⁴¹⁶ Antiochus's humiliation is an immediate display of divine might.

After Antiochus's death, divine manifestations dog the king's successors and their subordinates. Heavenly apparitions twice rout Timothy's forces (2 Macc 10:29–30; 12:22).⁴¹⁷ Judas's men are emboldened by the appearance of a heavenly rider who leads them against Lysias (11:8–10). Finally, a manifestation facilitates a climactic victory over Nicanor. Nicanor is

⁴¹⁶ The contrast between this and related episodes concerns the nature of the event. A manifestation elsewhere is an extraordinary appearance that produces judgment. Thus, a heavenly company appears and pummels Heliodorus (2 Macc 3:25–26); heavenly horsemen appear and confound Timothy's forces (10:29–30); and the appearance of Judas's divinely energized troops terrifies Timothy's forces (12:22; see n. 433). In Antiochus's case, nothing materializes to cause the king's demise; the king's downfall itself displays divine power. There is a more immediate identification of the divine manifestation and punishment in this episode. The revelation technically occurs in Antiochus's fall and inability to walk (9:8)—a turn of events that contrasts with the king's earlier pretensions (9:8). That said, it is artificially restrictive to limit the moment of revelation to Antiochus's fall. The ejection from the chariot is one moment in a complex of events that reveals divine power.

⁴¹⁷ I follow Schwartz in identifying the *Τιμόθεος* of 2 Macc 10 with that of 2 Macc 12, despite the former's death in 10:37 (2 *Maccabees*, 421; cf. Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 296–97; Goldstein, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 41A [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], 339–40, 351–52). As Schwartz argues, the discrepancy between Timothy's death and later appearance suggests different sources.

an antagonist in the style of Antiochus, revealing his likeness to the king with his threat to replace the Lord's temple with a "visible [ἐπιφάνεις] temple for Dionysus" (14:33). Nicanor's forces are fittingly defeated by a Maccabean army that has been energized by a divine manifestation (15:27; see 15:13–16).⁴¹⁸ Ultimately, his head is pinned to the citadel in Jerusalem as an "evident [φανερὸν] sign of the Lord's help" (15:35). The contest between divine ἐπιφάνεια and Antiochus Epiphanes runs the breadth of 2 Maccabees, showing that the Jews' God fully exhibits what the king claims of himself. Not all of these manifestations are punitive miracles, but almost all such miracles promote this theme.

The construal of punitive miracles as ἐπιφάνεια is momentous given the revelatory dimension of these events. It emerges from a series of testimonies after certain manifestations that these events make the Jews' God known among the Gentiles.⁴¹⁹ Heliodorus's trampling and flagellation make him obey the angelic summons to "proclaim the mighty power of God to all" (2 Macc 3:34; see vv. 36, 38–39). Antiochus's sudden deterioration makes the king vow to "become a Jew" and "declare the power of God" everywhere (9:17).⁴²⁰ A defeat by an angel-led army causes Lysias to recognize "the powerful God" as the Jews' ally and treat for peace (11:13–

⁴¹⁸ Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 501; cf. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 507. Goldstein interprets the ἐπιφάνεια of 2 Macc 15:27 as a reference to the encouraging "appearance" of Jeremiah before the battle (15:13–16). Schwartz thinks that 15:27 refers to an unnarrated battle apparition. In my opinion, it is unnecessary to posit an additional apparition to explain 15:27, as Schwartz does. On one hand, the hypothesized apparition would be superfluous if it were meant to encourage the Jewish troops: Judas's speech and vision report have already done so (15:8–17). On the other hand, this apparition would be gratuitous if it were meant to produce the defeat of Nicanor's army. Judas previously defeated this figure without immediate divine assistance (8:9–36; see Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 473–74 for the identification of the two Nicanors). It is best to view the ἐπιφάνεια of 15:27 in terms of Jeremiah's appearance.

⁴¹⁹ See 2 Macc 8:36 for a testimony not produced by a manifestation. In this case, an ironic reversal of fortunes (8:34–35) alerts Nicanor to the deity's support of the Jews.

⁴²⁰ That Ἰουδαῖον ἔσεσθαι (2 Macc 9:17) connotes a "theological conversion" is argued by Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, HCS 31 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 90–93, 129–30. This conversion purportedly entails worshipping the Jews' God, but not circumcision.

15).⁴²¹ The pattern of these stories (ἐπιφάνεια → a Gentile recognizing God) shows that divine manifestations are instruments of revelation. This property is arguably inherent in other manifestations in 2 Maccabees as well, even those that do not produce recorded testimonies.⁴²² The miracles in this book generally reveal the Jews' God. This development is natural within 2 Maccabees, fulfilling the last brother's appeal that Antiochus confess the Jews' God after experiencing "afflictions and scourges" (7:37). However, this feature has no parallel in 1 Maccabees,⁴²³ and it has not been prominent in biblical history.⁴²⁴

We must turn to the exodus event to find a precursor to the revelatory miracles in 2 Maccabees. The signs and wonders of the exodus event were instruments of divine revelation that made God's character and purposes known. These miracles alerted the Egyptians to the Lord's identity and brought Israel to know the Lord as a national redeemer. God's revelation to the Egyptians is consequential for the present discussion. Pharaoh's claim on the enslaved Hebrews entailed suppressing God's title to these people. The signs and wonders of the exodus

⁴²¹ Lysias's "testimony" is an internal deliberative process rather than a public declaration. Regardless, this process is a testimony of sorts since the narrator makes us privy to Lysias's thoughts.

⁴²² This inference is plausible given the prominent positions of the initial manifestations. The manifestations involving Heliodorus and Antiochus bookend the Antiochan crisis, establishing the profile of divine manifestations in 2 Maccabees. Since these manifestations produce testimonies, it is reasonable to extrapolate this revelatory dimension to later manifestations.

⁴²³ Antiochus's death-dealing grief in 1 Maccabees is revelatory in the sense that it alerts the king to his crimes (1 Macc 6:12–13). However, this revelation is subsidiary to the punishment of the king's crimes.

⁴²⁴ My colleague Eric McDonnell has drawn my attention to several texts in the book of Psalms that attest to a phenomenon like what I describe above. The most relevant among these texts is Ps 82. McDonnell observes that the psalmist entreats God to deal with Israel's enemies as God once treated Midian and Sisera (Ps 82:10)—that is, through miraculous judgments (see Judg 4:15; 7:22). The psalmist concludes, "Let them [the enemies] know that your name is the Lord; you alone are highest over all the earth" (Ps 82:19). Psalm 82 displays the same relationship between the miraculous judgment of Israel's enemies and their recognition of Israel's God as I observe in 2 Maccabees. McDonnell suggests that psalms like this make the phenomenon I have observed in 2 Maccabees less novel. I concur with McDonnell's general assessment. However, since I focus on punitive miracles in narrative literature, I generally do not engage the Psalter except when it factors into intertextuality (e.g., Acts 1:20).

event undermined Pharaoh's position by magnifying the Lord's status as the ruler of creation and rightful determiner of Israel's future.

The revelatory dimension of punitive miracles never became prominent after the departure from Egypt. However, it does appear in two accounts that evoke the exodus deliverance. On the first occasion (1 Sam 4–6), the Philistines' bungled attempts at managing the ark resulted in miraculous judgments that revealed God's presence. These judgments made it evident that the Philistines' ostensible victory over the God of the exodus was illusory. On a second occasion (2 Kgs 18–19), Hezekiah persuaded the deity to intervene against Sennacherib by casting Judah's deliverance as a matter of divine renown. Sennacherib ranged the Lord among the gods of the nations, so the miraculous destruction of his army revealed the Lord's uniqueness. What is striking about these post-exodus accounts is that the relevant miracles reveal the deity to foreigners who have assumed a stance like Pharaoh. The Philistines had effectively enslaved the Israelites. Sennacherib had designs of subduing and resettling the Judahites. The revelatory dimension of punitive miracles is activated when Israel faces oppressors who misclassify the Lord.

The development of punitive miracles in 2 Maccabees is natural against this background. Antiochus and his congeners arrogate divine prerogatives and prevent the Jews from rendering due obedience to God. These acts are predicated on an inadequate view of the Jews' God. Since the Seleucids have adopted a position eerily similar to Pharaoh,⁴²⁵ their actions are met with a response that conjures the revelatory deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt.

⁴²⁵ Schwartz cogently observes an allusion to Exod 1:11 (ἐπέστησεν [Φαραώ] αὐτοῖς ἐπιστάτας τῶν ἔργων, ἵνα κακώσωσιν αὐτοὺς ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις) in 2 Macc 5:22 (κατέλιπε [Ἀντίοχος] ... ἐπιστάτας τοῦ κακοῦν τὸ γένος). He writes, "Those who know their Septuagint will doubtless recognize here an allusion to the wicked Pharaoh of Exodus 1:11, who appointed 'officials' 'to torment' the Hebrews" (2 *Maccabees*, 263–64). This allusion may provide evidence of a more extensive effort to associate Antiochus with Pharaoh (see Schwartz, 2 *Maccabees*, 356).

It was not a foregone conclusion that the Antiochan crisis would provoke the literary resurgence of miracles in the style of the exodus event. As 1 Maccabees demonstrates, authors could respond to this crisis without resurrecting the signs and wonders of Moses.⁴²⁶ Our book makes the unusual, albeit reasonable decision to revive a thread from biblical history that was prominent in Exodus and then abandoned. This revival opens the way to future miracles that similarly reveal the deity.

As an aside, it is noteworthy that the revelatory aspect of these miracles has been fused with their type 1 covenantal function. The same events that instantiate blessings to the Jews reveal the Jews' God to their erstwhile opponents. I will analyze this development and its consequences in due course. For now, it suffices that the fusion of the type 1 function and this revelatory dimension opens creative vistas that other books can pursue.

3.3.3.4. War Miracles

A couple of miracles treated above require further analysis given their setting. Since two manifestations occur in a martial context (2 Macc 10:29–30; 12:22), they are also war miracles. These miracles fall under the aegis of the divine victory over Pharaoh in Exod 14. Additionally, these miracles neutralize opponents who would prevent the Jews from prospering in the land, like the conquest and occupation miracles.

The first war miracle protects the Jews' earliest gains under Judas. Shortly after the Jews reoccupy Jerusalem and the temple (2 Macc 10:1), Timothy marshals an overwhelming force and

⁴²⁶ There is a restricted sense in which 1 Maccabees evokes the exodus event. Since the "punishment" phase of the covenantal pattern in 1 Maccabees consists of foreign oppression, all the ingredients are at hand for depicting the type 1 covenantal miracle in the "restoration" phase as an exodus-like miracle of deliverance. First Maccabees does not take advantage of these ingredients, whereas 2 Maccabees does.

sets his sights on Judea (10:24). This threat follows on the heels of a prayer that the Lord would no longer punish the Jews through “blasphemous and barbarous nations” (10:4).⁴²⁷ The miracle in the ensuing conflict makes it evident that God has granted the Jews’ request. As the opposing forces fight, heavenly horsemen appear and turn the tide of battle in the Jews’ favor (10:29–30). The horsemen’s most fantastic act is decisive: they lob arrows and thunderbolts that arrest Timothy’s forces in blindness, causing their defeat (10:30).⁴²⁸

The dynamics of this episode associate the victory with God’s previous interventions in battle.⁴²⁹ First, the effect of the divine intervention here is identical to Exod 14: Timothy’s troops are stripped of the ability to gauge the conditions of battle (2 Macc 10:30 // Exod 14:24). Timothy has become a menace, and his forces are neutralized like Pharaoh’s army. Second, the

⁴²⁷ In his comments on 2 Macc 10:4, Goldstein observes, “The rest of the abridged history serves to demonstrate that the prayer in our verse was fulfilled” (*II Maccabees*, 379). The Jews’ prayer upon the reoccupation of Jerusalem is indeed programmatic. However, we should not overlook the special relationship between the prayer in 10:4 and Timothy’s invasion in 10:24. The request in 10:4 follows the reconquest of Jerusalem (10:1). The immediate import of this prayer is that God should no longer allow the “blasphemous and barbarous nations” to have free reign over the Jewish capital and sanctuary. Since Timothy aims at the subjection of Judea—and thus, Jerusalem—he is the first antagonist to test the deity’s response to this prayer.

⁴²⁸ The fate of Timothy’s forces depends on whether one follows the Göttingen edition (διεξίπταντο; 2 Macc 10:30) or Rahlfs-Hanhart (διεκρίπτοντο). For a discussion of these variants, see Nikolaos Domazakis, *The Neologisms in 2 Maccabees*, SGLL 23 (Lund: Lund University, 2018), 202–6. Domazakis persuasively argues that the former variant, which translators have taken to refer to the “scattering” of Timothy’s troops, is inferior to the latter, which Domazakis takes as a reference to the destruction of these forces.

⁴²⁹ Schwartz discusses 2 Kgs 6:15–18 as a possible influence on 2 Macc 10:29–30. He observes: “Both feature heavenly horses which surround the hero, are invisible to the Israelites/Jews, and bring blindness and defeat upon their enemies” (“On Something Biblical about 2 Maccabees,” in *Biblical Perspectives: Early Use and Interpretation of the Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the First International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 12-14 May, 1996*, ed. Michael E. Stone and Esther G. Chazon, STDJ 28 [Leiden: Brill, 1998], 226). A relationship between these passages is plausible given the use of ἀορασία in both. However, Schwartz’s parallels break down upon consideration. For instance, the horses in 2 Kgs 6 do not “bring blindness and defeat upon” the Syrians; God blinds them (2 Kgs 6:18). There are no personal divine agents apart from God in the Elisha episode, and it is difficult to imagine how the horses themselves would blind the opponents. Schwartz concedes, “There is nothing deep about this, no carry-through, no thorough-going attempt to compare Judas Maccabeus to Elisha ... If anyone remains unconvinced that 2 Kgs 6 played a role somewhere in the mind of the author of 2 Macc. 10 ... I would neither be surprised nor bother to argue the matter” (“On Something Biblical about 2 Maccabees,” 226). The likeness between 2 Kgs 6 and 2 Macc 10 is superficial.

citation of a suggestive text before battle casts Judas's efforts in the mold of the conquest. The Jews invoke Exod 23:22, calling on God "to be an enemy to their enemies and oppose the opponents" (2 Macc 10:26). God gave this "promise" to Moses at Mount Sinai.⁴³⁰ The continuation of this statement (Exod 23:23) indicates that the enemies in view were the Canaanites, whom God proposed to eliminate upon Israel's entrance into the promised land. By invoking this text, Judas's men activate the memory of God's involvement in the original struggle for the land, fashioning the present conflict as a renewal of this fight and calling for similar divine action against Timothy.⁴³¹ God answers this prayer, meaning the Jews enjoy divine support like Joshua's Israelites. The victory in 2 Macc 10 marks a resurgence of God's martial interventions that have punctuated Israel's history. The reporting of such a miracle connected with the first hostile attempt on Judea after Antiochus's death emphasizes the beginning of a new chapter in the people's history. God will henceforth protect the Jews in the land from would-be oppressors.

The second war miracle appears in another conflict with Timothy. After the battle for Judea in 2 Macc 10, Timothy and some other foes begin to antagonize the people (2 Macc 12:2). Although the nature of this disturbance is vague, the severity of the general threat to the Jews at this time is illustrated by the contemporary conduct of the Joppites, who treacherously drown the

⁴³⁰ Formally, the "promise" of Exod 23:22 is the apodosis of a conditional sentence. That the Jews invoke this statement presupposes that they have met the condition of the protasis, obedience.

⁴³¹ The appearance of heavenly horsemen in 2 Macc 10:29–30 provides additional evidence that the context of Exod 23 informs our episode. Schwartz observes that the appearance of the horsemen in 2 Macc 10:29 and 11:8 is a fulfillment of Exod 23:23, a text in which God proposes to keep the promise of the preceding verse by sending an angel to lead the people into Canaan (2 *Maccabees*, 387–88). Just as God formerly promised to side with the Israelites against their enemies through a guiding angel, God now answers the Jews' invocation of the same promise by sending heavenly horsemen to lead them against Timothy.

Jewish residents of their city (12:3–4).⁴³² Such hostility forces Judas to take up the sword once more. Judas pursues Timothy (12:10, 17–18, 20), and the latter’s forces are seized by an incapacitating fear when they catch sight of the Jews’ van (12:22).⁴³³ Timothy’s terrified forces make a precipitous dash for safety, producing many friendly fire injuries and self-inflicted wounds. Judas then presses his advantage and makes short work of the cowed opponent (12:23).

This event finds its *raison d’être* in preserving peace. Before the battle, the Jews decimated Lysias’s forces (2 Macc 11:11–12), causing the regent to persuade Antiochus V Eupator to agree to peace terms (11:13–15). The king yielded his claim to the temple and allowed the Jews to observe their ancestral customs (11:25), at which point the people enjoyed their first respite since before the Antiochan crisis (12:1).⁴³⁴ Timothy and his fellows threaten these concessions—or at least the spirit of them, which Eupator made to exempt the Jews from

⁴³² Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 442.

⁴³³ Two issues complicate the interpretation of 2 Macc 12:22: the nature of the manifestation of “the one who looks upon all things,” and the relationship of this ἐπιφάνεια to the prior “appearance” of Judas’s forces. The text does not describe the object of the opponents’ perception (Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 442; Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 431). Goldstein speculates that “perhaps the panic itself was the sole manifestation of it [the ‘divine intervention’]” (*II Maccabees*, 442). Schwartz suggests the reference to an ἐπιφάνεια might be the author’s means of “articulating the axiom that Judas’ victory *must* have been the result of divine aid” (*2 Maccabees*, 431). This statement apparently means that “manifestation” in this context denotes something other than a visible display of divine power. Notwithstanding my treatment of Antiochus’s death, it is preferable to seek an interpretation more in keeping with other ἐπιφάνεια in 2 Maccabees, which are usually visible manifestations. This desideratum can be met by exploring the second issue in this passage, the relationship between the manifestation and Judas’s forces. Since 2 Maccabees uses ἐπιφαν- terms strategically, it is telling that 12:22 uses such words to denote the appearance of Judas’s van (ἐπιφανέλσης) and the divine manifestation (ἐπιφάνεια). It is reasonable to infer a relationship between these events (see Robert Doran, *2 Maccabees: A Critical Commentary*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Herm [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012], 241 for the syntactical association of these events). Schwartz intuitively grasps this relationship (see *2 Maccabees*, 431). However, he fails to draw what I see as a reasonable inference: the van of Judas’s army has been strengthened by divine energy that arrests antagonists on sight. This reading presupposes a manifestation that differs from most others since it lacks divine beings. Regardless, this understanding allows me to fulfill the reasonable expectation that something should “appear” in connection with an ἐπιφάνεια.

⁴³⁴ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 407–8, 420. Schwartz notes that the young Antiochus’s concessions reverse his father’s prohibition of the Jewish laws (2 Macc 6:1) and takeover of the temple (6:2–5). He later writes, “[With the conclusion of 2 Macc 11], our story has ended; according to the diasporan author, the abrogation of the decrees against Judaism was followed by the establishment of peace between the Jews and the Seleucid monarchy” (*2 Maccabees*, 420). The concessions of 2 Macc 11 fully end the Antiochan crisis.

disturbances (11:25). The incapacitation of Timothy's forces subdues an emergent threat, facilitating the Jews' continued prosperity.

The divine actions against Timothy are reminiscent of the conquest and occupation miracles. This affinity is a matter of historical appeal in 2 Macc 10. Nevertheless, it is more fundamentally a matter of shared function. Just as the miracles of Israel's formative era paved the way toward acquiring and maintaining a hold on Canaan, the war miracles in 2 Maccabees preserve the Jews' prosperity in the land. Judas is following in the footsteps of Joshua by leading a new conquest. God assists this effort by subduing the Jews' opponents.

3.3.3.5. *The Curious Case of the Providentially Fallen Jews*

An odd event occurs in a battle against Gorgias, the governor of Idumea, that seemingly defies the profile I have sketched of 2 Maccabees. This event is the providential death of certain Jews. According to our book, Judas defeats Gorgias's forces in a brutal encounter, but some Jews die in the process (2 Macc 12:32–37). When the Jewish survivors recover their dead, they discover “consecrated objects of the Jamnian idols” on the victims (12:39–40).⁴³⁵ This finding leads the survivors to conclude that the possession of these items was responsible for the deaths (12:40).

An unstated presupposition makes the death of these Jews punitive. The empirical starting point for the survivors is the presence of illicit items on every victim. The survivors infer from this discovery that the list of those killed coincides entirely with those who possessed such

⁴³⁵ The nature of these “consecrated objects” (ἱερῶματα) is disputed. Goldstein holds that the ἱερῶματα are votive offerings that the fallen Jews plundered in contravention of Deut 7:25–26 (*II Maccabees*, 448–49). Domazakis understands these ἱερῶματα as protective representations of Jamnian deities (*The Neologisms in 2 Maccabees*, 191–99). I am inclined to agree with Goldstein given his observation that “no pious Jew would pray for the forgiveness of Ahaziah or of sinners like him [those “putting faith in false gods”; see 2 Kgs 1:2–16 for Ahaziah's sin]” (*II Maccabees*, 449).

items. With this presupposition in hand, the survivors conclude that God singled out the guilty for death as a punishment for their sins.

As to the miraculous nature of this event, the absence of non-complicit Jews among the fallen is a sign that God providentially distinguished between the innocent and the guilty. This distinction can be elucidated by probing the survival of the innocent. God either bestowed miraculous protection on the innocent or directed the brunt of Gorgias's forces at the guilty. The former possibility is likelier given statements about the "invulnerability" of the Jews (2 Macc 8:36; see also 8:5; 11:13). That such reports are to be taken at face value is indicated by our book's ignorance, apart from this episode, of Jewish deaths in battle.⁴³⁶ Second Maccabees assumes a baseline of Jewish invulnerability. Thus, God punished the guilty by withholding the protection they would otherwise enjoy. It is surprising to find this miraculous judgment after the restoration of divine favor to the Jews. The appearance of such a miracle at this stage calls God's support for the people into question.

Despite its apparent incongruity with the upswing in the Jews' fortunes, the miracle in 2 Macc 12 signals that the covenantal arrangement is working properly. This event testifies to divine impartiality. Judas began his current campaign by invoking God as "the righteous judge" (ὁ δίκαιος κριτής; 2 Macc 12:6). This invocation cast Judas's forces as the agents of divine vengeance. That Judas's men come to acknowledge the death of their fellows as the work of "the righteous judge" (ὁ δικαιοκρίτης; 12:41) affirms that the Jews remain liable to divine justice, even when God is otherwise propitious.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ For Jewish casualties in the synoptic portion of 1 Maccabees, see 1 Macc 5:55–62, 67; 6:43–46.

⁴³⁷ Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 245. Doran observes that this divine epithet's use creates an *inclusio* in 2 Macc 12. However, he does not explain the significance of this repetition.

Nevertheless, the Jews' experience in this episode reflects a covenantal privilege. As our author previously explained, God permits the nations to sin until they are ripe for judgment but sees promptly to the correction of the Jews, disciplining them swiftly in the event of sin to prevent the need for devastating punishment at a later date (2 Macc 6:12–16).⁴³⁸ From this perspective, the miracle in 2 Macc 12 is a promptly implemented judgment in the interest of divine “mercy” (see 6:16).⁴³⁹ The miracle prevents the guilty from sinning beyond remedy, and it potentially expiates their fatal offense (12:42).⁴⁴⁰

God's conduct in this episode hardly indicates a return to the Antiochan crisis. The miracle in 2 Macc 12 reveals that the covenantal relationship is operating at an enhanced level. At no other point in biblical history have the wicked alone been singled out for death in battle. The heightened degree of divine selectivity in this episode suggests that the deity is taking precautions to ensure that the people continue to enjoy divine favor. In light of the covenantal pattern embedded earlier in 2 Maccabees, this event should be interpreted as God's attempt to stave off another iteration of this sequence. The providential death of the guilty offers a paradoxical affirmation of divine support for the Jews.

⁴³⁸ The association of this miracle with 2 Macc 6:12–16 depends on Abel, *Les livres des Maccabées*, 444.

⁴³⁹ Goldstein is most likely correct that Judas's men acquired the consecrated objects during one of the expeditions against Jamnia (described in 1 Macc 5:55–62; 2 Macc 12:8–9) (*II Maccabees*, 448–49). Since only one Jamnian expedition appears in our book, it is natural to take this occasion as the inception of the sin in question. The Jews' sin is dealt with expeditiously: it is committed (2 Macc 12:9) and punished (12:34) in a single chapter.

⁴⁴⁰ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 441: “[The Jews pray] that the death of the sinners shall be complete atonement for them.” The Jews' statement, formally a prayer, offers no assurance that God is satisfied with the deaths of the guilty. However, this prayer suggests that the divine judgment may release the fallen from their sin.

3.3.3.6. Summary

The punitive miracles in 2 Maccabees represent an innovative adaptation of themes from biblical history. In keeping with 1 Maccabees and the Primary History, these miracles have a covenantal function. They also feature a revelatory dimension that can be traced to Exodus. Like the signs and wonders in Egypt, the manifestations of 2 Maccabees reveal divine power to the Gentiles. The outstanding accomplishment of 2 Maccabees is the thorough fusing of these features. The same events that deliver blessings to the Jews (the type 1 covenantal function) reveal the Jews' God to their erstwhile opponents. Punitive miracles do not produce conversions to Judaism in 2 Maccabees. However, these events lead the Jews' most pernicious opponents to recognize the supremacy of the Jewish God.

3.3.4. 3 Maccabees

3.3.4.1. Introduction

The punitive miracles in 3 Maccabees will be familiar to readers of 2 Maccabees.⁴⁴¹ The preeminent miracles in 3 Maccabees are epiphanic, manifesting divine power in the rescue of the Jews.⁴⁴² However, unlike 2 Maccabees, the revelatory dimension of these events is initially

⁴⁴¹ For this book's reliance on 2 Maccabees, see Johannes Tromp, "The Formation of the Third Book of Maccabees," *Hen* 17 (1995): 318–22; Noah Hacham, "Sanctity and the Attitude towards the Temple in Hellenistic Judaism," in *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History?: On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple*, ed. Daniel R. Schwartz, Zeev Weiss, and Ruth A. Clements, AGJU 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 171–77.

⁴⁴² The covenantal function of punitive miracles is active in 3 Maccabees, but it remains undeveloped due to the absence of the full covenantal pattern. The Jews are innocent throughout the narrative; there is no need for punishment, repentance, or restoration. The two prayers in the book contain confessions (3 Macc 2:13, 19; 6:10), but

absent in 3 Maccabees. This book postpones the antagonist's recognition of divine power until the last possible moment, energizing the narrative's plot in the process. This subversion of readerly expectations results in the elevation of the Egyptian Jewish community.

3.3.4.2. *Punitive Miracles as Manifestations ... without Revelation?*

The central tension in 3 Maccabees stems from an incident that bears a striking resemblance to the Heliodorus episode in 2 Maccabees. This incident involves the actions of Ptolemy IV Philopator after the Fourth Syrian War. Having defeated Antiochus III at Raphia and reestablished his claim to Coele-Syria (3 Macc 1:1–5), Ptolemy visits his holdings to consolidate his power (1:6–7). When the king comes to Jerusalem and observes the temple's operations, he is inspired to inspect the holy of holies (1:9–10). This plan sets the stage for a showdown between Ptolemy and the Jews that recapitulates Heliodorus's experience (3 Macc 1:11–2:20 // 2 Macc 3:13–23). The Jews' supplication for their holy site gives way to an ἐπιφάνεια that stymies the king's plan (3 Macc 2:21–23 // 2 Macc 3:24–28).⁴⁴³ Ptolemy is whipped,⁴⁴⁴ shaken “like a reed by the wind,” and briefly paralyzed and silenced (3 Macc 2:21–22).

these confessions are perfunctory. The miracles in 3 Maccabees have a type 1 covenantal function that does not develop the covenantal pattern.

⁴⁴³ Although the miracle in 3 Macc 2 is not termed an ἐπιφάνεια, the petition before this event (ἐπίφανον τὸ ἔλεός σου; 3 Macc 2:19) suggests that we should conceive of it in such terms. This miracle's likeness to the analogous event in 2 Macc 3:24–26, which indisputably involves a divine manifestation, points in the same direction. For a similar understanding, see Jeremy Corley, “Divine Sovereignty and Power in the High-Priestly Prayer of 3 Macc 2:1–20,” in *Prayer from Tobit to Qumran: Inaugural Conference of the ISDCL at Salzburg, Austria, 5–9 July 2003*, ed. Renate Egger-Wenzel and Jeremy Corley, DCLY 2004 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 381–82. For a contrary perspective, cf. Hacham, “Sanctity and the Attitude towards the Temple,” 159, 161–62. Hacham holds that the manifestation requested in 3 Macc 2:19 fails to materialize in the temple and is fulfilled later (6:18ff.).

⁴⁴⁴ The fact that God “whips” Ptolemy (3 Macc 2:21) indicates a visible manifestation along the lines of 2 Macc 3:26. An unbrandished whip would need to be visible to distinguish this action from the miraculous shaking.

What is startling about this episode is how it veers from Heliodorus's story from this point forward. Whereas Heliodorus went on to become a herald of "the Greatest God" (2 Macc 3:36), Ptolemy becomes hostile to "the Greatest God" (3 Macc 3:11; 4:16) and the Jews, who rely on this deity (1:16; 5:25). The analogy between Heliodorus and Ptolemy primes us to expect a conversion of sorts on the latter's part, but this expectation disappoints. The manifestation to Ptolemy lacks the revelatory dimension associated with such miracles. This absence energizes the ensuing drama.

Frustrated in his designs, Ptolemy returns to Egypt and vents his anger on the resident Jewish population. The king initially offers the Alexandrian Jews a carrot and a stick. The carrot is initiation into the Dionysian mysteries and Alexandrian citizenship (3 Macc 2:30; 3:21).⁴⁴⁵ The stick is the restriction of religious activities,⁴⁴⁶ forced participation in a census, an altered civic status,⁴⁴⁷ and branding with the ivy leaf of Dionysus (2:28–29).⁴⁴⁸ Most Jews decline both

⁴⁴⁵ Moses Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, JAL (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), 45.

⁴⁴⁶ Ptolemy's prohibition pertains to "those who do not sacrifice" (3 Macc 2:28). That this group includes the Jews is made certain by the preceding reference to Ptolemy's desire to discredit them (2:27). Joseph Modrzejewski clarifies that "[cette disposition] signifie, pour les Juifs d'Égypte, l'arrêt du culte synagogaal" (*Troisième livre des Maccabées*, BA 15.3 [Paris: Cerf, 2008], 139; see also 98–99).

⁴⁴⁷ Ptolemy decrees that the Jews will receive an οἰκετικὴν διάθεσιν (3 Macc 2:28). Hadas translates this phrase as "[a] slave condition" (*The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, 45). N. Clayton Croy likewise writes, "Philopator decreed that the Jews were to be subjected to slavery" (3 *Maccabees*, SEPT [Leiden: Brill, 2006], 59). Modrzejewski raises the possibility that Ptolemy is threatening to demote the Jews to the level of the native Egyptians (*Troisième livre des Maccabées*, 100–101; see also 139–40). However we interpret this phrase, an alteration in the Jews' civic status is in view.

⁴⁴⁸ Croy holds that the purpose of this branding is forced participation in the cult of Dionysus (3 *Maccabees*, 60). Luc Renaut contests this position, observing that we would expect the Jews who voluntarily join the cult (3 Macc 2:30) to be the ones receiving branding if it held such a meaning ("Ptolémée Philopator et le stigmatisme de Dionysos," *Mèt N. S.* 4 [2006]: 222). On Renaut's view, "la marque au fer rouge ... renvoie sans ambiguïté au souverain lagide lui-même [Philopator], auquel les Juifs sont désormais soumis, tels des captifs pris sur l'ennemi" ("Ptolémée Philopator et le stigmatisme," 222; similarly Modrzejewski, *Troisième livre des Maccabées*, 101–3). The issue is Ptolemy's intention: whether to force the Jews to violate their religious convictions or to mark them as notorious subjects. Croy's position seems stronger given the Jews' response in 3 Macc 2:32. The language of this

options as invitations to apostasy. They avoid the additional threat of death by paying bribes (2:32; see 2:28). This evasion infuriates Ptolemy, and he changes tack by ordering the rounding up of all Egyptian Jews (3:1, 25).⁴⁴⁹ The Jews are soon gathered in the Alexandrian hippodrome (4:4–11), and their plight reaches a crescendo as Ptolemy orders the elephant commander to prepare the pachyderms under his care to execute the captives (5:1–2). The Egyptian Jews face a crisis that far outstrips Ptolemy’s menace to Jerusalem. This crisis would have been averted had the king’s eyes been opened by the manifestation in the temple. As it is, Ptolemy is bent on the Jews’ destruction, raising the need for further divine intervention.

The beleaguered Jews respond to their impending doom by praying for “a magnificent manifestation” of the deity (3 Macc 5:8), a request God initially seems to ignore. To be sure, the captives are protected from danger in the interim. God fends off the immediate threat by overpowering Ptolemy with sleep, depriving the king of the ability to give the final approval for the execution (5:10–12). Ptolemy then adjusts course by moving the execution to the following day (5:18–20), at which time God strips the king of all knowledge of the plot (5:26–34).

Regardless, these interventions fall short of the ἐπιφάνεια requested in 5:8.⁴⁵⁰ The Jews’ fate

verse (οἱ δὲ πλεῖστοι ... οὐ διέστησαν τῆς εὐσεβείας) indicates that the Jews view both options—branding (2:29) and voluntary initiation (2:30)—as invitations to apostasy.

⁴⁴⁹ Hadas observes a contradiction in the scope of Ptolemy’s decree. Ptolemy condemns the Alexandrian Jews and their rural counterparts in 3 Macc 3:1, yet the former group is not facing death in 4:12 (*The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, 47). In the latter passage, Ptolemy learns that Alexandrian Jews are sneaking out of the city to lament the fate of the captives in the hippodrome (4:12), and he condemns the Alexandrian Jews as well (4:13–14). Hadas attributes this contradiction to an “unskilful mortising” of sources (*The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, 47). Regardless, it is clear that “the whole [Jewish] race” faces death by 4:14.

⁴⁵⁰ Croy, *3 Maccabees*, 86: “The response of the Jews to this deliverance [in 3 Macc 5:11–12] was to praise and entreat God. Philopator’s slumber was clearly an answer to the prayer of 5:7–8, or at least half an answer. The crisis had been averted and they had been rescued in a sense, but the developments of vv. 11–12 might not qualify as a ‘glorious manifestation.’ The entreaty of v. 13 looks back on their deliverance with gratitude, but it also seems to recognize the impermanence of that deliverance.” Another reason to distinguish between these divine interventions and the requested manifestation is the description of the former as ἐνέργειαι (5:12, 28; see 4:21). The Jews request an ἐπιφάνεια after these divine “activities” (5:51; 6:9).

appears to be sealed when Ptolemy regains his memory and commits himself by oath to their speedy extermination (5:37–38, 42–43).

When the Jews perceive their execution is imminent, they plead for God “to have pity on them with a manifestation” (3 Macc 5:51; see also 6:9), effectively declaring that it is now or never for the deity to make good on their earlier request. It is at this point that God takes matters in hand. The captives, apparently with the aid of divine amplification, raise a cry that terrorizes Ptolemy’s army (6:16–17). Two angels then come into view and implement the ἐπιφάνεια proper (6:18; see 6:39). The angels terrorize Ptolemy’s forces, immobilize these troops, and cause the elephants to trample them to death (6:19, 21).⁴⁵¹ The manifestation, though delayed, has the desired effect: it neutralizes the threat to the Jews, and to paraphrase Eleazar, it reveals to the nations that the Lord is with the people, even in Egypt (6:15).

Ptolemy is the foremost Gentile to perceive the manifestation’s import. Upon witnessing the angelic spectacle, the king is again seized by forgetfulness (3 Macc 6:20; see 5:28).⁴⁵² However, this time his transformation endures. Ptolemy recognizes “the Great God,” whom he formerly defied (3:11; 4:16), as the benefactor of the Lagid dynasty (7:2; see also 6:28).⁴⁵³ The king also acknowledges that the Jews are the children of this God (6:28; 7:6, 9) and a bulwark to his kingdom (6:25–26; 7:7), facts which spur him to release the Jews (6:27–29) and arrange their

⁴⁵¹ The text is silent concerning the cause of the elephants’ turn on the Ptolemaic forces; see 3 Macc 6:21. Regardless, we can reasonably attribute this change to the angels, either immediately (through a miraculous stimulus) or mediately (as Croy supposes, through the angels’ terrifying appearance; *3 Maccabees*, 104).

⁴⁵² Ptolemy’s last bout of forgetfulness (3 Macc 5:27–34) anticipates the transformation he experiences in 3 Macc 6:20, particularly in terms of his attitude toward his friends, on one hand, and the Jews, on the other hand (see esp. 5:31–32; 6:24–28).

⁴⁵³ Hacham, “Sanctity and the Attitude towards the Temple,” 163. Hacham associates ὁ μέγας θεός with the title ὁ μέγιστος θεός found elsewhere in the book. The difference in degree may reflect a note of reservation on Ptolemy’s part.

return home (6:37, 41; 7:1–9, 20–23). The ἐπιφάνεια in the hippodrome produces the Heliodorus moment expected during Ptolemy's visit to the temple.⁴⁵⁴

Though the king's transformation has been postponed, its outcome repays the wait. Whereas the manifestation in 2 Macc 3 produces the "conversion" of a Seleucid courtier, the one in 3 Macc 6 changes the Lagid monarch himself. Moreover, the manifestation in the hippodrome achieves what was off-limits in 2 Maccabees: the transformation of the Jews' chief antagonist. Ptolemy recognizes the supremacy of the Jews' God. In contrast, Antiochus IV was denied the opportunity to repent. The ἐπιφάνεια-induced transformation in 3 Maccabees involves an individual of higher profile and has greater significance than anything in 2 Maccabees. The revelatory dimension of this ἐπιφάνεια in 3 Maccabees has been magnified beyond 2 Maccabees.

The climactic manifestation in 3 Maccabees affects the portrayal of the Egyptian Jewish community. Since the manifestation that produces Ptolemy's transformation occurs in Alexandria, among diasporan Jews, rather than the temple in Jerusalem, Judaism's notional center, our book centers the diasporan community as the object of divine solicitude.⁴⁵⁵ This emphasis on the Jews of Egypt will be conspicuous to readers of 2 Maccabees. The Heliodorus episode (2 Macc 3) programs readers to expect a decisive display of divine might when an antagonist threatens the temple. This expectation fails with Ptolemy's trip to Jerusalem, at least in terms of the king's response. The Alexandrian manifestation reorients such readers by

⁴⁵⁴ Tromp, "The Formation of the Third Book of Maccabees," 321; similarly, Hacham, "Sanctity and the Attitude towards the Temple," 173–76.

⁴⁵⁵ Hacham, "Sanctity and the Attitude towards the Temple," 161; similarly, David S. Williams, "3 Maccabees: A Defense of Diaspora Judaism?," *JSP* 13 (1995): 25–29.

showing that God's care for Jews in Egypt equals God's concern for those of Judea.⁴⁵⁶ This altered emphasis is not a disparagement of the people and institutions of Judean Judaism;⁴⁵⁷ it demonstrates that diasporan Jews enjoy the same care that their Judean counterparts experience in 2 Maccabees. That parity is at stake is demonstrated by this book's presupposition that the fortunes of Judean and diasporan Jews rise and fall together.⁴⁵⁸ The ἐπιφάνειαι in 3 Maccabees promote the cohesion of geographically diffuse communities by indicating that the Jews of Egypt are equally the objects of divine concern as those in Judea.⁴⁵⁹

3.3.4.3. Summary

The punitive miracles in 3 Maccabees play on the profile of manifestations established by 2 Maccabees. Third Maccabees largely overlooks the covenantal function of manifestations in 2 Maccabees in favor of their revelatory utility. However, even this revelatory dimension is suspended to challenge the reader's understanding. The decisive manifestation appears not in Jerusalem but among diasporan Jews. This subversion reorients readers to see these Jews as objects of divine concern equal to their Judean counterparts.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁶ Adapting Hacham, "Sanctity and the Attitude towards the Temple," 155–79, esp. pp. 171–78; Williams, "3 Maccabees," 25–29. I disagree with Hacham's view of the polemical purpose of 3 Maccabees. Williams is more judicious: "It is evident that the author of 3 Maccabees is at pains to assert the connection of Diaspora and Palestinian Jewry, and God's providential concern for both, especially for Diaspora Jews" ("3 Maccabees," 27).

⁴⁵⁷ Contra Hacham, "Sanctity and the Attitude towards the Temple," 161–78.

⁴⁵⁸ Williams, "3 Maccabees," 24–25, 29. Williams shows that Ptolemy's anger at the Judean Jews spills onto those in Egypt (3 Macc 2:24ff.), and his anger at the Egyptian Jews spurs his threat to the temple (5:42–43).

⁴⁵⁹ Williams, "3 Maccabees," 24–25, 27, 29.

⁴⁶⁰ Hacham, "Sanctity and the Attitude towards the Temple," 176–78. Hacham's salient observation is that 3 Maccabees repurposes 2 Maccabees for the diasporan community.

3.3.5. 4 Maccabees

3.3.5.1. Introduction

Fourth Maccabees marshals the chief events of 2 Maccabees from the Heliodorus episode (2 Macc 3) to the martyrdoms (2 Macc 6–7) as a “narrative demonstration” (4 Macc 3:19; see also 1:7–9) of its thesis:⁴⁶¹ “godly reason” triumphs over the passions (1:1, 30; *passim*).⁴⁶² This retelling merits investigation since it is framed by the events that occasion the outstanding manifestations in 2 Maccabees. The narrative begins with the castigation of Heliodorus (now named Apollonius; 3:20–4:14) and ends with a report of Antiochus’s death (17:21; 18:5, 22). These events diverge from the profile of punitive miracles in 2 Maccabees. To account for this change, I will analyze the relevant texts in relation to their exemplars and the argument of 4 Maccabees.

3.3.5.2. The Encomiast’s Transformation of Punitive Miracles⁴⁶³

The Heliodorus episode in 4 Maccabees—or more appropriately, the Apollonius episode—is a condensed version of 2 Macc 3. Our author has assimilated the role of Heliodorus to that of

⁴⁶¹ Gk. ἀπόδειξις τῆς ἱστορίας. The translation “narrative demonstration” comes from David A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees: Introduction and Commentary on the Greek Text in Codex Sinaiticus*, SEPT (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 11, 110–11. Concerning our book’s method, deSilva writes, “The author shapes and recasts the ἱστορία he found in 2 Maccabees for the purpose of conveying his own ‘most philosophical’ thesis ... and a number of ancillary points” (4 Maccabees, 111).

⁴⁶² For this book’s reliance on 2 Maccabees, see Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, 92–95; Jan Willem van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees*, JSJSup 57 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 70–73; deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, xxx–xxxi.

⁴⁶³ For the author of 4 Maccabees as an encomiast, see deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, xxi–xxiii, 80–81.

Apollonius (4 Macc 4:1–5 // 2 Macc 3:4–7),⁴⁶⁴ adumbrated the Jews’ appeals to God (4 Macc 4:9 // 2 Macc 3:14–21), and stripped away much of the detail from the supernatural display in the temple (4 Macc 4:10 // 2 Macc 3:25–26, 33–34).⁴⁶⁵ Most such changes have little effect on the episode’s character. The meaningful change is the author’s failure to characterize this episode as an ἐπιφάνεια. Unlike the original Heliodorus narrative, which is distinctly profiled as a manifestation (2 Macc 3:24, 30), the Apollonius episode displays no such development.⁴⁶⁶ The angelic appearance in 4 Macc 4 is a moment of divine intervention, but it has been stripped of its epiphanic quality—a quality that was the outstanding achievement of 2 Maccabees.

Apollonius’s response to this event confirms the absence of the epiphanic dimension in 4 Macc 4. The antagonist’s appreciation of the Jews’ deity is not enhanced by the angelic appearance, as was Heliodorus’s when he became a herald of “the Greatest God” (2 Macc 3:35–39). Apollonius merely recognizes his fault and promises to announce the “blessedness” of the Jews’ temple (4 Macc 4:12)—a promise he fulfills only in conversation with Seleucus (4:14; cf. 2 Macc 3:36). The angelic appearance brings Apollonius to a realization, but it is an underwhelming one compared to Heliodorus’s. The author of 4 Maccabees is uninterested in the epiphanic dimension of this episode.

⁴⁶⁴ In agreement with Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, 162–63, cf. p. 94; deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 116.

⁴⁶⁵ One minor detail omitted from the supernatural display in 4 Maccabees requires comment. In simplifying the angelic appearance, our author has obscured the mechanism that produces Apollonius’s punishment. Whereas the angels (and the heavenly horse) in 2 Maccabees inflict damage on Heliodorus (2 Macc 3:25–26) and induce his near-death experience (3:27–28), the angels in 4 Maccabees do not. The latter figures make a terrifying appearance to Apollonius’s crew (4 Macc 4:10), and then Apollonius “falls down half-dead” (4:11). Since the angels inflict no damage on Apollonius, it is impossible to determine whether his fall is a consequence of the heavenly display—the act of viewing the angels brings Apollonius to the point of death—or whether his experience is a separate punishment. The latter possibility seems more likely since Apollonius’s associates witness the spectacle, yet he alone is afflicted.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. προφαίνω in 4 Macc 4:10. This use of a φαίνω compound has no thematic significance.

The treatment of Antiochus's demise and death in 4 Maccabees is equally puzzling. In 2 Maccabees, this event is God's riposte to Antiochus's pretensions, marking the resurgence of the divine *modus operandi* of 2 Macc 3 after a period of inaction. The event naturally reveals divine power to the monarch. Fourth Maccabees preserves the notion that Antiochus's death is punitive (4 Macc 17:21; 18:5, 22). However, the book neglects to characterize this event as a singular display of divine power, and it denies Antiochus the opportunity to become aware of the deity (cf. 2 Macc 9:8, 17).⁴⁶⁷ The author limits the king's development to an offbeat observation that the Jewish martyrs' courage and endurance are material for inspiring the Syrian troops in battle (4 Macc 17:23–24).

Moreover, our author has abbreviated Antiochus's demise to the point that it is no longer miraculous. The martyrs (4 Macc 9:24, 32; 10:21; 11:3, 23; 12:18) and the narrator (17:21; 18:5, 22) attribute Antiochus's (temporal) fate to divine agency. However, the report of this fate is so brief that it is impossible to eliminate the possibility of double causality, as in 2 Macc 1:11–17.⁴⁶⁸ Fourth Maccabees transforms the premier *ἐπιφάνεια* of 2 Maccabees into a providential, yet otherwise ordinary historical datum.

⁴⁶⁷ A complementary change in the youngest martyr's speech indicates that this denial is intentional. Whereas the youngest brother in 2 Maccabees anticipates that Antiochus will recognize the Jews' God after punishment (2 Macc 7:37), his counterpart in 4 Maccabees simply announces the king's dreadful fate (4 Macc 12:18). The martyrs of 4 Maccabees are ignorant of any rehabilitative purpose behind Antiochus's punishment.

⁴⁶⁸ The evidence is too scant to eliminate the possibility that the God of 4 Maccabees intends to dispatch Antiochus through an intermediary, perhaps the Persians (see 4 Macc 18:5). Such an outcome would be providential but not miraculous. As I indicate above, Antiochus's death in 2 Macc 1:11–17 results from double causality. God is credited with saving the Jews (2 Macc 1:11), yet the priests of Nanea perform the saving deed (1:13–16).

3.3.5.3. *The Encomiast's Development of Punitive Miracles*

We can uncover the purpose of the relevant episodes in 4 Maccabees by probing their relationship to our author's argument. This is most readily accomplished in Antiochus's case. Speaking strictly in terms of the author's thesis, Antiochus's fate is irrelevant. The conduct of the Jewish martyrs in the face of duress substantiates the proposition that "godly reason" triumphs over the passions. Whether the king is punished for his murders or dies peacefully, his fate does not touch the martyrs' accomplishment.

Antiochus's fate is pertinent to a subsidiary encomiastic objective that emerges in 4 Macc 1:10–11.⁴⁶⁹ After citing the example of the martyrs as primary support for the thesis concerning godly reason (4 Macc 1:7–9), the author announces the intention of "praising those who died ... for [their] virtues" and "pronouncing [them] blessed for their honors" (1:10). We later learn that the "honors" of the deceased consist of participation in "the blessed age" (17:18–20) and credit for a series of civic services: the nation's preservation from subjugation (17:20), Antiochus's punishment (17:21), and the homeland's purification (17:21–23; see also 1:11).⁴⁷⁰ Antiochus's demise appears in 4 Maccabees primarily because it conduces to the praise of the martyrs, who become "benefactors of their country" by instigating this event.⁴⁷¹

The death of Antiochus in 4 Maccabees is not entirely estranged from 2 Maccabees. Antiochus's fate remains a consequence of the deity's reconciliation with the Jews, which, in

⁴⁶⁹ deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 80–81. The encomiastic aim of 4 Maccabees is inseparable from the demonstration of the author's thesis, considering that the martyrs' procurement of national benefits is a result of their exercise of godly reason (van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours*, 257–69, esp. pp. 261, 267–69; deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 249). Regardless, it is expedient to distinguish the aims of 4 Maccabees because this allows me to determine the function of the stories in question with greater precision.

⁴⁷⁰ deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 82–83.

⁴⁷¹ deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 83.

turn, is a result of the martyrs' deaths (4 Macc 9:24; 17:20–22). This chain of events hints at a broader phenomenon: 4 Maccabees exhibits the covenantal pattern (disobedience [4:19–20] → punishment [4:21–26] → repentance [6:26–29; 9:23–24; 12:15–17] → restoration [17:20–22]). Antiochus's death appears in the “restoration” phase as the climax of the covenantal sequence. If we are to speak of the martyrs as “benefactors of their country,”⁴⁷² it is best to call them “covenantal benefactors.” The martyrs render service insofar as their actions, set within a covenantal framework, modulate the deity's stance and activate a “great avenger” (11:23). Antiochus's death redounds to the martyrs' praise because 4 Maccabees has retained the covenantal pattern of 2 Maccabees.

It is impossible to be sure of the author's purpose in abbreviating Antiochus's demise to the point of mundanity. However, this treatment may reflect the author's view of personal eschatology. Fourth Maccabees operates on a different understanding of the afterlife than 2 Maccabees. Whereas 2 Maccabees anticipates resurrection for the faithful martyrs (2 Macc 7:9, 11, 14, 23, 29) and denies a postmortem existence to Antiochus (7:14), 4 Maccabees announces that the martyrs (4 Macc 9:8; 10:15; 17:17–19; 18:23) and Antiochus alike (10:11; 15; 12:12, 18; 18:5, 22) will receive recompense in a future (unembodied) existence.⁴⁷³ These expectations can be correlated to the respective approaches to Antiochus in the two books.⁴⁷⁴ Second Maccabees

⁴⁷² deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 83.

⁴⁷³ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity*, Exp. ed., HTS 56 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 121–22, 139–40; Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 304, 304 n. 4. The author of 4 Maccabees avoids any description of the afterlife that entails a corporeal existence. The martyrs are rewarded with “pure and immortal souls from God” (4 Macc 18:23).

⁴⁷⁴ In what follows, I adapt an insight from Trompf, *Early Christian Historiography*, 69. Trompf contrasts the historiography of Luke, who held to an ultimate universal judgment, with that of other historians, who possessed no such belief. According to Trompf, Luke's presupposition relieved him of the need to demonstrate divine retribution in the course of the historical record. The same contrast appears in the approaches to Antiochus in 2 and 4 Maccabees.

is compelled to give Antiochus his just deserts before dispatching the king because death will mean annihilation. Antiochus's demise is the last chance to turn the screws on the king, and 2 Maccabees does so to the fullest by miraculously enhancing the events that precipitate his death. In contrast, the Antiochus of 4 Maccabees faces eternal torture, and the importance of his temporal fate recedes accordingly. The ability to defer the bulk of Antiochus's punishment to the next life eliminates the need to make his death miraculously gruesome.

This leaves us with the utility of the Apollonius episode. Like Antiochus's death, Apollonius's punishment promotes the encomiastic objective of 4 Maccabees. However, this punishment does so indirectly. At the outset of the Apollonius episode, the Jews experience "deep peace due to [their] observance of the law" (4 Macc 3:20). Apollonius threatens this condition, prompting the deity to intervene to perpetuate the people's wellbeing. This sequence of events demonstrates that the Jews' adherence to the Mosaic law (εὐνομία) engages the deity to act in times of trouble. Jason's reforms (4:18–20) disturb this arrangement, and the Antiochan persecution is the result (4:21ff.). In this context, the martyrs' outstanding accomplishment is "renewing observance of the law [εὐνομία] in the homeland" (18:4), an act that restores peace and reestablishes the "status quo ante" of 3:20.⁴⁷⁵ By leading with the Apollonius episode, 4 Maccabees accentuates the profile of the martyrs, who restore the conditions under which such aid is forthcoming.

If we make allowance for differences due to the distinct genres of 2 and 4 Maccabees, the Apollonius episode perpetuates the covenantal orientation of the Heliodorus episode. I argued that the Heliodorus episode offers an example of divine concern for the Jews under normal

⁴⁷⁵ van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours*, 261; similarly, deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 254. As these authors observe, the conditions produced by the martyrs (4 Macc 18:4: εἰρήνη and εὐνομία) hearken back to former times (3:20: εἰρήνη and εὐνομία). I borrow the term "status quo ante" from Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 184.

conditions. There are two consequences of placing this episode at the beginning of the historical narrative in 2 Maccabees: the account accentuates the deity's absence during the Antiochan crisis, and it contributes to the characterization of the post-crisis miracles as restored covenantal blessings. The placement of the Apollonius episode at the beginning of the narrative in 4 Maccabees perpetuates the first consequence. The frontloading of this episode stresses the deity's absence during the Antiochan crisis, inviting an interpretation of this period in terms of Deuteronomistic theology.⁴⁷⁶ That said, the location of the Apollonius episode does not perpetuate the second consequence. There are no post-crisis miracles in 4 Maccabees for this episode to affect. Regardless, the Apollonius episode does affect the portrayal of another post-crisis event, the martyrdoms. The Apollonius episode is an example of divine care for the Jews during seasons of blessing. Since the martyrs restore the conditions that gave rise to Apollonius's punishment, it is reasonable to infer that their deaths have inaugurated a new season of blessing.

3.3.5.4. Summary

The events that occasion the outstanding manifestations in 2 Maccabees reappear in 4 Maccabees because they are conducive to praising the martyrs as covenantal benefactors. The Apollonius episode and Antiochus's death frame the Antiochan decrees and the ensuing persecution, promoting an interpretation of these events in terms of the covenantal pattern. This is all in keeping with 2 Maccabees.

What is surprising about 4 Maccabees is the avoidance of divine manifestations. Neither Apollonius's punishment nor Antiochus's death is an evident display of divine power that

⁴⁷⁶ In agreement with deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 122.

produces a noteworthy Gentile response. It is impossible to determine what led the author to abandon the epiphanic dimension of these accounts. Regardless, the result of this decision is evident. Fourth Maccabees fissures the union created by 2 Maccabees, retaining the covenantal function of punitive miracles and discarding their epiphanic dimension.

3.3.6. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

I previously observed that 2 Kings leaves the prophetic storyline open-ended, inviting a continuation. The books of Maccabees take up this challenge. These books show that the history of God's dealings with Israel extends to the Hellenistic era. One means of forging this connection is punitive miracles. The timely appearance of miraculous judgments shows that God still observes the covenant and prospers the Jews when they hew closely to the Mosaic law.

However, if 1–4 Maccabees extend biblical history, they do so selectively. These books surrender the association between punitive miracles and prophetic individuals. These miracles now promote the nation's wellbeing rather than individual members of God's people. Moreover, these books prioritize the prophetic miracle in its creative and covenantal functions over the priestly mode of miracle. The Jews' story in this era is discontinuous from the past.

The most generative innovation in the books of Maccabees exhibits this tension. The "epiphanic" dimension of punitive miracles comes into focus in 2–3 Maccabees. Miracles displaying this dimension cause the Jews' opponents to recognize divine power. These epiphanies—or "manifestations"—revive a feature of the signs and wonders of the exodus event. However, unlike previous biblical history, the scale and role of these manifestations are now raised to new heights. Punitive miracles of the epiphanic sort play a more pivotal role in plot

development than previously. The books of Maccabees have taken a minor theme and elevated it to a new level of importance.⁴⁷⁷

Characterization. Punitive miracles in the books of Maccabees rarely assist in characterizing prophetic individuals. This lacuna is mainly due to the absence of kings and prophets in these books. The war miracles in 2 Maccabees are the sole exception to this rule. These events contribute to Judas's characterization as a Joshua-like figure who leads a struggle to control the land. By and large, the Maccabean miracles neither contribute to characterizing kings and prophets nor assist in prophetic tasks.

The miracles in 2 and 4 Maccabees promote the characterization of another figure, the martyr. The miracles in these books depict the martyrs as intercessors whose deaths turn the course of history. The martyrs are somewhat removed from the prophetic storyline since surrendering one's life to God is a priestly act.⁴⁷⁸ There is no sign that God has tapped the martyrs to perform this role, as though their deaths amounted to a prophetic task. Regardless, the characterization of the martyrs merits attention because these figures are central to a critical alteration to the covenantal pattern, which I will explore below.

⁴⁷⁷ The books of 3 and 4 Maccabees attest to the achievement of 2 Maccabees and its potential for development. The accomplishment of 2 Maccabees is the fusion of the covenantal function of punitive miracles—a mainstay of the Primary History—with an epiphanic dimension that has seldom appeared in this history apart from the exodus event. Third Maccabees is deeply informed by the epiphanic dimension of 2 Maccabees, creatively appropriating the Heliodorus episode to propel the story of the Jews' fate under Ptolemy Philopator. Fourth Maccabees retains the covenantal function of select episodes in 2 Maccabees to provide a frame for the account of the Jewish martyrs that facilitates the interpretation of the Antiochan crisis. The use of punitive miracles in 2 Maccabees is fertile ground for further developments. That said, neither 3 nor 4 Maccabees reproduces the fusion of 2 Maccabees. The covenantal function is technically present in 3 Maccabees, yet it is a vestige rather than an essential element informing the plot. As for 4 Maccabees, this book fissures the achievement of 2 Maccabees completely, retaining the covenantal aspect of the relevant accounts and discarding the epiphanic dimension. The influence of 2 Maccabees on 3–4 Maccabees is evident, yet neither of these books fully reproduces the synthesis of the antecedent volume.

⁴⁷⁸ See Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 112.

The development of prophetic topoi. The punitive miracles in 1–4 Maccabees develop the topoi of injustice, blessedness, the hardness of people’s hearts, and divine action through a select individual. First, injustice is strongly associated with the punitive miracles in 1–4 Maccabees. Most miracles come in response to acts of foreign oppression, whether proximately, as in Antiochus’s death (1 Macc 6; 2 Macc 9), or remotely, as in Timothy’s first defeat (2 Macc 10). Because of this association, the pattern of the exodus event is present in the lion’s share of the Maccabean miracles. Second, blessedness is a feature of almost every punitive miracle in the books of Maccabees. Aside from Alcimus’s death (1 Macc 9) and the death of certain Jews in battle (2 Macc 12), every Maccabean miracle displays the type 1 covenantal function (denoting blessing).⁴⁷⁹ These miracles depict God’s providential care of the Jews. Third, the hardness of people’s hearts appears in episodes that climax in a manifestation. Epiphanic punitive miracles generally afflict the Jews’ most obstinate opponents, turning their antagonism into a newfound appreciation of the Jews’ God. Fourth, divine action through a select individual emerges from the war miracles in this corpus. Punitive miracles facilitate the Jews’ victories over Timothy, suggesting that Judas performs a tacit prophetic task by leading the Jews against their enemies.

The thematic development of God’s kingdom. Each of the books of Maccabees continues the Primary History. These books are reasonably read as extensions of the narrative that ceases at the end of 2 Kings.⁴⁸⁰ There are chronological gaps of varying sizes between the events of 2 Kings and the texts in question. Nevertheless, these texts presuppose that the events they recount

⁴⁷⁹ On the question of Alcimus’s covenantal status, see n. 396.

⁴⁸⁰ This statement must be qualified given the non-historical genre of 4 Maccabees. In the case of 4 Maccabees, it is more appropriate to claim that the narrative portions of this work presuppose biblical history as the background against which the recorded events are to be understood.

are part of an extensive history of God's dealings with Israel. The use of punitive miracles in ways reminiscent of the Primary History promotes this association.

Unlike 1–2 Chronicles, 1–4 Maccabees do not reconceive the role of punitive miracles in Israel's history. The punitive miracles in the Primary History relate to God's kingdom in two ways. First, these miracles are integral to fulfilling God's promises, which have as their goal the formation of God's earthly kingdom populated by people who reflect God's character. Second, these miracles preserve God's kingdom. These same basic roles persist in 1–4 Maccabees, occurring now with some overlap.

The only punitive miracles that promote God's earthly kingdom in the same manner as the Primary History appear in 1 Maccabees. Both miracles in this text play a role in the emergent Jewish state's development. The miracles in 2–3 Maccabees advance God's kingdom in a new sense. Heliodorus's maiming (2 Maccabees) and the hippodrome miracle (3 Maccabees) cause Gentiles to take note of the Jews' God. Heliodorus and Philopator do not "convert" to Judaism, yet their experience of miraculous punishment draws them into the penumbra of God's kingdom.

The Maccabean miracles also preserve God's kingdom. Most of these miracles have a type 1 covenantal function, denoting blessing. God blesses the obedient people by protecting them from their adversaries. These miracles occur while the Jews remain subjects of the Hellenistic dynasts, meaning these events do not preserve God's kingdom as formerly constituted.⁴⁸¹ Nevertheless, God continues to protect God's people, who constitute the core of the deity's earthly dominion. The Maccabean miracles perpetuate the fundamental roles observed in the Primary History by advancing God's kingdom and protecting God's people.

⁴⁸¹ See Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, 238: the Hasmoneans are not entirely independent of the Seleucids until Simon's tenure as high priest.

There are a couple of developments in terms of patterns and conventions that I must discuss before leaving the books of Maccabees. The first development is the expansion of the type 1 covenantal function in 2–3 Maccabees. This expansion occurs thanks to the “epiphanic” dimension of the miracles in these books. In a nutshell, the outstanding miracles in 2–3 Maccabees reveal the power of the Jews’ God, resulting in stunning testimonies from the Jews’ antagonists. This development is relevant for understanding LXX patterns and conventions because the revelation of divine power always occurs in conjunction with a type 1 covenantal miracle. None of the manifestations in 2–3 Maccabees are freestanding; all are covenantal blessings that (potentially) affect the Gentiles.

The epiphanic dimension of punitive miracles is best described as a pairing of motifs. The first motif is the type 1 covenantal miracle. This miracle features a visible display of divine power in the texts under consideration, or at least the thematic use of ἐπιφαν-derivatives (or allied terms) to describe the event. The second motif is the antagonist’s recognition of divine power as attested by reported speech, an internal monologue, or the like.⁴⁸² These motifs may appear together at the climax of the covenantal pattern, as in Antiochus’s death, or in a static period of blessing, as in the maiming of Heliodorus and the manifestation to Ptolemy. This pairing indicates that the instantiation of covenantal blessings to the Jews has resulted in their opponents taking notice of God.

The epiphanic dimension of punitive miracles moves God’s kingdom toward expansion. Conversions to Judaism do not result from the Maccabean manifestations. The Antiochus of 2 Maccabees would have taken this step had the deity not cut his life short. Regardless, the

⁴⁸² The second motif is not necessary when it comes to manifestations in 2 Maccabees. This book’s thematic use of manifestations establishes a robust profile for these miracles. Consequently, the revelatory property inheres in every event in 2 Maccabees that is depicted as a manifestation.

trajectory of 2–3 Maccabees moves toward including at least a few Gentiles in the divine kingdom. That this phenomenon is not a one-off will become apparent in the book of Daniel.

The second development in the books of Maccabees is an alteration to the covenantal pattern. The covenantal pattern in the Primary History consists of the phases disobedience, punishment, repentance, and restoration. This pattern persists in 1, 2, and 4 Maccabees. However, the content of the repentance phase changes in these books. “Repentance” in the Primary History means that the nation returns to covenantal observance (see Judg 4:3; 6:6; 1 Sam 7:2–9; 1 Kgs 18:39–40). “Repentance” in the books of Maccabees looks different.

In 1 Maccabees, repentance takes the form of a grassroots insurgence led by Mattathias and Judas. These leaders implement a program of purging Hellenizing Jews from the people and enforcing covenantal observance among the lapsed. The association of this insurgence with “repentance” is a loose one given the Maccabees’ innocence, on one hand, and the Hellenizers’ recalcitrance, on the other hand. The Jews repent in that some of their numbers express renewed zeal for the covenant, but this act does not mean a nationwide return to covenantal observance. The development of “repentance” in 1 Maccabees reflects a critical intertext, Deut 13:13–19.⁴⁸³ This text presupposes that the faithlessness of an Israelite city can incite divine wrath against the nation (Deut 13:18) and prescribes annihilating the guilty as a remedy (13:16). Mattathias and his sons destroy the faithless among the Jews, averting divine wrath.

In 2 Maccabees—and by extension, 4 Maccabees—repentance comes through the martyrs’ deaths.⁴⁸⁴ The martyrs are not entirely estranged from repentance. George Nickelsburg

⁴⁸³ In agreement with Choi, *The Use and Function of Scripture in 1 Maccabees*, 166.

⁴⁸⁴ For the meaning of the martyrs’ deaths in 4 Maccabees, see van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours*, 150–53.

observes that “the obedient deaths of the brothers are a vicarious act of repentance.”⁴⁸⁵

Regardless, the martyrs are personally innocent,⁴⁸⁶ meaning their accomplishment is something other than repentance as in the Primary History. The potency of the martyrs’ accomplishment is a matter of their vicarious deaths.⁴⁸⁷ The martyrs acknowledge that their fate at Antiochus’s hands is a consequence of God’s anger at the nation (2 Macc 7:18, 32),⁴⁸⁸ and they pray that God will consider their deaths sufficient grounds for ending the period of wrath (7:37–38). God accedes to this request, as evidenced by the remark that “the Lord’s wrath was turning to mercy” (8:5).⁴⁸⁹ The deaths of the martyrs modulate the deity’s stance from “cursing” to “blessing.” Nothing resembling this shift appears in the Primary History. The books of Maccabees broaden the meaning of “repentance.” The movement from the third to the fourth phases of the covenantal pattern no longer requires nationwide contrition. Covenantal blessings may be restored through acts of extraordinary piety.

⁴⁸⁵ Nickelsburg, “1 and 2 Maccabees,” 523.

⁴⁸⁶ Concerning the apparent references to the martyrs’ sins in 2 Macc 7:18, 32, van Henten writes: “The phrase ‘our own sins’ ... refers not so much to the individual sins of the martyrs, but to the sins of the people as a whole ... The wicked deeds of some Jewish leaders have led the whole people including the martyrs into a state of sin ... The martyrs and Razis die because of the sins of the people and in this way show their solidarity with the people” (*The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours*, 137).

⁴⁸⁷ van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours*, 140–44, 153–55.

⁴⁸⁸ For the “sins” in 2 Macc 7:18, 32 as the nation’s, see van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours*, 136–37.

⁴⁸⁹ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 22–23.

3.4. Job

3.4.1. Introduction

For all intents and purposes, the book of Job is unrelated to biblical history. This book envisions a world that does not meaningfully intersect with Israel's story. Yet Job's story begins with a series of miracles that are impossible to ignore. These miracles command attention for two reasons. First, the Joban miracles are ostensibly punitive. As far as Job's friends can tell, God has ruined Job's life because of some sin. These companions are wrong, but we can hardly blame them. They have run Job's experience through the interpretive grid of traditional wisdom, leading them to conclude that Job is at fault. Second, the Joban miracles set the stage for dismantling the conventional view of retribution. This view is fundamental to my definition of a punitive miracle and the now-familiar covenantal function of many such miracles. I can only treat the divergent voices of the LXX with integrity by allowing this critical voice to speak.

I will engage the Joban miracles by evaluating them with progressively broader frames of reference. First, I will examine the miracles strictly in light of the evidence in Job 1–2 that causes these events to seem like punitive miracles. This data helps us appreciate the companions' perspective. Second, I will broaden my interpretive horizon to include additional data in the prologue that undermines the companions' viewpoint. The evaluation of this data reveals that the Joban miracles are not genuinely punitive but “probative.” These events probe the integrity of the act-consequence nexus at the heart of traditional wisdom. Third, I will interpret the Joban miracles in light of the succeeding dialogues and epilogue. These sections shift the focus from Job's integrity to God's, resulting in the revelation that divine conduct—and by extension, the miracles of the prologue—are unconstrained by the conventional understanding of retribution.

3.4.2. The Joban Miracles as Ostensible Punitive Miracles

Judging by external appearances, the miracles in the book of Job are punitive. These events deconstruct Job's life (Job 1:1–5) in two rounds. The first set of miracles targets Job's household. In quick succession, plunderers steal Job's oxen and jennies (1:14–15), a heavenly fire destroys his sheep (1:16), a band of cavalry takes his camels (1:17), and a catastrophic wind causes the death of his children (1:18–19).⁴⁹⁰ Most of Job's servants also die in these disasters (cf. 1:15–17, 19). The next round homes in on Job's person. Job now finds himself afflicted by an oozing wound that covers his body (2:7).⁴⁹¹ He responds by taking up residence on the dunghill outside his city (2:8; see also 2:9c), as would a leper who cannot participate in social interactions (see Lev 13:45–46).⁴⁹² The miracles in Job 1–2 transform the protagonist from a prominent community member into an outcast. God has seemingly punished Job for his sins.

The presence of subtle Deuteronomisms in the book's prologue heightens this impression. The slanderer's charge against God—"You blessed the works of his [Job's] hands

⁴⁹⁰ The only event in Job 1:14–19 that is unambiguously miraculous is the destruction of Job's sheep (Job 1:16). That this event is miraculous is made evident by the extent of the destruction: fire destroys all of Job's sheep and all but one of his shepherds (in agreement with Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985], 92). It is not likely that a random lightning strike would kill 7,000 sheep (see 1:3) and the shepherds tending them. The rest of the events in Job 1 could, on their own, be conceived as natural events. The first, third, and fourth disasters only become miraculous when associated with similar events. As a unit, the events in Job 1 display three features indicative of the miraculous: synchronicity, parallelism, and comprehensiveness. In terms of synchronicity, the occurrence of these disasters at or near the same time suggests miraculous coordination (adapting Zakovitch, *The Concept of the Miracle*, 29–30). In terms of parallelism, the events display a pattern indicative of supernatural design: the theft or destruction of part of Job's household is combined with the deaths of all his servants save one, who is spared to report the disaster. As for comprehensiveness, the combined effect of these events is the devastation of Job's household (see 1:2–3).

⁴⁹¹ Job's affliction with oozing wounds (Job 2:7) is not miraculous from an empirical perspective. The event is miraculous from the reader's vantage, who knows that "the slanderer ... struck Job with a severe wound" (2:7) (Habel, *The Book of Job*, 95).

⁴⁹² Habel, *The Book of Job*, 96.

(Job 1:10)—is thoroughly Deuteronomistic (see Deut 28:12).⁴⁹³ This statement makes it sound like Job initially enjoys divine favor like Israel. With this in mind, Job’s surplus of children and animals (Job 1:2–3) is naturally conceived as a condition like the blessings promised to obedient Israel (see Deut 28:4, 11).⁴⁹⁴ The Deuteronomistic depiction of Job’s blessedness programs readers to conceive of his subsequent downfall in similar terms.

Given Job’s enjoyment of the covenantal blessings, his loss of the same (Job 1:14–19) suggests he has fallen victim to the covenantal curses (see Deut 28:18, 31–32, 41, 51).⁴⁹⁵ This finding gains traction with the description of Job’s bodily affliction: “the slanderer ... struck Job with a severe wound from the feet to the head” (Job 2:7). This statement is a modified quotation of Deut 28:35 (“May the Lord strike you with a severe wound ... so that you cannot be healed from the soles of your feet to the top of your head”),⁴⁹⁶ suggesting that Job has fallen victim to a

⁴⁹³ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ εὐλόγησας; Job 1:10 // εὐλογῆσαι πάντα τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου; Deut 28:12; see also 2:7; 16:15; 24:19; similarly 14:29; 15:10; 23:21.

⁴⁹⁴ Raik Heckl, *Hiob — vom Gottesfürchtigen zum Repräsentanten Israels: Studien zur Buchwerdung des Hiobbuches und zu seinen Quellen*, FAT 70 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 391; Markus Witte, “Does the Torah Keep Its Promise? Job’s Critical Intertextual Dialogue with Deuteronomy,” in *Reading Job Intertextually*, ed. Katharine Dell and Will Kynes, LHBOTS 574 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 63.

⁴⁹⁵ Susannah Ticciati, *Job and the Disruption of Identity: Reading Beyond Barth* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 61; for the covenantal curses as the opposite of the blessings, see Levine, *Leviticus*, 185, 276. There is no one-to-one correspondence between the threats of Deut 28 and Job’s losses. Some objects destined for destruction in Deut 28 are stolen from Job, and vice versa. Regardless, these discrepancies are insignificant. I agree on this point with Heckl, who assumes that the book’s apparent references to Deuteronomy increase the plausibility of less conspicuous references (*Hiob*, 391). Job does not need to suffer precisely as a disobedient Israelite would for his story to problematize the logic of punitive miracles. The nexus of Deuteronomisms adequately establishes that God (ostensibly) relates to Job as the deity would to Israel.

⁴⁹⁶ ὁ διάβολος ... ἔπαισεν τὸν Ἰὼβ ἔλκει πονηρῶ ἀπὸ ποδῶν ἕως κεφαλῆς; Job 2:7 // πατάξαι σε κύριος ἐν ἔλκει πονηρῶ ... ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι σε ιαθῆναι ἀπὸ ἰχνους τῶν ποδῶν σου ἕως τῆς κορυφῆς σου; Deut 28:35. The LXX marginally diminishes the resemblance between these texts on account of differing lexeme choices (הָרַג = πατάσσω [Deut 28:35], παίω [Job 2:7]; תִּרְתָּר = κορυφή [Deut 28:35], κεφαλῆ [Job 2:7]). Sufficient points of contact remain to establish an affinity between the Greek verses. The difference between these texts concerning the agent of judgment (God [Deut 28]; the slanderer [Job 1–2]) is evident yet not worthy of extended discussion. The slanderer’s actions are prescribed by God and constitute divine judgments in the eyes of Job and his companions.

covenantal sanction.⁴⁹⁷ Job's sins have seemingly prompted a change in divine behavior. God once treated Job as if he were faithful to the covenant, but God now confronts Job as a transgressor.⁴⁹⁸ Job is ostensibly condemned as a lawbreaker, and the miracles in Job 1–2 punish him accordingly.

3.4.3. The Joban Miracles in Light of the Prologue

My analysis thus far has ignored relevant data. I have bracketed this data to make it possible to appreciate the arguments of Job's friends. David Clines aptly summarizes the friends' perspective: "What the friends have in common is their unquestioning belief that suffering is the result of sin. Their doctrine of retribution, that sin produces punishment, is also reversible: see a man suffering and you can be sure he has deserved it. There is no doubt in their minds of the order: Job's misery is by the book."⁴⁹⁹ The given for the friends is Job's suffering. The friends have run this datum through the framework provided by their understanding of retribution. The result of this analysis is that Job has sinned. The sudden swing in Job's fortunes—from excessive wealth to unrivaled suffering—can only reinforce this conclusion.

We have access to additional data as readers of Job's story. This evidence challenges the view that the Joban miracles are punitive. The first datum that calls for a reevaluation of the Joban miracles is the prologue of Job—specifically, the testimonies in this section that certify

⁴⁹⁷ Ticciati, *Job and the Disruption of Identity*, 61–62; Konrad Schmid, "Innerbiblische Schriftdiskussion im Hiobbuch," in *Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen: Beiträge zur Hiob-Symposium auf dem Monte Verità vom 14.-19. August 2005*, ed. T. Krüger et al., ATANT 88 (Zurich: TVZ, 2007), 250; Heckl, *Hiob*, 263–66.

⁴⁹⁸ Job does not participate in the covenant. His story simply features language that invites us to conceive of his relationship with God in covenantal terms. Job's relationship with God is "covenant-adjacent."

⁴⁹⁹ David J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, WBC 17 (Dallas: Word, 1989), xl.

Job's innocence. According to the narrator, Job is "true, blameless, righteous, God-fearing, and [a man who] avoids every evil deed" (Job 1:1). The narrator confirms that this characterization persists throughout the prologue by certifying Job's innocence after both rounds of miracles (1:22; 2:10). The deity's perspective is similar: God attributes the same predicates to Job as the narrator (1:8; 2:3).⁵⁰⁰ There is no gap between the narrator and God on Job's character; their testimony is mutually reinforcing. The prologue does not allow that Job deserves punishment.

Job's manifest innocence prohibits identifying the miracles in Job 1–2 as punitive. As I have defined the term, a punitive miracle is an extraordinary divine response to an actual or threatened violation of God's will. This event's hallmark is the coordination of a fault and a harmful miraculous outcome. There can be no such coordination in Job's case.

We need another category to describe the Joban miracles. It is tempting to describe these miracles as "beneficent" in light of God's final settlement with Job (Job 42:10–17). However, it is doubtful that Job would agree with this assessment. Moreover, no other beneficent miracle in the LXX involves harming an innocent party for their eventual benefit.

A more plausible option is to identify the Joban miracles as "maleficent." These miracles are undeniably maleficent given their production of unmerited suffering. However, the term maleficent is misleading. The problem is a lexical one. Maleficence can describe an event's effect or an actor's disposition.⁵⁰¹ The term "maleficent miracle" does not adequately distinguish these possibilities. The Joban miracles harm Job, but they do not reflect divine malevolence.

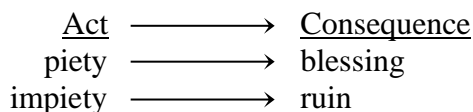
⁵⁰⁰ God agrees with the narrator that Job is "true," "blameless," "God-fearing," and "[a man who] avoids every evil deed" (Job 1:8; 2:3). The differences between the narrator and God (God omits "righteous" in both texts and adds "innocent" in 2:3) are insignificant.

⁵⁰¹ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.vv. "maleficence," "maleficent."

It is preferable to fashion a new label to avoid ambiguity. Because the relevant events in Job arise from the heavenly inquiry into the protagonist's piety, I classify them as "probative" miracles. As probative miracles, the events in question produce the requisite data to resolve the heavenly discussion about Job's conduct. The slanderer assails the notion that Job's piety exists independent of his prosperity (Job 1:9–11; 2:4–5). This challenge induces God to permit the destruction of Job's life (1:12; 2:6).

At the heart of the slanderer's challenge is an assault on the "act-consequence nexus."⁵⁰² Traditional wisdom conceives of human behavior as a simple movement from act to consequence, such that piety results in blessing while impiety results in ruin (see Figure 4):⁵⁰³

Figure 4: The Act-Consequence Nexus of Traditional Wisdom

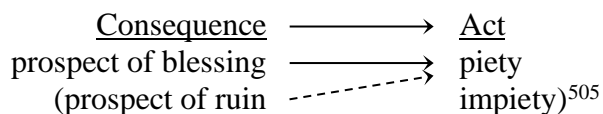


Against the standard view, the slanderer argues that the reverse obtains: human behavior runs from prospective consequences to acts (see Figure 5).⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰² David J. A. Clines, "False Naivety in the Prologue to Job," *HAR* 9 (1985): 132–33. In using the term "act-consequence nexus," I do not mean to adopt the position of Klaus Koch in his seminal essay on the topic ("Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?," in *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, ed. James L. Crenshaw, trans. Thomas H. Trapp, IRT 4 [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 57–87). Koch argues that the operative view of retribution in the OT assumes that positive or negative consequences arise directly from good or bad actions, respectively. Clines prescinds from offering "a particular theory of *how* the act is related to the consequence" ("False Naivety," 132 n. 9). We would be wise to do the same.

⁵⁰³ Clines, "False Naivety," 132–33; also Clines "Deconstructing the Book of Job," in *The Bible as Rhetoric: Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility*, ed. Martin Warner, WSPL (London: Routledge, 1990), 66. According to Clines, the Joban God initially holds the unreflective view of the act-consequence nexus and must subject Job to an "experiment" to determine this mode's validity (Clines, "Deconstructing the Book of Job," 68).

⁵⁰⁴ Clines, "False Naivety," 132; Clines, "Deconstructing the Book of Job," 68.

Figure 5: The Slanderer's Reconfiguration of the Act-Consequence Nexus

The slanderer proposes a way to test his hypothesis: the act-consequence nexus should be modified so that Job's conduct results in ruin (see Figure 6).⁵⁰⁶ If Job experiences disaster in return for his habitual behavior yet stays the course, his conduct is disinterested; conversely, if Job alters his behavior, this will validate the slanderer's objection.⁵⁰⁷

Figure 6: The Slanderer's Test

Since Job adheres to his piety when the result is ruin (1:20–22; 2:8–10), his conduct is indisputably disinterested, and the act-consequence nexus is affirmed.⁵⁰⁹ God can now reinstitute the familiar nexus, beginning with Job's compensation for his troubles (42:10–17).⁵¹⁰ The Joban miracles suspend the act-consequence nexus only to reaffirm it.

⁵⁰⁵ The bracketed line and dashed arrow portray an implication of the slanderer's argument. If Job is pious because of the prospect of blessing, he presumably avoids impiety because of the prospect of ruin.

⁵⁰⁶ Clines, "Deconstructing the Book of Job," 68.

⁵⁰⁷ Clines, "Deconstructing the Book of Job," 68, 74.

⁵⁰⁸ The dashed arrow indicates the possibility of impiety resulting in blessing. This possibility is not realized in the book of Job, but it forms the basis of Job's ruminations (Job 21:7–16).

⁵⁰⁹ Clines, "Deconstructing the Book of Job," 75.

⁵¹⁰ Clines, "Deconstructing the Book of Job," 69–71, 75.

3.4.4. The Joban Miracles in Light of the Dialogues and Epilogue

The second datum that calls for reappraising the Joban miracles is the events following Job's afflictions. This series includes the dialogues between Job, his friends, and God (Job 3–41) and an epilogue (Job 42). Since the dialogues and epilogue come after the prologue, readers of these sections know that the Joban miracles are probative. Regardless, the probative dimension of these miracles never surfaces in the dialogues or epilogue. Different issues come to the fore: Does the traditional view of retribution fit Job's experience?⁵¹¹ If not, what does the failure of this model mean for understanding God? Our knowledge of the prologue enables us to answer the first question in the negative. What the prologue fails to address is God's warrant for subjecting a righteous person to torment. The dialogues and epilogue confront us with the consequences of God's suspension of the conventional system of retribution.

The dialogues and epilogue make it impossible to avoid the incongruity of the Joban miracles with the traditional view of retribution. The dialogues explore this incongruity by allowing Job to level unsparing charges against God. Job's first response to Bildad adumbrates his position: "[God] has made my afflictions many for no reason" (Job 9:17). At the core of Job's broadsides are two convictions: God has not dealt with Job per the terms of conventional retribution, and God is in the wrong for having done so.⁵¹² Job admits to various faults in his speeches (see 13:26; 14:16–17; 19:4–5), but these admissions never amount to anything actionable. The protagonist maintains that God afflicted him without provocation.

⁵¹¹ For the traditional view of wisdom as the basis of the friends' speeches, see Clines, *Job 1–20*, xl–xlii.

⁵¹² Pierre van Hecke, "'But I, I Would Converse with the Almighty' (Job 13.3): Job and His Friends on God," in *Job's God*, ed. Ellen van Wolde, Conc 2004/4 (London: SCM, 2004), 19–20.

To our surprise, the divine speeches in Job 38–41 do not rehabilitate conventional retribution. God’s intervention has a shock and awe effect that makes Job recognize his creatureliness (Job 42:6).⁵¹³ However, God does not address the claim that Job suffered without having done wrong,⁵¹⁴ nor do the speeches lead Job to repent in the sense of admitting he deserved torment.⁵¹⁵ As Brueggemann suggests, Job relinquishes “the penultimate issue of moral symmetry” for “the awesomeness of Yahweh.”⁵¹⁶ God does not answer Job’s query; the deity decenters Job’s preoccupation.

The epilogue puts the nail in the coffin of conventional retribution. God here condemns Job’s friends, saying, “You spoke nothing true before me, like my servant Job [did]” (Job 42:7). The import of this rebuke is evident: the friends went astray by forcing Job’s suffering into the mold of traditional retribution. It is more challenging to identify Job’s “true” speech that forms the basis of comparison in Job 42:7.⁵¹⁷ Since Job’s speech is presented as a counterpoint to the friends, it is reasonable to take their positions as opposites. Unlike the friends, Job is “praised for recognizing that Yahweh does not indeed govern the world according to the principle of

⁵¹³ Claude Cox, “‘Ipsissima Verba’: The Translator’s ‘Actual Words’ in Old Greek Job and What They Tell Us about the Translator and the Nature of the Translation,” *JSCS* 49 (2016): 79. Cox observes that the OG reading of Job 42:6 (ἡγημαὶ δὲ ἐμαυτὸν γῆν καὶ σποδόν) amounts to Job’s recognition of “his mortality, with its limitations” rather than a declaration of repentance.

⁵¹⁴ David J. A. Clines, *Job 38–42*, WBC 18B (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 1092.

⁵¹⁵ Cox, “‘Ipsissima Verba,’” 79; Martina Kepper and Markus Witte, “Job: Das Buch Ijob / Hiob,” in *Septuaginta Deutsch: Erläuterungen und Kommentare zum griechischen Alten Testament*, ed. Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2011), 2123.

⁵¹⁶ Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 391; cf. 392 for an alternate assessment of the passage.

⁵¹⁷ For a summary of the challenges in identifying Job’s “true” speech, see Clines, *Job 38–42*, 1231.

retribution.”⁵¹⁸ This commendation need not mean that God never retributes individuals according to their deeds. Instead, the deity is not compelled to do so.

If the prologue suspends the act-consequence nexus to reaffirm it, the dialogues and epilogue explore the consequences of this suspension. The takeaway from the dialogues and epilogue is that the miracles in the prologue are independent of conventional retribution. These events are unconstrained divine acts from beginning to end. God, under no compulsion to treat Job according to his deeds, has not wronged the protagonist.

The affinity of the Joban miracles to maleficent miracles demonstrates how radical this development is. I previously questioned whether certain miracles are maleficent in light of their tenuous associations with faults. This label has almost always been inappropriate. Other biblical writings are predicated on the conventional view of retribution to varying degrees. Genuinely maleficent miracles would be ill at ease in such contexts. The Primary History contains just a handful of morally ambiguous miracles.⁵¹⁹ Only one of these miracles qualifies as maleficent upon inspection.⁵²⁰ The Chronistic History, detesting moral ambiguity, eliminates this sole maleficent miracle by transforming it into a punitive one. In contrast, the book of Job puts conventional retribution to the test, producing a hospitable environment for miracles that would be abhorrent elsewhere. The Joban miracles are not truly maleficent; they do not derive from divine malice. Regardless, these miracles produce more unmerited suffering than any other miraculous event in the LXX.

⁵¹⁸ Clines, *Job 38–42*, 1231.

⁵¹⁹ These miracles are the death of David and Bathsheba’s child, the plague after David’s census, and Azariah’s leprosy.

⁵²⁰ This miracle is Azariah’s leprosy.

The Joban miracles probe not only Job's piety but also conventional retribution.⁵²¹ These episodes are a bold experiment in the evolution of miraculous events. The miracles in Job 1–2 have no genuine counterpart, nor do they require one. These events demonstrate that the conventional view of retribution is, at best, myopic. Once the myopia is detected, we can hardly return to our former naivety concerning the act-consequence nexus.

3.4.5. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

The book of Job employs ostensible punitive miracles to probe Job's piety. Job passes this test with flying colors. The book then turns unexpectedly as Job interrogates the traditional understanding of retribution. God ultimately intervenes to reframe the discussion in terms of divine power, but the deity makes no effort to rehabilitate the model assumed by the friends and contested by Job. God's silence implies that conventional retribution does not constrain God. God may freely retribute people according to their deeds. Yet God's relationship with the world is more complex than the traditional understanding of retribution suggests.

The book of Job differs from other texts I have examined in its posture toward Israel's history. This book generally displays no connection to the story of God's dealings with Israel. Given this difference, trying to shoehorn Job into the prophetic storyline is hopeless. Job's experience has consequences for this storyline, but they are indirect.

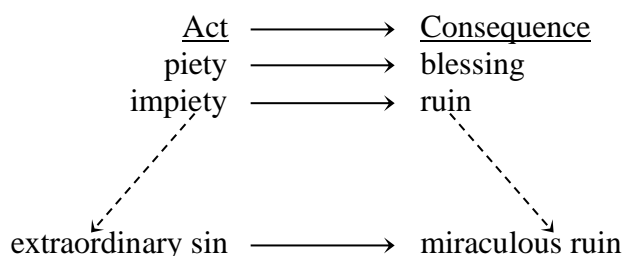
⁵²¹ Adapting Clines, "False Naivety," 133: "The primary ethical problematic of the book is being raised in these two scenes [Job 1:1–5 and 1:6–12]: namely, the act-consequence nexus. In the dialogues that problematic will appear as the question whether suffering is brought about by sin; in the prologue as the question whether prosperity is brought about by piety. The two are but two sides of one coin." The book probes the same issue in the prologue and dialogues from different directions.

Characterization. Given the absence of kings and prophets from the book of Job, the Joban miracles do not characterize prophetic individuals. These miracles play a complex role in characterizing Job and God, but this development is unrelated to the prophetic storyline.

The development of prophetic topoi. The Joban miracles fail to develop most of the prophetic topoi I observed previously. The sole topos these miracles bring into focus is injustice. Ironically, whereas punitive miracles regularly counter acts of human injustice, the Joban miracles provide the impetus for discussing divine injustice. The miracles in Job 1–2 send the protagonist into an existential crisis because his treatment by God does not correspond to his conduct. The Joban miracles are seemingly damning evidence that God’s concern with injustice is a façade. God is apparently the primary agent of injustice, rather than humans. Job does not have the final word in this discussion. However, the deity is only rescued from the protagonist’s charge because God distances Godself from the system of reciprocity assumed by the companions and questioned by Job.

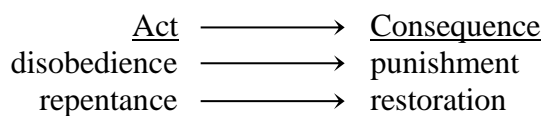
The thematic development of God’s kingdom. In this chapter, my goal in the “thematic development” sections is to demonstrate how punitive miracles facilitate the continuation or reconfiguration of God’s kingdom. It is not possible to pursue this goal with the Joban miracles. The world envisioned by the book of Job exists outside the prophetic storyline.

Notwithstanding the above, the book of Job interrogates the conventional model of retribution, making this work relevant to investigating punitive miracles. The Joban miracles are not genuinely punitive. However, these “probative” events challenge the model of retribution undergirding my definition of a punitive miracle. A punitive miracle is an extraordinary response to a violation of God’s will. This definition maps onto the act-consequence nexus (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Anatomy of a Punitive Miracle

In my definition, conventional retribution produces the cohesion between an extraordinary sin and a miraculous outcome. Without this model of retribution to unite them, miraculous outcomes and blameworthy acts would stand side-by-side as independent events. By aiming for conventional retribution, the Joban miracles suggest that God's relationship with the world is more complex and less constrained than punitive miracle accounts suggest.

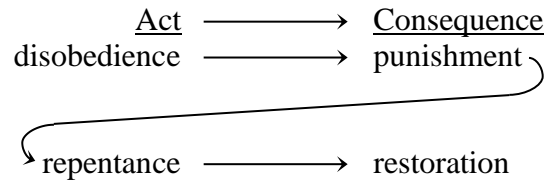
The challenge of the Joban miracles is acute for punitive miracles appearing in conjunction with the covenantal pattern. I have argued that the punitive miracles in other books facilitate structuring history according to the phases disobedience → punishment → repentance → restoration. Punitive miracles often occur when the restoration phase of this pattern is active (the type 1 covenantal function). To a lesser extent, these miracles appear when the punishment phase is operative (the type 2 covenantal function). The covenantal pattern is open to the critique of the Joban miracles because it is modeled on the act-consequence nexus in the movements from disobedience to punishment and repentance to restoration (see Figure 8).⁵²²

Figure 8: The Covenantal Pattern and the Act-Consequence Nexus

⁵²² For the act-consequence nexus as the basis of these movements, see Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 196.

To further complicate matters, the covenantal pattern compounds the act-consequence nexus. It links the two movements in a single chain of events (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: The Compounding of the Act-Consequence Nexus



The covenantal pattern assumes the act-consequence nexus at multiple points, making this pattern a target of the Joban critique. To the extent that punitive miracles express the various phases of this pattern, their coherence is likewise challenged.

The effect of the Joban miracles on the phenomena of punitive miracles and the covenantal pattern is not destruction but vitiation. God can freely act according to conventional retribution, in which case the logic of punitive miracles and the covenantal pattern will continue to obtain. However, the Joban miracles vitiate these phenomena. These miracles force us to negotiate with a less constrained understanding of God’s relationship to the world than we have thus far encountered.

3.5. Jonah

3.5.1. Introduction

At first blush, the book of Jonah promises to continue the prophetic storyline. This book takes a prophet from the Primary History (see 2 Kgs 14:25) and tasks him with preaching to a prominent people in this history, the Assyrians. God tells Jonah that “the outcry produced by [Nineveh’s]

evil came up to me” (Jonah 1:2),⁵²³ hinting that God intends to treat this city like Sodom and Egypt (see Gen 18:20; 19:13; Exod 3:7, 9). Jonah’s announcement of Nineveh’s destruction (Jonah 3:4) seemingly confirms that the Assyrian capital will share the fate of the cities of the plain (see esp. Gen 19:25; Deut 29:22). Jonah’s mission will likely end in Nineveh’s destruction.

However, Jonah’s strange behavior quickly reveals that this story is no straightforward extension of the prophetic storyline. This book features a prophet of the most unusual sort. Jonah flees westward toward Tarshish when God sends him eastward to Nineveh. The prophet relishes the thought of Nineveh’s destruction and then wants to die when God spares the city. Most importantly, Jonah is the victim of punitive miracles rather than the Ninevites. The grounding of Jonah’s story in the prophetic storyline is a setup. The book primes readers to expect a certain kind of story—one ending in Nineveh’s judgment—then provides something else entirely. This text uses a familiar character (the prophet) and event (the punitive miracle) for novel ends.

I will organize my analysis of the book of Jonah around the two confessional statements in this text. In Jonah 1:9, the prophet confesses that he worships “the Lord God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” Jonah resists God in the domains that his confession subordinates to the deity. Consequently, God exercises control over these regions to get Jonah back on task. In Jonah 4:2, the prophet recites Israel’s ancient creed, leading him to acknowledge that God’s forbearing character motivated his attempt to subvert the divine plan. The contest between God and the prophet concerns divine mercy. From this vantage, the Jonahic punitive miracles express God’s concern for Nineveh and invite Jonah to emulate this aspect of the deity’s character.

⁵²³ I take the genitive clause τῆς κακίας αὐτῆς as an example of Daniel Wallace’s “genitive of production”; see *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 104–6. Nineveh’s evil acts provoke an outcry to God.

3.5.2. Punitive Miracles and the Created Order

The punitive miracles in the book of Jonah are occasioned by the eponymous character's unusual responses to his prophetic vocation. God twice commissions Jonah to visit Nineveh and indict the city for its deeds (Jonah 1:1–2; 3:1–2). The prophet twice responds in a manner belying his commitment to this divine mission (1:3ff.; 3:3–4; 4:1ff.). In the first instance, Jonah's refusal is manifest. Instead of traveling to Nineveh, Jonah boards a ship heading in the opposite direction, toward Tarshish (1:3).⁵²⁴ In the second case, the prophet's belligerence is concealed, yet all the more insidious. Jonah now complies with his commission (3:4), but his proclamation to the Ninevites is brusque and perfunctory.⁵²⁵ Regardless, Jonah's diminutive efforts achieve an absurd degree of repentance (3:5–9),⁵²⁶ causing God to walk back the promised judgment (3:10).⁵²⁷ This turn of events leaves Jonah grieved and wishing for death (4:1–3). Jonah's response to divine activity runs contrary to what is expected from a prophet.

⁵²⁴ Jack M. Sasson, *Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary, and Interpretation*, AB 24B (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 78–79.

⁵²⁵ There is a glaring discrepancy between Nineveh's size—it requires “a journey by road of three days” (Jonah 3:3)—and Jonah's effort—he takes a “journey of one day” into the city and delivers a single message (3:4). Jonah is unconcerned about reaching the entire city. For the brusqueness of Jonah's message, see Terence E. Fretheim, *The Message of Jonah: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 107–8. Fretheim observes various irregularities in Jonah's preaching, such as his failure to inform the Ninevites of the reason for their destruction and the short timeframe until fulfillment (forty days). In Fretheim's view, these data indicate that “Jonah ... makes his message as vague and as blunt and as offensive as he possibly can” (*The Message of Jonah*, 108). Fretheim's remarks concerning Jonah's message are speculative, but it is noteworthy that the Greek text supports his comment about the prophet's timeline. Whereas the Hebrew text has Jonah announcing destruction in forty days (3:4 MT), the Greek text reduces this timeline to three days (3:4 LXX). Considering that the tour of Nineveh requires three days (3:3) and Jonah has completed a third of this journey (3:4), Jonah's message will not reach the city's furthest reaches—perhaps by word of mouth, as Fretheim supposes (*The Message of Jonah*, 107)—until the day before destruction comes. Jonah is restricting the city's window of repentance as much as possible.

⁵²⁶ The absurdity of Jonah's success comes to the fore with the “repentance” of the Ninevites' animals (Jonah 3:7–8). No creature in Nineveh is unaffected by Jonah's message.

⁵²⁷ Many scholars note that the MT of Jonah 3:4 (עוֹד אֲרִבְעִים יוֹם וְיִנְהָה נִהְפֹּכֶת) is ambiguous. Sasson explains that נִהְפֹּכֶת (from הִפְךָ) may denote Nineveh's annihilation or its transformation given the niphal stem, which can convey a passive or reflexive sense. He observes that the ancient versions, including the LXX, assume the former interpretation (Sasson, *Jonah*, 234–37, 345–46). Thus, OG Jonah translates נִהְפֹּכֶת as καταστραφήσεται

In this context, the starting point for the Jonahic miracles is the prophet's self-designation as a "servant of the Lord," whom he dubs "the God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land" (Jonah 1:9). Jonah resists God in the domains that his confession subordinates to the deity (sea, dry land), and God exerts control over these regions to get the prophet back on task.⁵²⁸

God exercises control over the sea as Jonah is fleeing by stirring up a storm that nearly destroys the ship carrying the prophet (Jonah 1:4).⁵²⁹ The deity's power over the sea is such that no one may escape the storm or cross over to dry land while opposing the divine will. The sailors try to circumvent Jonah's advice to cast him overboard (see 1:12) by making for land. However, the storm prevents them from doing so while the fugitive is in their midst (1:13). Only after the sailors have jettisoned Jonah does the storm abate (1:15), at which point they may return to shore. Jonah is likewise restricted to the sea until he accedes to the divine will. The prophet experiences a change of heart while dying on the seafloor (2:4–8).⁵³⁰ God then sends a "great sea

(future passive indicative, from *καταστρέφω*). Jonah's proclamation in Greek unambiguously describes something that will be done to Nineveh (by God). That this divine action will entail Nineveh's destruction is established by the conspicuous parallels between the Greek text of Jonah and Gen 18–19 LXX, which associate these stories to a greater degree than in the MT (Larry Perkins, "The Septuagint of Jonah: Aspects of Literary Analysis Applied to Biblical Translation," *BIOSCS* 20 [1987]: 51).

⁵²⁸ Phyllis Tribble, "Divine Incongruities in the Book of Jonah," in *God in the Fray: A Tribute to Walter Brueggemann*, ed. Tod Linafelt and Timothy K. Beal (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 198–208, esp. pp. 205–6.

⁵²⁹ There are ample reasons for interpreting this storm as a miracle. The primary consideration is the storm's strength. The sailors believe the storm is an extraordinary event that calls for placating the gods (Jonah 1:5–7). They presumably reserve the casting of lots for extreme circumstances. Another factor is the storm's effect on the creation. The storm hardens the otherwise permeable boundary between sea and dry land, preventing Jonah and the sailors from passing from one domain to the next until they submit to God (for the relationship between miracles and created boundaries, see "1.2.1. The Definition Proper"). Finally, the storm's timing indicates we are dealing with a miracle. The storm begins when Jonah flees (1:4) and ends when the prophet enters the sea (1:15).

⁵³⁰ If we allow the narrative's details to inform our interpretation of Jonah 2, then 2:4–8 describes the prophet's experience while exposed in the sea. Salvation comes to Jonah at the bottom of the sea when he turns his thoughts to the Lord (Jonah 2:8; see 2:3). The sea monster is the instrument of Jonah's salvation, appearing at the last moment to save him from death.

monster” to carry him back to dry land (2:1, 3, 11). Neither the sailors nor Jonah may escape the storm event—and by extension, the sea—until they submit to God.

God exerts control over the dry land while Jonah is anticipating Nineveh’s destruction by destroying the plant shading the prophet (Jonah 4:6–7).⁵³¹ With the plant gone, the deity stirs up a wind—perhaps to destroy Jonah’s makeshift shelter (see 4:5)⁵³²—exposing the prophet to the elements (4:8). Jonah is no more successful at opposing the divine plan outside Nineveh than en route to Tarshish. Jonah resists God in the domains that his confession subordinates to the deity, sea and dry land. God responds by exerting control over these regions. Jonah cannot evade the mandate of the one who made and controls the world.

3.5.3. Punitive Miracles and Divine Mercy

The goal of the miracles in the book of Jonah is not to reveal God as the creator, although they do so; their object is to illuminate divine mercy. The prospect of mercy is concealed as much from readers as from the Ninevites for most of this book. It emerges after God spares Nineveh that mercy was the impetus for Jonah’s calling and the source of his fear.

It initially seems that Nineveh’s story will end with disaster. The book commences with an indictment that mimics the charge against Sodom and Gomorrah: “the outcry produced by

⁵³¹ The miracle consists of God ordering a worm to destroy the plant (Jonah 4:7). The event can be identified as miraculous because of how quickly the plant is destroyed: the worm begins its task early in the day (4:7), and the plant no longer provides adequate shade when the sun rises (4:8). God is said to “order” (προσέταξεν; 4:7) the worm, just as God orders the sea monster (2:1; divine passive in 2:11), the plant (4:6), and the wind (4:8). Using one verb to describe God’s deeds indicates that a single type of divine action is in view. Since some of these deeds are indisputably miraculous, it is a reasonable inference that the rest of these acts are also miracles.

⁵³² Sasson, *Jonah*, 304. Sasson mentions the possibility that the wind directly afflicts Jonah, but he effectively dismisses this option due to the book’s silence on this matter. As far as the Greek text is concerned, it is reasonably clear that the wind is an instrument of torment. The wind in question is a “blazing wind of heat” (πνεύματι καύσωνος συγκαλοντι; Jonah 4:8)—a description that brings out the wind’s oppressive character.

[Nineveh's] evil came up to me" (Jonah 1:2; see Gen 18:20–21; 19:13).⁵³³ With this opening, it appears that the great Assyrian city will be destroyed in a dramatic—and likely, miraculous—fashion. Jonah's flight toward Tarshish temporarily suspends this plotline. Nevertheless, the prophet's change of heart and journey to Nineveh indicate that the judgment narrative has resumed. Jonah's message reinforces this impression. Jonah announces that "Nineveh will be destroyed [καταστραφήσεται]" in a matter of days (Jonah 3:4), using a term (καταστρέφω) that is a shorthand for the fate of the cities of the plain (see Gen 19:25; Deut 29:22; Amos 4:11).⁵³⁴ Jonah anticipates a grisly end for Nineveh. The reader has little reason to differ with him.

The Ninevites display repentance in response to Jonah's preaching (Jonah 3:5–9), but they are ignorant of whether this will be effective (3:9). Readers are likewise in the dark. Jonah's message contains no provision for averting the disaster, and the prophet is silent as the acts of contrition occur. When God does relent, readers are surprised along with the Ninevites. We have thus far read what seemed to be an account of Nineveh's destruction patterned on Sodom and Gomorrah. This expectation happily disappoints, and we realize that the story has been about mercy, rather than judgment, all along.

⁵³³ Gk. ἀνέβη ἡ κραυγὴ τῆς κακίας αὐτῆς πρὸς με; see Gen 18:20–21 (κραυγὴ Σοδόμων καὶ Γομόρρας πεπλήθυνται ... ὅψομαι εἰ κατὰ τὴν κραυγὴν αὐτῶν τὴν ἐρχομένην πρὸς με συντελοῦνται); 19:13 (ὕψωθη ἡ κραυγὴ αὐτῶν ἐναντίον κυρίου). God's description of the Hebrews' cries in Egypt (Exod 3:7, 9: τῆς κραυγῆς αὐτῶν ἀκήκοα ἀπὸ τῶν ἐργοδιωκτῶν ... κραυγὴ τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἥκει πρὸς με) is another important parallel to this passage. κραυγὴ is used exclusively in Genesis to denote the response of Sodom and Gomorrah's victims. It next appears in Exodus as God expresses concern at the Israelites' cries. The selective use of this term indicates that the groups in question engage in oppressive acts that prompt impassioned pleas to God. The same indication obtains in the case of Nineveh. The Ninevites are monstrous sinners who richly deserve judgment. The relevant scriptural intertexts indicate they will meet a miraculously destructive end.

⁵³⁴ The verb καταστρέφω also denotes the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 13:10; 19:29; Isa 13:19; Jer 20:16; 27:40; Lam 4:6; see Isa 1:7, 9. The use of this term in Jer 20:16 is particularly illustrative: Jeremiah wishes for the person who announced his birth to "be like the cities that God destroyed [κατέστρεψεν] in anger." There is no need for the prophet to name these cities; καταστρέφω suffices to denote Sodom and Gomorrah.

From the vantage of God’s mercy, the punitive miracles in this book are a consequence of Jonah’s aversion to the expression of this divine attribute. Jonah’s antagonism becomes evident when he learns God has called off the judgment. The prophet recites a portion of Israel’s ancient confession (“You [Lord] are merciful and compassionate, longsuffering and very merciful and repenting of evils”; see Exod 34:6–7) and states it was precisely the forbearing aspect of the divine character that motivated him to “get the jump [on God] by fleeing to Tarshish” (Jonah 4:2).⁵³⁵ Jonah’s erratic actions—specifically his flight, but arguably also his proclamation—have been attempts to stymie God’s mercy. Jonah is this story’s antagonist, and his deeds warrant judgment if for no other reason than to guarantee the achievement of divine purposes. The storm in Jonah 1 expressly safeguards the divine plan. The miracles in Jonah 4 lack a similar protective function. Yet they do punish the prophet for his opposition to God’s mercy.

Jonah’s belligerence produces a counterintuitive result. The punishment that should have befallen Nineveh instead falls to Jonah.⁵³⁶ Judgment turns from one victim to the next given their contrasting responses to God’s character. The Ninevites intuit the divine character and grope their way to a reprieve.⁵³⁷ Jonah is aware of God’s mercy and plots his defiant acts accordingly.

⁵³⁵ Gk. προέφθασα τοῦ φυγεῖν εἰς Θαρσις. The construction προφθάνω + articular infinitive is used to denote an action taken to stave off the activity of another agent; see 1 Macc 10:4 (Προφθάσωμεν τοῦ εἰρήνην θεῖναι μετ’ αὐτῶν πρὶν ἢ θεῖναι αὐτὸν μετὰ Ἀλεξάνδρου καθ’ ἡμῶν), 10:23 (προέφθακεν ἡμᾶς ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος τοῦ φιλῖαν καταλαβέσθαι τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις). In Jonah’s case, the flight to Tarshish is an attempt to “get the jump on” God. Jonah supposes God will not show mercy to Nineveh if Jonah avoids the city.

⁵³⁶ Fretheim, *The Message of Jonah*, 125. Fretheim develops the contrast between Nineveh and Jonah: “Destruction now [in Jonah 4:7–8] comes, not upon Nineveh, but upon something that had become very important to Jonah ... He is thus given a little taste of what it is like to experience destruction ... A kind of preliminary judgment is here passed on Jonah rather than Nineveh.”

⁵³⁷ The Ninevites intuitively follow Joel’s counsel to Israel: they fast (Jonah 3:5, 7 // Joel 2:12); rend their hearts (Jonah 3:8 // Joel 2:13) in addition to altering their clothes (Jonah 3:5–6, 8; cf. Joel 2:13); ask, “Who knows if God will repent and turn away from his angry wrath?” (Τίς οἶδεν εἰ μετανόησει ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἀποστρέψει ἐξ ὀργῆς θυμοῦ αὐτοῦ; Jonah 3:9 // τίς οἶδεν εἰ ἐπιστρέψει καὶ μετανόησει; Joel 2:14); and experience mercy from the God of Israel’s creed (Jonah 3:10; see 4:2: σὺ [κύριε] ἐλεήμων καὶ οἰκτίρμων, μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος καὶ μετανῶν ἐπὶ ταῖς

Jonah's punishment is not a sign that God has written him off. Judgment need not have the final word in Jonah's story any more than Nineveh's. Instead, these miracles conduce to the prophet's participation in divine mercy. This dynamic is explicit in Jonah 4. God uses Jonah's experience with the ephemeral plant (Jonah 4:6–8) to elucidate the deity's concern for Nineveh (4:9–11). As God indicates, Jonah was deeply invested in his plant even though it cost him no effort and was transitory (4:10). If Jonah took such interest in a plant, it is all the more reasonable for God to take an interest in Nineveh and desire its inhabitants' preservation (4:11).⁵³⁸ The purpose of the plant's demise is to arouse in Jonah a sense of revulsion at the prospect of destruction and invite him to join God in feeling similarly about Nineveh.⁵³⁹ God does not need Jonah's assent. The Ninevites have been warned and repented. Regardless, the miracle in Jonah 4 shows that the deity longs for Jonah to align with the divine character as expressed in Israel's creed.

The relationship between the miracle in Jonah 1 and divine mercy is less explicit. However, a similar purpose can be discerned if we conceive of the storm as the catalyst of a chain of events culminating in the prophet's rescue from the deep (Jonah 2). As I argued above, the storm is a miraculous judgment that arrests Jonah's flight to Tarshish. The prophet's near-drowning is a consequence of this storm.⁵⁴⁰ Jonah gains a reprieve from punishment because of

κακίαις // [κύριος ὁ θεός] ἐλεήμων καὶ οἰκτίρμων ἐστὶ, μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος καὶ μετανοῶν ἐπὶ ταῖς κακίαις; Joel 2:13). The Ninevites respond to Jonah's preaching as model Israelites would.

⁵³⁸ The unstated premise of the comparison is that Nineveh is an enduring city that has cost God tremendous effort; see Sasson, *Jonah*, 310–11, 313; Fretheim, *The Message of Jonah*, 127.

⁵³⁹ Fretheim, *The Message of Jonah*, 125.

⁵⁴⁰ It is unlikely that Jonah's submersion is necessary for calming the storm (as Sasson claims; see *Jonah*, 127, 142). Jonah could have repented on the ship. Instead, Jonah's directive (Jonah 1:12) reflects his preference for death over his commission (in agreement with Fretheim, *The Message of Jonah*, 87–89). Jonah's descent into the deep is a likely consequence of the storm, not a necessary one. Jonah could have broken the chain of events that ended with him on the seafloor, yet this was unlikely to occur given his one-dimensional character.

an ostensible change of heart (2:8; see 2:3), and the salvific sea monster then arrives to rescue him from a watery grave. The storm creates a series of events that gives Jonah a taste of divine mercy. This episode should prepare Jonah for Nineveh's similar experience.⁵⁴¹ The miracles in Jonah show that the God whom the prophet serves, having the character delineated in Israel's creed, is appropriately concerned for Nineveh and its inhabitants. These miracles extend an invitation for Jonah to adopt a similar attitude.

3.5.4. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

The book of Jonah takes a character from the Primary History and tasks him with preaching to a prominent people in this history, the Ninevites. Given Jonah's commission and proclamation, it is reasonable to expect Nineveh's oppressive acts to be met with a devastating judgment, like Sodom and Egypt. The book is teed up to extend the prophetic storyline.

Remarkably, these initial expectations of Jonah's story are misleading. In a shocking twist, Jonah falls victim to judgment rather than the Ninevites. Jonah is aware that God is merciful, and he has plotted his defiant acts to prevent God's expression of this attribute (Jonah 4:2). Consequently, punitive miracles beset Jonah at sea (Jonah 1) and on dry land (Jonah 4) to preserve God's plan. The book puts a novel spin on a character type (the prophet) and event (the punitive miracle) central to the prophetic storyline.

Characterization. The relationship between the prophet and the punitive miracles in the book of Jonah is bizarre. I have long observed a close association between prophets and such

⁵⁴¹ Fretheim, *The Message of Jonah*, 103, 108, 118–20. Fretheim helpfully develops the incongruity between Jonah's experience of mercy and his revulsion at Nineveh's preservation. This incongruity implies that Jonah should have known better based on his merciful reprieve.

miracles in the prophetic storyline. Prophets appear in proximity to punitive miracles as the heralds or beneficiaries of these events. The book of Jonah inverts this relationship. The prophet is now the miracle's victim. This inversion is not unprecedented, but it is rare and generally oriented toward prophetic authorization.⁵⁴² Jonah is not punished because he doubts a fellow prophet or a prophetic message; he is punished because he hopes to suppress a calling of whose validity he is sure. The miracles that a prophet like Jonah would oversee rebound on him because he wishes to embargo the extension of divine mercy. This inversion challenges the usual relationship between punitive miracles and prophetic individuals. Since punitive miracles are used against Jonah, the implication is that the prophet is no longer a conduit but an obstacle to divine activity in the world.

The development of prophetic topoi. The punitive miracles in Jonah develop the topoi of divine action through a select individual and the hardness of people's hearts. Punitive miracles regularly facilitate divine action through a select individual, either by enhancing that person's actions or protecting them from threats. The ironic development in the book of Jonah is that punitive miracles facilitate divine action through a prophetic individual by inhibiting their strenuous efforts to the contrary. Jonah so diverges from the prophetic profile that punitive miracles must prevent his sabotage of the prophetic task.

Similarly, punitive miracles have long been associated with the hardness of people's hearts. Such miracles often punish people's recalcitrance, as in the wilderness. Remarkably, the prophet falls victim to punitive miracles in this book for his hardness of heart rather than the

⁵⁴² The relevant miracles appear in Num 12 (Miriam's leprosy) and 1 Kgs 13 (the mauling of the man of God). These prophets fell victim to punitive miracles because they doubted the validity of another prophet (Miriam) or their own message (the man of God).

people. Jonah displays the most malignant stubbornness, like Israel at the lowest points in its history.

The thematic development of God's kingdom. I have argued for a longstanding association between punitive miracles and the prophetic storyline. Most such miracles participate in this storyline by promoting the fulfillment of God's promises or preserving the integrity of God's kingdom. What is striking about the book of Jonah is that this association disappears. The miracles in this book have a superficial connection to Israel's history, and their association with the divine kingdom is tangential.⁵⁴³ The *raison d'être* of these miracles is to express God's concern for the Assyrians and ensure that Jonah warns them away from judgment.

That being the case, it is remarkable that the Ninevites are not closer to the worship of Israel's God at the end of this book. Jonah's proclamation fails to mention Israel's God (see Jonah 3:4), and the Ninevites' repentance is directed toward a nondescript deity (ὁ θεός) rather than the Lord (3:8–9).⁵⁴⁴ The Ninevites end up with a national character more like the Lord's than previously (3:8), but they are just as distant from the knowledge of Israel's God as ever. The punitive miracles in Jonah do not expand the divine kingdom. These miracles facilitate divine activities independent of the prophetic storyline.

The Jonahic miracles relativize the prophetic storyline. The prophetic storyline persists despite this book's focus; Israel remains the locus of God's concern. Regardless, using punitive miracles to accomplish God's purposes in the world beyond Israel reminds us that the scope of

⁵⁴³ There is a point of contact between the book of Jonah and the prophetic storyline at the end of chapter 1: after being delivered from the storm, the sailors worship Israel's God (Jonah 1:16). The miraculous storm causes the Gentiles to recognize divine power, like the manifestations in 2–3 Maccabees. I describe this intersection as "tangential" because the sailors' newfound appreciation of the Lord is anecdotal and undeveloped.

⁵⁴⁴ Fretheim, *The Message of Jonah*, 111.

divine concern is broader than one people. God is the creator who cares for “all the tribes of the earth” (Gen 12:3).

3.6. Daniel

3.6.1. Introduction

The events of the book of Daniel are rooted in the Southern Kingdom’s history.⁵⁴⁵ This book takes some Judeans who were deported from the land and drops them into Nebuchadnezzar’s court in Babylon. This relocation happens because “the Lord handed over [Jerusalem] into [Nebuchadnezzar’s] hands” (Dan 1:2). Daniel and his friends find themselves in Babylon because of God’s anger at Judah. This book assumes the history of God’s dealings with the covenant people and extends it into the exilic era. Consequently, the single punitive miracle in the book, appearing in Dan 4, extends Judah’s history.

Jewish kings and prophets generally do not appear in the book of Daniel. The eponymous hero of this book is the sole possible exception to this rule. The book does not describe Daniel as a *προφήτης*,⁵⁴⁶ but early Christian readers would likely have perceived him as such.⁵⁴⁷

⁵⁴⁵ Clines associates the book of Daniel with a “Secondary History” headed by the books of Chronicles. He makes this association because the book of Daniel describes Nebuchadnezzar’s seizure of some temple vessels (Dan 1:2), which only appears in 2 Chron 36:7 (*What Does Eve Do to Help?*, 90–91; cf. 2 Kgs 23:36–24:6). This argument is sound. Regardless, the book of Daniel’s reliance on Chronicles appears minimal. Daniel can be read as an extension of the Primary History, the Secondary History, or Israel’s history in general.

⁵⁴⁶ See esp. Dan 3:38: “At this time there is no ... prophet.”

⁵⁴⁷ Carol A. Newsom and Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 53. Breed cites the reference to Daniel as a *προφήτης* in Matt 24:15 and early Christians’ arrangement of the OT canon as evidence to this effect.

Regardless, Daniel does not play a significant role in the punitive miracle in this book, apart from predicting its accomplishment. The relevant miracle is largely untethered to prophets and their tasks.

I will examine the Danielic punitive miracle by investigating its role in Nebuchadnezzar's story arc (Dan 1–4). I will first consider how the miracle in Dan 4 culminates Nebuchadnezzar's fitful interactions with his Judean captives in Dan 1–3. I will then investigate how this miracle cooperates with the events of Dan 3 to reproduce the covenantal pattern. Finally, I will examine how Nebuchadnezzar's response to this instantiation of the covenantal pattern moves the prophetic storyline into uncharted waters.

3.6.2. Nebuchadnezzar's Beastly Transformation

The miracle in Dan 4 is the climax in a series of fitful interactions between Nebuchadnezzar and his Judean captives.⁵⁴⁸ These interactions are marked by alternating moments of royal insight and menace. On one hand, the captives make quite an impression on the king. The Judeans' conduct in these encounters leads Nebuchadnezzar to recognize their wisdom (Dan 1:18–20), to acknowledge that their God is the “God of gods and Lord of lords and Lord of kings” (2:47), and to establish death as the punishment for blasphemy against their deity (3:96). On the other hand, the king's insights are tempered by erratic actions. Nebuchadnezzar inducts the captives into a

⁵⁴⁸ The complicated history of Daniel in Greek affects my treatment of this book. A new edition of Daniel (known as the Theodotionic text; henceforth Θ) arose alongside the initial Greek translation (Old Greek; henceforth OG) at an early date (Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Versions of the Bible*, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson [Leiden: Brill, 2000], 143–44, 51). The NT makes use of both editions (Pierre Grelot, “Les versions grecques de Daniel,” *Bib* 47 [1966]: 386–91). I will attend to the miracle as it appears in both texts. I privilege the OG as the earlier text, making it the basis of my comments above. However, I will mention salient differences in the Θ text in subsequent footnotes.

royal bureaucracy that requires violating their religious scruples (1:3–8), he sentences them to death with the rest of the wise men (2:12–13), and he tries to burn three of them alive (3:14–21). The composite that emerges from Dan 1–3 is one of contrasts. At one moment, Nebuchadnezzar is a pious Gentile ruler; at the next, he is “the most evil (king) in the whole world” (3:32).

The state of affairs in Dan 1–3 is unstable, and it falls to Dan 4 to bring about a resolution. Daniel 4 turns the spotlight on Nebuchadnezzar, making him the central character. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream about the felling of a magnificent tree (Dan 4:4–5, 10–17). When the king summons Daniel to interpret the dream, Daniel says that it portends an impending period of divine punishment (4:18–26). The problem is royal hubris: “[Nebuchadnezzar’s] heart was raised up ... against the Holy One and his angels,” as a result of which he “utterly devastated the house of the living God” (4:22).⁵⁴⁹ The punishment for this insolence will be severe. Nebuchadnezzar faces a detention overseen by angels, a sojourn in the wilderness, and flogging (4:24–26). These threats are later expanded to include the constant angelic pursuit of the king, resulting in social isolation (4:32). The king fails to heed Daniel’s summons to repent (4:27–30), so the punishment unfolds as predicted.

The sequence of events during Nebuchadnezzar’s period of divine punishment is not entirely coherent, but the miracle and its results are straightforward.⁵⁵⁰ Nebuchadnezzar is compelled to live among wild animals and undergoes a metamorphosis that makes him their equal (Dan 4:33a–b). The king later testifies that his “flesh and heart [were] changed” during this

⁵⁴⁹ No statement of Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of the temple appears in Dan 4:22 ☹.

⁵⁵⁰ Describing Dan 4:33a–36, Lawrence Wills writes, “Like Daniel 4 in general, this section *as it stands* is a morass of conflicting images and logical difficulties. Not only are the images of the affliction mixed, but the order of events is very difficult to reconcile” (*The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends*, HDR 26 [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], 93, emphasis original). It is beyond the scope of my investigation to resolve these problems. It suffices that Nebuchadnezzar’s beastly transformation is reasonably straightforward.

period, and he habitually “walked around naked with the beasts of the earth” (4:33b). It is reasonable to infer that the alteration of Nebuchadnezzar’s heart catalyzes his animalistic behavior.⁵⁵¹ The king’s hubris results in a theriomorphic transformation that makes him a human-looking beast.

However, as Daniel predicted (Dan 4:26; see also 4:17), the king’s punishment is temporary. After Nebuchadnezzar has served his sentence, he prays to God and procures his release (4:33a, 34).⁵⁵² The king emerges from isolation as a changed man. Nebuchadnezzar now agrees with Daniel that God “changes seasons and times, taking away the kingdom from kings and installing others in their place” (4:37; see 2:21).⁵⁵³ He commands the inhabitants of his kingdom to worship this God (4:37b; see also 4:37a).⁵⁵⁴ Most fantastically, the king becomes a monotheist and broadcasts his new conviction throughout the realm (4:37c).⁵⁵⁵ The king’s

⁵⁵¹ Two considerations suggest that Nebuchadnezzar’s transformation is a miracle. First, Nebuchadnezzar interprets his transformation as such. The king narrates the alteration of his heart with the verb *ἀλλοιόω* (*ἡλλοιώθη ἡ σὰρξ μου καὶ ἡ καρδία μου*; Dan 4:33b), and he later uses the same term to describe the change that God performed in him (*ὁ θεὸς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ... ἡλλοίωσεν ἐπ’ ἐμοὶ μεγάλα πράγματα*; 4:37a). The repeated use of this term reveals that God was the agent of the king’s transformation. Second, Nebuchadnezzar’s experience involves a blurring of created boundaries. Nebuchadnezzar does not experience mental illness; he fully matches the beasts in their demeanor and conduct. Nebuchadnezzar’s relationship with the beasts demonstrates the nature of his transformation: once transformed, the king walks freely among these animals. The beasts accept him as one of their own, whereas the natural inclination of such *θηρία* would be to attack him (e.g., see Gen 9:5; Lev 26:6, 22). God has transformed Nebuchadnezzar into a beast in all essential respects. The boundary between *θηρία* and *ἄνθρωποι* has been breached. Nebuchadnezzar’s liminal experience is indicative of divine intervention.

⁵⁵² The king’s release presumably entails the undoing of his beastly condition.

⁵⁵³ Nebuchadnezzar’s statement in Dan 4:37 (*αὐτός ... ἄλλοιοῖ καιροὺς καὶ χρόνους ἀφαιρῶν βασιλείαν βασιλέων καὶ καθιστῶν ἑτέρους ἀντ’ αὐτῶν*) demonstrates that the king is now of one mind with Daniel (2:21: *αὐτὸς ἄλλοιοῖ καιροὺς καὶ χρόνους, μεθιστῶν βασιλεῖς καὶ καθιστῶν*). Nebuchadnezzar’s confessions in Dan 4:3, 34–35, 37 Θ do not mirror Daniel’s statement.

⁵⁵⁴ Nebuchadnezzar commends the Judeans’ God to his subjects in Dan 4:2–3, 37 Θ, but he does not expect his subjects to worship this deity.

⁵⁵⁵ Nebuchadnezzar’s previous confessions build up to his monotheistic declaration in Dan 4:37c (*εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ θεός*). The king initially confessed that Daniel’s God is “the only one who reveals hidden mysteries” (2:47). He later recognized that “there is not another God [besides the Judeans’] who will be able to deliver in this manner” (3:96). It is only in the king’s “encyclical letter” (4:37b–c), set after his punishment, that we find an explicit

transformation causes him to trade his intermittent interest in the captives' God for a full-throated promotion of Judean monotheism.

3.6.3. Punitive Miracles and the Covenantal Pattern in Dan 3–4

Nebuchadnezzar's beastly transformation continues the prophetic storyline. It does so by tying up a loose end: the temple's destruction. As far as we learn from the Primary History, Nebuchadnezzar burned the temple with impunity. That said, the king destroyed the temple as an agent of divine wrath, leaving him in a precarious position. According to Deut 32, enemies whom God uses to punish Israel are prone to take exclusive credit for their actions, leading God to destroy them after being reconciled to Israel (32:27, 35, 41–43).⁵⁵⁶ Nebuchadnezzar's conduct in the book of Daniel matches this description. Paraphrasing Daniel, the king was tasked with the temple's destruction,⁵⁵⁷ yet he executed this task with hubris (Dan 4:22).⁵⁵⁸ God is mindful of the king's pride and judges him as severely as Israel.

declaration of monotheism. The Θ text lacks a monotheistic declaration. The king praises the Judeans' God (2:47; 3:95–96; 4:2–3, 34–35, 37 Θ), but he never rules out the existence or veneration of other gods.

⁵⁵⁶ See Schwartz, "On Something Biblical about 2 Maccabees," 229.

⁵⁵⁷ Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar, "You utterly devastated the house of the living God because of the sins of the consecrated people" (Dan 4:22). The inclusion of the prepositional phrase "because of the sins of the consecrated people" indicates that the preceding clause, which describes the king's treatment of the temple, is a divinely ordained punishment. For similar phrases, see Lev 26:18; Mic 6:13.

⁵⁵⁸ For an alternate interpretation of Dan 4:22, see A. P. J. McCrystall, "Studies in the Old Greek Translation of Daniel" (University of Oxford, DPhil thesis, 1980), 274–80, Center for Research Libraries Global Resources Network. McCrystall argues that 4:22 is an indictment of Nebuchadnezzar's appropriation of temple vessels during his first visit to Jerusalem (Dan 1:1–2; see 2 Chr 36:6–7) rather than his destruction of the temple. Central to this view is the observation that Nebuchadnezzar's 18th year, mentioned in Dan 4:4, is when the king narrated his completed experience rather than the date when the sin mentioned in 4:22 occurred. In McCrystall's view, Nebuchadnezzar is rehabilitated by his experience in Dan 4, which includes events ranging from his 11th to 18th years, and this rehabilitation prepares him to be "God's instrument" in Jerusalem's destruction later in the 18th year ("Studies in the Old Greek," 276–80). Adopting McCrystall's interpretation would entail reframing Nebuchadnezzar's offense, but it would not undermine my argument concerning Dan 4 developing the prophetic

The miracle in Dan 4 acts in concert with the Prayer of Azariah in Dan 3. Azariah's prayer frames the plight of the Judean captives in the furnace in terms of Israel's fortunes. This analogy unfolds in three movements. First, Azariah states that Israel has fallen victim to divine punishment (Dan 3:27–28, 31–33), and this deservedly so on account of the nation's sins (3:29–30). Next, Azariah searches for a remedy. The captive cites God's reputation, the covenant, and the ancestral promises as reasons for the deity to relent (3:34–37). He also offers the humble contrition of his companions and himself as a sacrifice in the absence of an operative sacrificial system (3:38–40). Finally, Azariah invokes the deity to deliver the nation and avenge its cause (3:41–45). The nation's enemies are to be humiliated, with the proviso that they come to "know that you alone are Lord" (3:44–45).

Azariah's prayer unfolds according to the covenantal pattern. Azariah interprets Israel's predicament as a punishment (Dan 3:27–28, 31–33) for national disobedience (3:29–30), he construes the sacrifice of his companions and himself as the requisite act of repentance (3:38–40),⁵⁵⁹ and he anticipates that the reconciled deity will bring about restoration (3:41–45). The

storyline. Regardless, it is preferable to take Daniel's statement in 4:22 as an indictment for the temple's destruction. Disregarding other evidence, the date in 4:4 does refer to the timing of the king's testimony. However, there are countervailing data to consider. The most relevant datum appears in the Prayer of Azariah: "There is not at this time ... a place for offering before you [offerings] and finding mercy" (3:38). There is no temple standing when the events of Dan 3 occur. If we take the succession of episodes in Daniel to reflect a chronological sequence, this statement indicates the temple is already gone when the king gives his testimony in Dan 4. More likely than McCrystall's view is the possibility that the date in 4:4 was prefixed to the account of Nebuchadnezzar's transformation without regard for the difficulties produced. The account is tied to the king's 18th year as a nod to Jeremiah's dating of the temple's destruction (Jer 52:29 MT; John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Herm [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 222), or perhaps, as a way of denoting the formulation of the king's plans during the year before the destruction of Jerusalem's shrine (Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, "Relecture et refonte historicisantes du livre de Daniel attestées par la première version grecque (Papyrus 967)," in *Études sur le judaïsme hellénistique: Congrès de Strasbourg (1983)*, ed. R. Kuntzmann and J. Schlosser, LD 119 [Paris: Cerf, 1984], 203–4).

⁵⁵⁹ M. Gilbert, "La prière d'Azarias (Dn 3, 26–45 Théodotion)," *NRTh* 96 (1974): 578–81; T. J. Meadowcroft, *Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel: A Literary Comparison*, JSOTSup 198 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 130. Meadowcroft writes, "The lament for the lost cultic sacrifice (v. 38) is linked to the three companions' own self-sacrifice in the fire (v. 40). It [the self-sacrifice] thereby becomes a kind of atonement."

first two phases of this sequence are set in the past; the prayer and its attendant acts constitute repentance in the present; the period of restoration follows. In response to the prayer, an angel descends and protects the captives from a gruesome death (3:49–50).

This prayer is not fully answered at the end of Dan 3. The scope of Azariah's prayer raises the expectation of a deliverance that exceeds the three captives. However, no such deliverance appears in Dan 3. Moreover, the request for divine recognition (Dan 3:45) is aimed at Nebuchadnezzar,⁵⁶⁰ but the king's confession at the end of Dan 3 falls short of this petition. He admits, "there is not another God who will be able to deliver in this manner" (3:96), but this does not exclude his recognition and worship of other gods.

We find answers to these aspects of the prayer by expanding our interpretive horizon to include Dan 4, as the OG invites us to do.⁵⁶¹ Nebuchadnezzar's transformation achieves a measure of national vindication by tying up one of the loose ends of the prophetic storyline, the Babylonians' destruction of the temple. Further, Nebuchadnezzar's experience brings him to the point of making the desired confession: "God is one" (Dan 4:37c // 3:45). From this vantage, Dan 3 and 4 cooperate to reproduce the covenantal pattern.⁵⁶² The captives' sacrificial act

⁵⁶⁰ Gilbert persuasively argues that the original enemies envisioned by the Prayer of Azariah were the Jewish Hellenizers and Antiochus IV ("La prière d'Azarias," 568, 574–75). Be that as it may, the insertion of this prayer in Dan 3 makes Nebuchadnezzar the adversary.

⁵⁶¹ Meadowcroft cites a shared date (see Dan 3:1; 4:4) and similar confessional topics and terms as features uniting Dan 3 and 4 in the OG text. He also remarks that the king's confession in Dan 3 is less impressive than those in Dan 4 and 6, leading him to suggest, "If chs. 3 and 4 reflect a process of development in the king, the confession of ch. 4 becomes the completion of the partial acknowledgment in ch. 3" (*Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel*, 157–59). Nebuchadnezzar's transformation is not dated in the Θ text (see Dan 4:1–4 Θ). This version provides less reason to read the stories in Dan 3–4 as a unit.

⁵⁶² This insight only applies to the OG text. The Θ text does not connect Nebuchadnezzar's punishment to the temple's destruction. Therefore, this punishment is not a moment of vindication in a movement spanning Dan 3–4 Θ. Further, the Θ text does not make Nebuchadnezzar a monotheist at the end of Dan 4. There is no reason to suppose that Nebuchadnezzar's condition at the end of Dan 4 Θ fulfills Azariah's prayer. Azariah's prayer establishes a covenantal pattern in the Θ text, but this pattern is restricted to the events of Dan 3.

inaugurates a season of covenantal blessing. God responds by performing a type 1 covenantal miracle to take Nebuchadnezzar to task for his insolence. The captives achieve less of a national restoration than the martyrs in 2 Maccabees. Regardless, Nebuchadnezzar's beastly transformation is an unexpected blessing that interrupts Israel's prolonged wait for renewal.

3.6.4. Nebuchadnezzar and the Blessing of the Nations

One unusual aspect of Nebuchadnezzar's experience is left to consider: the king's transformation. The adherence of a Gentile oppressor to Israel's God is a turn of events Deut 32 does not anticipate. Iterations of the covenantal pattern in the Primary History contain no comparable developments. We come closer to Dan 4 by looking further afield. The experiences of Heliodorus (2 Maccabees) and Ptolemy (3 Maccabees) have an outward affinity to Nebuchadnezzar's. These opponents witness miracles that cause them to recognize God's power. However, they are not agents of divine wrath but run-of-the-mill opponents whom God subdues per the deity's covenantal obligations. Nebuchadnezzar has no counterpart in his capacity as an agent of divine wrath who becomes an adherent of the Judean deity.

Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Maccabees) is the only productive analog to Nebuchadnezzar. Antiochus is an agent of divine judgment à la Deut 32,⁵⁶³ and he comes to recognize God's power. Yet Nebuchadnezzar differs from Antiochus in one respect. God does not ultimately allow Antiochus to depart from the pattern of Deut 32, which depicts divine vengeance as the

⁵⁶³ Schwartz, "On Something Biblical about 2 Maccabees," 227–32; Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 21–23.

end of a foreigner whom God uses to judge Israel.⁵⁶⁴ Nebuchadnezzar is a Gentile whom God uses to judge the nation, but his subsequent transformation veers from Deut 32.

Nebuchadnezzar's story mirrors Antiochus's until the Babylonian king's beastly transformation. Henceforth, the king's experience resembles that of the Jews' lesser adversaries who witness manifestations and become adherents of the Jewish God.⁵⁶⁵ The covenantal pattern essentially pivots at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's punishment to an outcome that resembles a divine manifestation. Combining familiar patterns into something new signifies that the prophetic storyline has moved into uncharted territory.

Nebuchadnezzar's experience results in an extension of the prophetic storyline unlike any we have seen thus far. This event is grounded in Israel's history, achieving a measure of vengeance for the exiled Judeans. Nevertheless, God's people derive no tangible benefit from the miracle. The people remain in exile after Nebuchadnezzar regains the throne, and the Judeans who serve in the Babylonian court enjoy no elevation of their status. The principal beneficiaries of the king's transformation are the Gentiles. Nebuchadnezzar becomes an ardent monotheist, and his empire's inhabitants become devotees of the Judean God (Dan 4:37a–c). The king's transformation revives an idea that has not been consequential since Abraham: blessing for God's people results in blessing for the nations (Gen 12:3).⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ See Schwartz, "On Something Biblical about 2 Maccabees," 227–32; Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 21–23.

⁵⁶⁵ Nebuchadnezzar's beastly transformation does not involve an ἐπιφάνεια. The punishment is neither preceded by a visible demonstration of divine power nor does it feature ἐπιφάν- derivatives. However, the king's transformation produces results like the Maccabean manifestations: the king recognizes divine power and testifies to the Judeans' God. Nebuchadnezzar even uses the same epithets that appear after the Maccabean manifestations ("the Great God": Dan 4:37c; see 2 Macc 3:36; 3 Macc 7:2; "the Most High God": Dan 4:37, 37a; see 3 Macc 7:9; similarly 2 Macc 3:31). The miracle in Dan 4 is epiphany-adjacent, but not an epiphany as such.

⁵⁶⁶ I have described the salient differences between the OG and Θ texts above. These differences boil down to two characteristics of the Θ text. First, the Θ text severs the link between Nebuchadnezzar's punishment and the prophetic storyline. This punishment no longer ties up a loose end from the period of Israelite monarchy; it merely

3.6.5. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

The book of Daniel takes a group of Judeans who were deported from Jerusalem and sets them in Nebuchadnezzar's court in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar's dealings with these captives culminate in his beastly transformation. Remarkably, the king's experience produces his surprising transformation into a proponent of Judean monotheism.

The miracle that transforms Nebuchadnezzar extends the prophetic storyline by tying up a loose thread from the Primary History, Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the temple. The sacrificial devotion of the captives in the furnace (Dan 3) modulates the deity's stance toward the nation, causing God to take the king to task for his insolence in destroying the temple (Dan 4). The miracle achieves a moment of national vindication in the people's wait for restoration.

The result of Nebuchadnezzar's transformation is a novel extension of the prophetic storyline. The enduring consequence of this event is the extension of divine blessing to Nebuchadnezzar and his subjects. In effect, the episode of the king's beastly transformation revives an idea that has not been consequential since Abraham: blessing for God's people results in blessing for the nations.

Characterization. Nebuchadnezzar's transformation occurs at the end of the covenantal pattern in Dan 3–4. The king's punishment is a type 1 covenantal miracle that instantiates blessing after a period of punishment. Notably, the sacrificial devotion of the three captives (Dan 3) is the event that modulates God's stance from "cursing" to "blessing." From this vantage, the punitive miracle depicts the captives as effective intercessors, much like the martyrs in 2 and 4

chastises the king for his hubris. Second, the Θ text tones down the radical character of Nebuchadnezzar's "conversion." Nebuchadnezzar's transformation in the Θ text produces the king's most extensive confessions in the book (4:2–3, 34–35, 37), but these do not differ in kind from earlier ones. The tale in Dan 4 Θ is simply the last in a series of encounters between Nebuchadnezzar and his Judean courtiers.

Maccabees. Azariah and his friends do not achieve complete national restoration. Nevertheless, the captives are a source of deliverance during a bleak period in the people's history.

Also worth noting is that the punitive miracle in Dan 4 causes Nebuchadnezzar to perform something resembling a prophetic task. After "converting" to Judean monotheism, the king enjoins his subjects to worship the Judeans' God. This charge amounts to an unprecedented, albeit compulsory, expansion of the divine kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar never receives a prophetic commission. Regardless, the punitive miracle causes the king to act like a prophetic individual.

The development of prophetic topoi. The Danielic miracle develops the topos of the hardness of people's hearts. That the miracle in Dan 4 is a response to Nebuchadnezzar's hardness of heart becomes evident from examining the king's interactions with his Judean captives. In successive encounters, Nebuchadnezzar poses a threat to the Judeans and then comes to a realization about these captives and their God. The persistence of these cycles demonstrates that Nebuchadnezzar, like Pharaoh, is waffling in his response to divine revelation. The judgment in Dan 4 overcomes the king's hardness of heart.

The thematic development of God's kingdom. The Danielic punitive miracle facilitates the extension of God's kingdom, albeit in an unusual manner. On one hand, the miracle in Dan 4 preserves the divine kingdom. The event gives Nebuchadnezzar his just desserts for destroying the temple and provides the Judeans with a moment of national vindication. On the other hand, the miracle in Dan 4 also expands the divine kingdom's reach. This miracle is epiphany-like in its results, inducing Nebuchadnezzar to become an adherent of Judean monotheism. This event simultaneously preserves and extends God's kingdom in a novel way, suggesting that this kingdom is moving into uncharted waters.

This finding is confirmed by how the miracle in Dan 4 modifies Septuagintal patterns. The substructure of Dan 3–4 is the covenantal pattern. The basic expression of this pattern in Dan 3–4 is unremarkable. The only noteworthy feature is the captives’ act of sacrificial devotion standing in for the display of repentance. This expansion of “repentance” parallels developments in 1, 2, and 4 Maccabees. What is remarkable about Dan 4 is how the covenantal pattern pivots at the point of Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment to another familiar pattern, the divine manifestation. The covenantal pattern results in an epiphany-like outcome as Nebuchadnezzar worships God.⁵⁶⁷ Like the Maccabean manifestations, Nebuchadnezzar’s experience displays the pairing of the type 1 covenantal miracle and the antagonist’s recognition of divine power. The covenantal pattern seamlessly combines with an epiphany-like outcome thanks to the shared term in both patterns, the type 1 covenantal miracle. The punitive miracle is the hinge that enables the covenantal pattern to pivot to a conclusion resembling a manifestation.

This configuration of Septuagintal patterns suggests that God’s kingdom is developing in a new way. The climax of the covenantal pattern has never resulted in blessing for the Jews and Gentiles alike. Second and Third Maccabees prepare the way for this development. However, neither book fully exhibits a covenantal sequence that culminates in a Gentile antagonist’s adherence to God. Second Maccabees nearly achieves this feat with Antiochus IV, but the book ultimately denies him the opportunity to repent. The book of Daniel demonstrates genuine creativity in combining these patterns. With this combination, the restoration of covenantal blessings to the Jews spills over onto the Gentiles.

⁵⁶⁷ I do not classify Nebuchadnezzar’s punishment as a manifestation proper because Dan 4 lacks the hallmark of this event, a visible display of divine power or the thematic use of ἐπιφαν- derivatives (or allied terms). The miracle in Dan 4 is epiphany-adjacent given the similarity of its outcome to full-fledged manifestations.

3.7. Conclusions

This chapter has extended the investigation of the previous chapter into books outside the Primary History. My goal has been uncovering the intersection of punitive miracles and the early Christian prophetic storyline. I will organize my findings according to two headings. First, I will consider how punitive miracles outside the Primary History cohere with the prophetic storyline. Second, I will analyze how these divergent voices reflect the patterns and conventions discovered in the Primary History.

3.7.1. The Coherence of LXX Punitive Miracles and ECPR's Prophetic Storyline

There is a natural fit between the Primary History and ECPR's prophetic storyline that the Septuagint's divergent voices cannot fully match. The Primary History is the Septuagint's narrative center of gravity. This history presents a continuous narrative from creation to exile, which conduces to reading Genesis–2 Kings as the story of the emergence and development of God's kingdom. The books in this chapter do not offer a narrative comparable to the Primary History in its scope and detail. Readers who engage the Septuagint's divergent voices with the prophetic storyline in mind must do so against the background of the Primary History. From this vantage, the books assume more or less explicit postures toward the Primary History and its vision of God's kingdom. I will elucidate these postures by synthesizing the findings of the “consequences for the prophetic storyline” sections in this chapter. The results of the “thematic development of God's kingdom” analyses form the basis of the categories below. I will also draw on salient insights from the “characterization” and “development of prophetic topoi” sections to flesh out these postures.

The Septuagint's divergent voices display three postures toward the vision of the divine kingdom that emerges from the Primary History: reconfiguration, continuation, and relativization. These postures describe the general stance of individual books or corpora toward the Primary History as attested by their use of punitive miracles. Since these categories are heuristic, they will not always match the books in question without remainder. Regardless, I am interested in trends rather than hard and fast rules.

First, the books of Chronicles use punitive miracles to reconfigure the divine kingdom. The miracles in this corpus promote two interests: the elevation of the priestly storyline and the regularity of divine retribution. Both trends result in a depiction of God's kingdom that diverges from the Primary History.

The Chronicler uses punitive miracles to elevate the priestly storyline as a locus of divine concern. This elevation is accomplished, in part, through miracles in the prophetic mode. This correlation results in the recession of the priestly storyline's numinous dimension. The nation's cult now figures less as a system that protects the people from the deity's presence and more as a series of observances conducive to worshipping God. At any rate, the increased prominence of the priestly storyline comes at the expense of the prophetic storyline.

Moreover, the Chronicler deploys punitive miracles to depict the regularity of divine retribution. Almost every miraculous judgment in Chronicles promotes the divine kingdom's integrity. However, the Chronicler's proliferation of retributive events, miraculous and non-miraculous alike, diminishes the salience of punitive miracles. Whereas the sparing use of these miracles in the Primary History allows them to denote the apices and nadirs of the prophetic storyline, these events now become "ordinary" expressions of God's providence.

The shift in emphasis from the prophetic to the priestly storyline is paralleled by the reduced characterizing role of punitive miracles in 1–2 Chronicles. Punitive miracles are no longer closely associated with prophetic tasks. Consequently, the prophets do not emerge as a site of God’s rule alternate to the nation’s faithless rulers. The prophets still play a role in the nation’s history, but their relationship to miraculous judgments has been attenuated.

The prophetic storyline persists in 1–2 Chronicles. Nevertheless, this storyline has been reconfigured. This alteration is attested by the corpus’s use of punitive miracles. The Chronicler’s punitive miracles are most salient when intersecting with the priestly storyline, but their importance recedes when interacting with the prophetic storyline.

Second, the books of 1–4 Maccabees and Daniel use punitive miracles to continue the history of God’s kingdom. In 1–4 Maccabees, punitive miracles forge a bond between the Jews under the Hellenistic dynasts and the Israelites of old. God continues to care for the people during seasons of obedience by miraculously cowing their enemies. This association is evident in the development of injustice and blessedness in these books, which recalls the Primary History. These topoi are strongly associated with the Maccabean miracles, whether in the acts of oppression that necessitate rescue (injustice) or God’s posture when defeating enemies (blessing). Nebuchadnezzar’s beastly transformation in Daniel extends the prophetic storyline by retributing the king’s destruction of the temple during a season of covenantal blessing. Neither the books of Maccabees nor Daniel fully resumes the Primary History and its prophetic storyline. Yet the developments in these books can only be understood on the assumption that the relevant events are part of an extensive history of God’s dealings with Israel. The deployment of punitive miracles in ways reminiscent of the Primary History promotes the association of these divergent voices with Genesis–2 Kings.

These books also display discontinuity with the Primary History. This discontinuity appears in the characterizing role of punitive miracles. These miracles seldom contribute to characterizing prophetic individuals. They now promote the characterization of a new character, the martyr. Moreover, the miracles in the books of Maccabees and Daniel move the prophetic storyline in a new direction, toward expanding God's kingdom among the Gentiles. At any rate, the Primary History's use of punitive miracles hardly anticipates this development, particularly when it comes to Nebuchadnezzar's promotion of monotheism.

Generally, the books of 1–4 Maccabees and Daniel continue the prophetic storyline emerging from the Primary History. The punitive miracles in these texts promote this goal. These books use miraculous judgments in ways reminiscent of the Primary History, enabling them to be read as extensions of the prophetic storyline in new contexts.

Third, the book of Jonah uses punitive miracles to relativize the divine kingdom. At first blush, this book promises to continue the prophetic storyline. However, the eponymous prophet's behavior makes it apparent that this story is something other than a straightforward extension. The book uses a familiar character (the prophet) and event (the punitive miracle) for a novel purpose. The Ninevites end up with a national character that resembles the Lord's more closely than it did formerly, but they do not worship Israel's God. The punitive miracles in Jonah facilitate divine activities independent of the prophetic storyline. The effect of these miracles is the relativization of this storyline.

My "characterization" and "prophetic topoi" analyses confirm this finding. The punitive miracles in the book of Jonah invert the normal relationship between the prophet and the miraculous event, making the former the victim of the latter. The prophet is no longer a conduit but an obstacle to divine activity. Similarly, the topoi of divine action through a select individual

and the hardness of people's hearts are developed in this book, but their development is ironic. Punitive miracles facilitate divine action through Jonah by inhibiting the prophet's efforts to sabotage God's plan. The hardness of heart addressed by the Jonahic miracles is the prophet's own rather than the people's. The punitive miracles in the book of Jonah undermine expectations concerning characterization and prophetic topoi. This development suggests a strategy of using the conventions of the prophetic storyline to relativize it.

The Jonahic miracles do not require abandoning the prophetic storyline. Nothing in the book of Jonah suggests that God's concern for the Ninevites comes at the expense of God's relationship with Israel. Moreover, the book converges with the prophetic storyline for a brief moment. After being delivered from the storm, the Gentile sailors worship Israel's God. Nonetheless, the *raison d'être* of these miracles is to express God's concern for the Assyrians. God's activities in the world surpass the confines of the prophetic storyline.

The Joban miracles add a fourth category to those mentioned above, with the proviso that these events are not genuinely punitive. The book of Job uses ostensible punitive miracles, which I define as "probative," to confront the divine kingdom. The world envisioned by the book of Job exists outside the prophetic storyline. Yet this book's perspective is relevant to investigating punitive miracles. The outward presentation of the Joban miracles as punitive produces a frontal challenge to the inexorability of conventional retribution. God's relationship with the world is more complex than the punitive miracles in Genesis–2 Kings suggest. Moreover, the Joban miracles indirectly challenge the covenantal pattern, which assumes and compounds the act-consequence nexus. The Joban miracles promote a less constrained understanding of God's relationship to the world than the prophetic storyline assumes.

The development of injustice in the book of Job reflects this trenchant challenge. Injustice is the sole topos that the Joban miracles bring into focus. Ironically, whereas punitive miracles regularly counter human acts of injustice, the Joban miracles become a site for interrogating divine injustice. The miracles in Job 1–2 send Job spiraling into an existential crisis because his treatment by God does not correspond to his conduct. Job has seemingly damning evidence that God’s concern with justice is a façade. God only escapes Job’s charge by distancing Godself from the conventional understanding of retribution.

Job’s posture toward the prophetic storyline does not require scrapping this storyline. God never forswears retributing people according to their deeds. However, the Joban miracles require a less constrained understanding of God’s relationship to the world than we have thus far encountered. The assumptions of the prophetic storyline are not self-evident.

Harmonizing these postures toward the Primary History and its vision of God’s kingdom is neither necessary nor possible. These postures can theoretically coexist with a high degree of tension. However, it is impossible to treat texts like 1–2 Chronicles with integrity by pretending that their understanding of God’s interaction with the world closely coheres with the Primary History. The diverse postures of the Septuagint’s divergent voices indicate that we are dealing with different perspectives on how the prophetic storyline—and with it, the use of punitive miracles—is to be carried into new contexts.

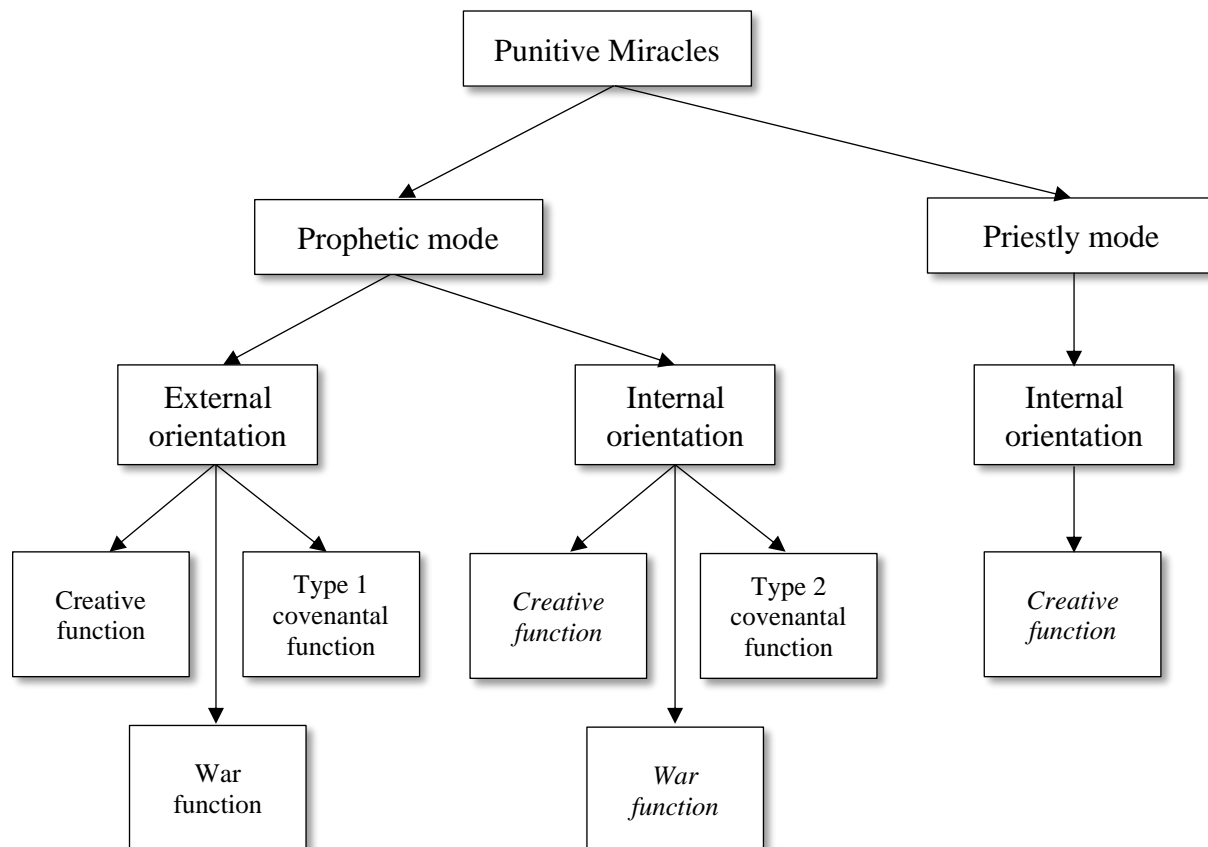
The key takeaway from the divergent voices is their multiplicity of responses to the Primary History. The use of punitive miracles in the books in question provides a reliable index of each book’s posture toward the prophetic storyline. For these texts, punitive miracles are essential to forging a relationship (of whatever sort) to the prophetic storyline. This correlation does not mean that narrating punitive miracles is a *sine qua non* of responding to the prophetic

storyline. Regardless, a predominant means of responding to the Primary History's vision of the divine kingdom is narrating miraculous judgments in new contexts.

3.7.2. The Emergence of LXX Patterns and Conventions

At the end of the last chapter, I provided a taxonomy of the modes, orientations, and functions of punitive miracles in the Septuagint's Primary History. It is time to update this chart to account for developments in the divergent voices. No single book or corpus displays all combinations presupposed by the following taxonomy. This chart depicts the general drift of these texts.

Figure 10: Modes, Orientations, and Functions in the Divergent Voices



The core components of this taxonomy are unchanged from the previous chapter. Both modes (prophetic and priestly) and orientations (external and internal) appear in the divergent voices.

Likewise, all of the functions are represented among the books treated in this chapter. This taxonomy differs from the Primary History's by adding three new functions (in italics) and deleting the priestly-external branch, which is not attested. I will summarize the salient developments pertaining to the functions in what follows. As before, these functions should not be considered hard and fast distinctions.

The creative function of punitive miracles has undergone some development. The familiar prophetic-external-creative function is well represented, appearing in 1 Maccabees (death of Antiochus), 2 Maccabees (maiming of Heliodorus), 3 Maccabees (hippodrome miracle), and Daniel (Nebuchadnezzar's beastly transformation). The former miracle perpetuates this function as it appears in the Primary History. The latter miracles are creative in a new sense. These miracles promote God's kingdom by incorporating Gentiles into this body (Daniel) or including them in its penumbra (2–3 Maccabees). Alcimus's death (1 Maccabees) falls under a new "prophetic-internal-creative" category. The remarkable development concerning the creative function is its use in the books of Chronicles. Uzzah's death sparks a revolution in David's understanding of Levitical duties, leading to a "priestly-internal-creative" function with respect to the priestly storyline. Likewise, the plague following David's census draws his attention to the site of Solomon's temple (priestly storyline), which I describe as a "prophetic-internal-creative" function vis-à-vis the priestly storyline. The divergent voices perpetuate the creative function of punitive miracles from the Primary History. They break new ground by using these events to achieve unexpected results in the prophetic storyline and experimenting with their use in the priestly storyline.

The war function persists in the divergent voices but is receding in prominence. The destruction of the Assyrian army (2 Chronicles) fits the prophetic-external-war category, as do

the divine interventions on the Jews' behalf against Timothy (2 Maccabees). The deaths of the idolatrous Jews in battle (2 Maccabees) give rise to a new "prophetic-internal-war" category. Nevertheless, these war miracles are generally less pivotal to Israel's history than those in Genesis–2 Kings. The divergent voices establish a trajectory from God's great victories in battle, as in Israel's early history, toward more "mundane" interventions, as in Luke-Acts.

The covenantal function remains central to the miracles discussed in this chapter. This function grew in prominence as the Primary History advanced, and it remains a factor in most of the prophetic punitive miracles in the Septuagint's divergent voices. The prophetic-internal miracles in 1–2 Chronicles (plague after David's census; Asa's foot disease; Jehoram's death; Azariah's leprosy) and 1–2 Maccabees (Alcimus's death; deaths of the idolatrous Jews in battle) can be classified as type 2 covenantal miracles, denoting cursing. Likewise, the prophetic-external miracles in 2 Chronicles (destruction of the Assyrian army), 1–4 Maccabees (death of Antiochus; maiming of Heliodorus/Apollonius; war miracles against Timothy; sundry miracles against Philopator), and Daniel (Nebuchadnezzar's beastly transformation) are type 1 covenantal miracles, denoting blessing. In the Primary History, the type 1 covenantal function was restricted to martial contexts, meaning all the relevant miracles were simultaneously war miracles. In the divergent voices, this association recedes. A handful of type 1 miracles still occur in battle (see above). However, most such events occur in daily life, whether in a Gentile's attempt to violate the temple (Heliodorus/Apollonius; Philopator), a king's personal experience (Antiochus Epiphanes; Nebuchadnezzar), or during a spectacle in the hippodrome (Philopator). In keeping with the decline of the punitive war miracle, miraculous covenantal blessings now routinely appear in the Jews' encounters with their Gentile rulers.

Of the two covenantal functions, the type 1 miracle displays the most development relative to the Primary History. This development occurs through the expansion of the type 1 function and alterations to the covenantal pattern, with which it is closely associated. I will review both developments in concluding this chapter.

The type 1 covenantal function is expanded to include an “epiphanic” dimension in 2–3 Maccabees. The epiphanies (or manifestations) in these books are type 1 covenantal miracles that feature a display of divine power—or at least ἐπιφαν-derivatives (or allied terms)—to describe the event. This motif is paired with an antagonist’s recognition of divine power. This pairing is best described as an expansion of the type 1 function rather than a new, discrete function because it represents the fusion of the prophetic-external-covenantal and prophetic-external-creative categories. In this event, the expression of covenantal blessings for the Jews (type 1 function) achieves an expansion (or near expansion) of God’s kingdom among the Gentiles (creative function). This development of the type 1 miracle has some analogs in the Primary History. Nevertheless, the epiphanic dimension achieves such prominence in 2–3 Maccabees that these books represent a watershed in the evolution of punitive miracles.⁵⁶⁸

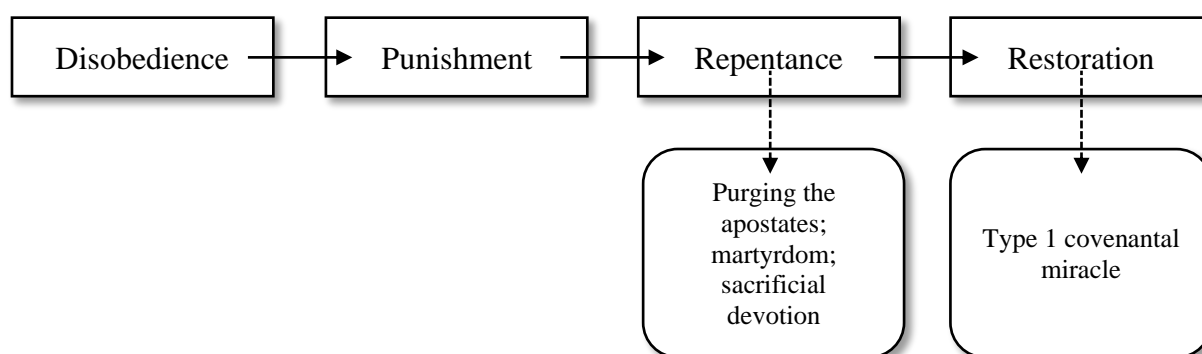
The type 1 covenantal miracle remains closely allied to the covenantal pattern. In the last chapter, I observed that the covenantal functions of punitive miracles (type 1 and 2 alike) facilitate their incorporation into the covenantal pattern. Punitive miracles in the Primary History alternately appear in the “punishment” or “restoration” phases of this pattern to denote divine cursing or blessing, respectively. The divergent voices retain the association of punitive miracles

⁵⁶⁸ Something resembling this epiphanic dimension appears outside 2–3 Maccabees. I describe Nebuchadnezzar’s experience in Dan 4 as “epiphany-adjacent” because this episode concludes with an outcome similar to the Maccabean manifestations. The king’s story features a type 1 covenantal miracle (his beastly transformation) and his recognition of divine power. The miracle is not fully developed as a manifestation, yet the king’s experience reflects the fusion of the type 1 covenantal and the creative functions.

with the covenantal pattern. However, this association is generally restricted to type 1 covenantal miracles, as in the Primary History.⁵⁶⁹ This restriction solidifies the association of the covenantal pattern and the type 1 function.

It is also noteworthy that the “repentance” phase of the covenantal pattern is reconceived in the divergent voices. In the Primary History, “repentance” means that the nation turns from disobedience to covenantal observance. This phase looks different in the books in this chapter:

Figure 11: Reconfiguration of the Covenantal Pattern in Maccabees and Daniel

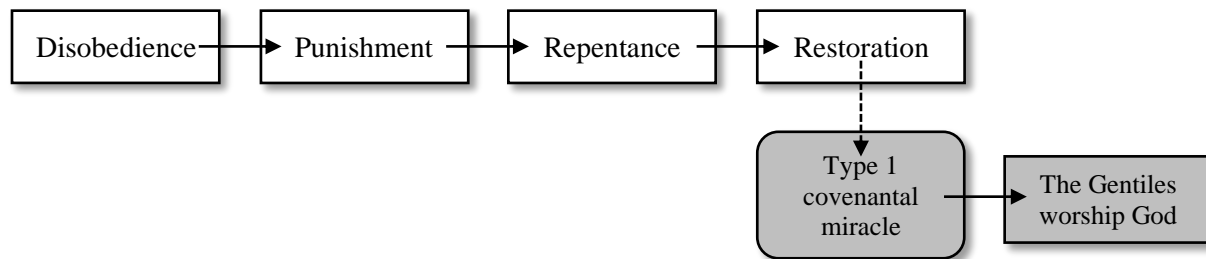


The range of acts that constitute repentance is broader in the divergent voices than in the Primary History. God’s covenantal posture can now be modulated through a program of purging the apostates (1 Maccabees), martyrdom (2 and 4 Maccabees), and sacrificial devotion (Dan 3–4). The acts necessary to restore type 1 covenantal miracles have been reconfigured.

My final observation concerns the readiness of the developments described above for further combination. The epiphanic dimension of the Maccabean miracles and the covenantal pattern share a common component: the type 1 covenantal miracle. Because of this shared term, the epiphanic dimension is preconfigured for incorporation into the covenantal pattern. This combination occurs with the miracle in Dan 4:

⁵⁶⁹ In the Septuagint’s divergent voices, the association of a type 2 miracle and the covenantal pattern is present only in the story of David’s census and the plague (1 Chron 21).

Figure 12: Combination of the Covenantal Pattern with an Epiphanic Outcome



Nebuchadnezzar's punishment is a type 1 covenantal miracle appearing at the climax of the covenantal pattern. This punishment culminates in Nebuchadnezzar becoming a devotee of the Judeans' God. In effect, the covenantal pattern pivots to an epiphany-like outcome. The shared term in these phenomena, the type 1 covenantal miracle, facilitates the pivot from one pattern to the next. Nebuchadnezzar's experience is far from the norm. Regardless, this episode contains the germ of an idea that will be consequential for Luke-Acts: the restoration of divine blessings for God's people expands the reach of God's kingdom.⁵⁷⁰

The Septuagint's divergent voices maintain and develop the functions I observed in the Primary History. As a whole, these witnesses privilege the type 1 covenantal miracle, denoting blessing. The prevalence of this function is tied up with its prospects for development and ready incorporation into the covenantal pattern. Other remnants of the Primary History's use of punitive miracles can also be discerned in these witnesses. Regardless, as far as its *Wirkungsgeschichte* is concerned, the effect of the Primary History on the divergent voices is the use of miraculous judgments to express covenantal blessing, whether static or renewed.

⁵⁷⁰ See Jacob Jervell, "The Divided People of God: The Restoration of Israel and Salvation for the Gentiles," in *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 41–74.

CHAPTER 4. PUNITIVE MIRACLES IN LUKE-ACTS

4.1. Introduction

The last two chapters have probed the intersection of punitive miracles and the Septuagint's prophetic storyline. This work has been preparatory for the present chapter, which extends my investigation into Luke-Acts. I do not claim that Luke's punitive miracles operate in precisely the same manner as their LXX precursors. I propose that Israel's sacred history, in its Greek form, likely shaped the understanding of early Christian readers. A view of how LXX punitive miracles operate forms a plausible context for understanding how early Christian readers would likely perceive similar events in Luke's corpus.

I now begin my investigation of Luke's punitive miracles, aiming to interpret these events in the context of the prophetic storyline. As in previous chapters, I will probe the intersection of punitive miracles and the narrative of Luke-Acts. I cannot attend to Luke's entire story given considerations of length. Instead, I will focus on episodes that contain punitive miracles, summarizing salient developments in Luke's narrative along the way to contextualize these stories. The translations and quotations of Luke-Acts in this chapter are based on Nestle-

Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece* (NA28).⁵⁷¹ As necessary, I address salient differences between the NA28 and the *Editio Critica Maior* (ECM) of Acts.⁵⁷²

Six events in Luke-Acts fit my definition of a “punitive miracle”:⁵⁷³ Zechariah’s muting (Luke 1); Judas’s death (Acts 1); Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths (Acts 5); Saul’s blinding (Acts 9); Herod’s death (Acts 12); and Bar-Jesus’s blinding (Acts 13). Since scholars often question whether some of these events genuinely count as miracles, I will provide additional justification for my identification of these events at appropriate points in the following discussion. Each of these episodes contains an identifiable fault followed by miraculous retribution, making them akin to the miraculous judgments I examined in previous chapters.

My procedure for this chapter returns to the one employed in chapter 2. I will investigate the relevant Lukan accounts in turn, summarizing each episode’s “consequences for the prophetic storyline” at the end of each section. Since Luke-Acts presents an essentially continuous narrative from John the Baptist’s birth onward, the “thematic development of God’s kingdom” analyses in this chapter will resemble those in chapter 2. Just as the Primary History’s continuous narrative permitted an analysis of the development of God’s kingdom within and across periods, Luke-Acts permits a similar analysis concerning its sections.

⁵⁷¹ Kurt Aland et al., eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

⁵⁷² Holger Strutwolf et al., eds., *Novum Testamentum Graecum: Editio Critica Maior, III: Acts of the Apostles*, 4 vols. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2017).

⁵⁷³ See “1.2.1. The Definition Proper.”

4.2. The Muting of Zechariah (Luke 1:5–80)

4.2.1. Introduction

A defining feature of the Septuagint's prophetic storyline is covenantal observance. Israel's obedience moves God to a posture of covenantal blessing, and its disobedience moves God to covenantal cursing. Given this arrangement, I have contextualized LXX punitive miracles by relating them to God's covenantal posture. Since my objective is to read Luke-Acts in light of the prophetic storyline, it is appropriate to begin by determining what the opening of Luke's Gospel assumes about such matters.

The data concerning the people's covenantal observance are mixed. On one hand, Luke 1–2 features several faithful characters. Zechariah and Elizabeth are “righteous before God” and they “walk blamelessly in all the Lord's commandments and regulations” (Luke 1:6). Simeon is “righteous and devout” (2:25). Anna spends all her time performing pious activities at the temple (2:38). Luke shows a large group of the people praying outside the temple (1:10), reflecting popular piety. On the other hand, these chapters feature statements that move in the opposite direction. John's task involves “turning many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God” (1:16; see also 1:17), indicating the need for repentance. Zechariah says that John will “give the knowledge of salvation to [the Lord's] people in the forgiveness of sins” (1:77), meaning they have sins in need of forgiveness. Finally, Simeon prophesies that Jesus will produce a shuffling within Israel, with some “falling” and others “rising” (2:34). The nation needs change. Individuals and groups within Israel are faithful, but the nation is not.

Remarkably, God's posture is not one of covenantal cursing. Luke 1–2 emphasizes that God is acting in a new way to restore Israel and keep divine commitments. These chapters speak

of God “preparing” (Luke 1:16–17), “helping” (1:54), “redeeming” (1:68; 2:38), “saving” (1:69, 71, 77; 2:11, 30), “rescuing” (1:74) and “illuminating” (1:77–78) Israel. These divine activities are rooted in the ancestral promises to Abraham (1:55, 73) and David (1:32–33). God is acting to advance the prophetic storyline despite the nation’s incomplete repentance.

The divine initiative in Luke 1–2 has precedents in the Septuagint’s prophetic storyline. God has acted in moments of acute crisis for the people’s benefit, despite their faithlessness. Two of these episodes are intertexts of Luke 1. After announcing John’s birth, Gabriel states that the child “may never drink wine or beer” (οἶνον καὶ σίκερα οὐ μὴ πίῃ) and “will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15).⁵⁷⁴ This statement causes John to resemble Samson, who was required to abstain from alcohol (καὶ οἶνον καὶ σικερα μὴ πιέτω; Judg 13:14) and experienced the Spirit’s activity (14:6, 19; 15:14).⁵⁷⁵ Samson, like John, was called to a prophetic task while Israel was unrepentant (see Judg 13:1). Similarly, Gabriel describes John as a kind of Elijah *redivivus* in fulfillment of Malachi’s prophecy: John “will go before [the Lord]” (προελεύσεται ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ; Luke 1:17 // ἐπιβλέψεται ὁδὸν πρὸ προσώπου μου; Mal 3:1) “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (ἐν πνεύματι καὶ δυνάμει Ἐλίου; Luke 1:17 // Ἡλίαν τὸν Θεοσβίτην; Mal 3:22) “to turn the hearts of fathers to children” (ἐπιστρέψαι καρδίας πατέρων ἐπὶ τέκνα; Luke 1:17 // αποκαταστήσει καρδίαν πατρὸς πρὸς υἱόν; Mal 3:23).⁵⁷⁶ God called Elijah at one of the bleakest moments in Israel’s history. The conditions of Luke 1–2 do not rise to the

⁵⁷⁴ For σίκερα as “beer,” see BDAG, s.v. Hannah’s dedication of Samuel as a Nazirite (1 Sam 1:11) is another possible intertext of Luke 1:15. I do not discuss 1 Sam 1–2 above because this episode exhibits fewer parallels with Luke 1 than exist between Samson and John.

⁵⁷⁵ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 75.

⁵⁷⁶ Luke’s rendition of the last phrase (ἐπιστρέψαι καρδίας πατέρων ἐπὶ τέκνα; Luke 1:17) is closer to Sirach (ἐπιστρέψαι καρδίαν πατρὸς πρὸς υἱόν; Sir 48:10) than Malachi (αποκαταστήσει καρδίαν πατρὸς πρὸς υἱόν; Mal 3:23). Luke’s potential use of Sirach is otherwise minimal in this section.

exigencies of Ahab's reign. Nevertheless, like Elijah, John is called to turn the nation from disobedience. God is intervening in the prophetic storyline despite Israel's faithlessness.

Mary's song in Luke 1 provides a framework for interpreting the first punitive miracle in Luke's corpus. This song explains how God acts in the present stage of the prophetic storyline.⁵⁷⁷ Mary claims that God has "scattered the arrogant," "dethroned the powerful," and "sent the rich away empty" (Luke 1:51, 52a, 53b). Conversely, God has "exalted the humble" and "filled the hungry with good things" (1:52b, 53a). Since Mary has spoken of her own "humility" (ταπεινώσις; 1:48) in the context of these statements, she characterizes herself as one of the "humble" (οἱ ταπεινοί) whom God has exalted. Zechariah is neither powerful nor necessarily wealthy, but his response to the divine initiative starkly contrasts with Mary's. Reading Zechariah's story through the lens of Mary's song clarifies that his punishment is a matter of humbling and thus orienting him to God's renewed kingdom in Luke-Acts.⁵⁷⁸

4.2.2. Zechariah's Muting

The Third Gospel opens with an introduction that will be familiar to a "LXX-competent audience."⁵⁷⁹ Luke fixes our attention on an elderly priest, Zechariah, and his wife, Elizabeth. He

⁵⁷⁷ See John O. York, *The Last Shall Be First: The Rhetoric of Reversal in Luke*, JSNTSup 46 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 54–55: "The bi-polar reversal presented in these verses [Luke 1:51–53] is almost universally described as eschatological reversal ... If by eschatology one is referring to the broader concept of the break-up of the existing order, then it is possible to understand God's acts toward Mary as eschatological and to see the reversals of vv. 51–53 as indicative of the new order that has already been inaugurated."

⁵⁷⁸ My interpretation of Luke 1 has been developed in conversation with Vernon Robbins. In particular, Robbins pointed me toward the understanding that Luke-Acts reconfigures the prophetic storyline and God's kingdom. This reconfiguration moves the emphasis of the prophetic storyline from covenantal faithfulness to the belief proper to God's renewed kingdom (on this last point, see n. 597). I cite Robbins's written works when possible to give appropriate credit.

⁵⁷⁹ I borrow "LXX-competent audience" from Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor*, 84.

says that Zechariah and Elizabeth are descended from Israel's first priest, Aaron (Luke 1:5), grounding them in the priestly storyline. He also writes that they are "righteous before God" and "blameless" in terms of God's commandments (1:6), connecting them to the prophetic storyline as model members of God's kingdom. This pair faces a challenge: they cannot have children due to their old age and Elizabeth's barrenness (1:7). The echo of biblical stories suggests that shame attaches to this condition (1:24 // Gen 30:23; see 29:31). The couple's resemblance to Abraham and Sarah is also striking. Abraham and Sarah were in the same position (righteous: Gen 17:1; 26:5; old: 17:17; 18:11–12; barren: 11:30; 16:2), yet God granted them a miraculous conception (17:16, 19, 21; 18:10, 14). The background of Abraham's story raises the prospect that Luke will soon narrate an unlikely birth that advances divine plans.

This expectation develops as the scene shifts to the temple. Zechariah's priestly division is currently responsible for making sacrifices and offerings to God (Luke 1:8), and the lot has fallen to him to present an incense offering (1:9).⁵⁸⁰ Luke shows a crowd outside the sanctuary, sending prayers to heaven to accompany the offering (1:10; see Rev 8:3).⁵⁸¹ He then turns our focus into the sanctuary, where only the priests may go. Zechariah is standing before an altar with incense on top of it. As the incense burns, an angel appears to the right of the altar, much to Zechariah's surprise (Luke 1:11–12). The angel tells Zechariah that his prayer has been heard and Elizabeth will have a child (1:13 // Gen 17:19). The promised child will be extraordinary: he will observe an unusual diet from birth and complete a prophetic task (Luke 1:15–17). This message seemingly confirms the impression made by the introduction. Luke is apparently

⁵⁸⁰ For λαγχάνω as a reference to casting lots, see BDAG, s.v.

⁵⁸¹ For the association of the incense offering with prayer, see Jeremy Penner, *Patterns of Daily Prayer in Second Temple Period Judaism*, STDJ 104 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 37–45. According to Penner, "It is the anamnestic quality of incense—the ability to 'remind' God of the worshipper—that made the *minḥah* incense sacrifice an appealing time to pray" (*Patterns of Daily Prayer*, 43).

continuing the prophetic storyline with priestly protagonists who will raise a prophetic son. Apart from their lineage, Zechariah and Elizabeth resemble Abraham and Sarah so closely that we might even say Luke is rerunning the prophetic storyline, starting with Gen 11–21.⁵⁸² Zechariah’s response supports this outlook. Just as Abraham asked for confirmation that his descendants would possess the land (Gen 15:8), Zechariah asks the angel to confirm that Elizabeth will conceive a child (Luke 1:18).

The narrative takes a surprising turn when the angel responds. The angel makes three statements that complicate the relationship between this episode and the prophetic storyline. First, the angel identifies himself as Gabriel, a divine agent with special access to God (Luke 1:19). Gabriel is familiar from the book of Daniel (Dan 8:16; 9:21),⁵⁸³ but he did not appear in the original version of Abraham’s story. Second, Gabriel construes Zechariah’s request as a matter of unbelief (Luke 1:20). Interrogating God has long been an accepted convention in the prophetic storyline (e.g., Gen 18:22–33; Exod 3:1–4:17),⁵⁸⁴ but Gabriel treats the priest’s request as deficient. Third, Gabriel announces a penalty for Zechariah’s offense (1:20). The statement of

⁵⁸² Credit for this description of Luke’s discourse is due to Vernon Robbins, who suggested “rerun” to me on the basis of Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner’s term “running the blend” (see *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* [New York: Basic Books, 2002]). For a comprehensive display of parallels between Gen 11–21 and Luke 1–2, see Joel B. Green, “The Problem of a Beginning: Israel’s Scriptures in Luke 1–2,” *BBR* 4 (1994): 68–71. Green assesses that “Luke has ... inscribed himself in tradition, showing his debt to this *previous* story and inviting his auditors to hear in *this* story the reverberations and continuation of *that* story as he attempts to give significance to the *present* one.” He also observes that “Luke not only inscribes himself in the past but also breaks loose from its constraints” (“The Problem of a Beginning,” 77, emphasis original).

⁵⁸³ Luke describes Gabriel’s appearance using statements from Dan 10 (for “Gabriel,” see Dan 9:21). The priest’s fear upon Gabriel’s visit (φόβος ἐπέπεσεν ἐπ’ αὐτόν; Luke 1:12) resembles the response of Daniel’s companions in a similar moment (φόβος ἐνέπεσεν αὐτοῖς; Dan 10:7 OG). Zechariah learns that his prayer “was heard” (εἰσηκούσθη ἡ δέησίς σου; Luke 1:13) and Gabriel “was sent” (ἀπεστάλην λαλῆσαι πρὸς σέ; 1:19) to give him an answer, much like Daniel did (εἰσηκούσθη τὸ ῥῆμά σου; Dan 10:12; ἀπεστάλην ἐπὶ σέ; 10:11). Finally, Zechariah’s encounter with Gabriel results in his muting (ἔση σιωπῶν; Luke 1:20) and the eventual restoration of his speech (ἀνεώχθη δὲ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ... καὶ ἐλάλει; 1:64), mirroring Daniel’s experience (ἐσιώπησα; Dan 10:15; καὶ ἤνοιξα τὸ στόμα μου καὶ ἐλάλησα; 10:16).

⁵⁸⁴ See Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 232, 243–45.

this penalty, combined with the indictment for unbelief, indicates that the discourse has taken a prosecutorial turn. Luke 1 is not a simple continuation of the prophetic storyline.

Our focus now returns to the sanctuary's exterior, where the crowd was praying (Luke 1:21; see 1:10). The crowd is still here, but the people are perplexed by how long Zechariah has been inside (1:21). Before the crowd takes any action, the priest emerges from the sanctuary and relieves their suspense. The cause of his delay soon becomes apparent. Zechariah can only make motions to the crowd, leading them to deduce he saw a vision (1:22). This deduction is valid, but readers have a fuller perspective. Gabriel just told Zechariah that he would be "silent and unable to speak" (1:20). This penalty has been implemented immediately. Zechariah has become mute (1:22)—and as we later learn, deaf (1:62)⁵⁸⁵—because of his response to Gabriel.

Zechariah's offense is a matter of unbelief. The priest "did not believe [Gabriel's] words" (Luke 1:20), and he is punished accordingly. This development is surprising given Mary's characterization, which I will examine in the next section. Brittany Wilson observes, "the main thrust of Mary's objection [to Gabriel; 1:34] is not significantly different from Zechariah's objection ... While Zechariah's and Mary's objections to Gabriel are markedly similar, Gabriel's respective responses to their objections are markedly *dissimilar*." In this reading, Gabriel punishes Zechariah for questioning a divine promise (1:20; see 1:18: "How will I know this?") but accommodates Mary when she raises a similar objection (1:35; see 1:34: "How will this be?"). This discrepancy signals to Wilson that the contrast between Zechariah and Mary is a

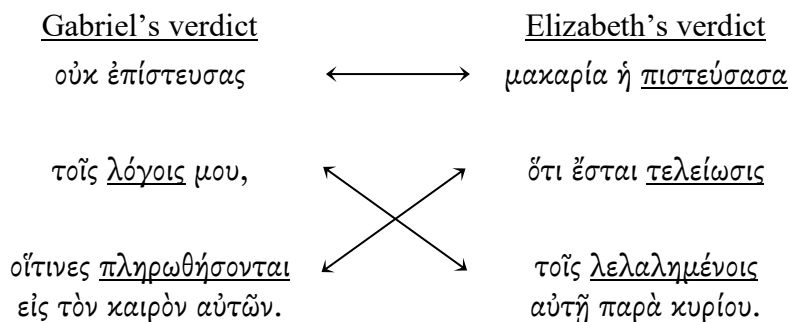
⁵⁸⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 328–29, 381; Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 109–10; François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. Christine M. Thomas, Herm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 39, 71. These commentators observe that the crowd's recourse to physical gestures (Luke 1:62) implies Zechariah's deafness. For the evolution of *κωφός*, see Christian Laes, "Silent Witnesses: Deaf-Mutes in Graeco-Roman Antiquity," *CW* 104 (2011): 460–65, esp. 462–63. Laes shows that the use of *κωφός* to denote muteness and deafness was an older Ionian practice. Attic authors—and most subsequent Greek writers—used *κωφός* to describe deafness and *ἐνέος* for muteness.

matter of “gender reversal.”⁵⁸⁶ Wilson is right that gender reversal factors into this story.

However, there is no need to hedge on the prominence of belief and unbelief in Luke 1.

Gabriel and Elizabeth, reliable spokespersons for God, establish the contrast between Zechariah and Mary. Gabriel characterizes himself as one who “stands before God” and has brought a message from the deity (Luke 1:19). Luke provides no reason to doubt this claim. Hence, there are no grounds for questioning Gabriel’s indictment of Zechariah’s unbelief (1:20). Likewise, Elizabeth praises Mary for “believing there will be a fulfillment of the things spoken to her by the Lord” (1:45). This statement is a verdict on Mary’s response to Gabriel, as shown by its similarity to the indictment of Zechariah (1:20):

Figure 13: Gabriel and Elizabeth’s Authoritative Pronouncements



Elizabeth effectively declares that Mary has the faith Zechariah lacks. This statement appears after Elizabeth has been filled with the Holy Spirit (1:42), making it a Spirit-inspired verdict. Luke gives Gabriel and Elizabeth the authority to deliver verdicts on the respective questions. Zechariah’s question exhibits unbelief, while Mary’s question accords with belief.

The truly provocative contrast in Luke 1 is between Zechariah and Abraham. The parallels between these figures are so extensive that Zechariah’s story initially looks like a rerun

⁵⁸⁶ Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Reconfigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 87–89, emphasis original; cf. 88 n. 35.

of Gen 11–21. Yet these parallels break down in Luke 1:18. Zechariah asks, “How will I know this?” (κατὰ τί γνώσομαι τοῦτο; Luke 1:18), much as Abraham inquired about the land, “How will I know that I will inherit it?” (κατὰ τί γνώσομαι ὅτι κληρονομήσω αὐτήν; Gen 15:8). God answered Abraham’s question by making a covenant with him (15:9ff.) In contrast, Gabriel acts affronted,⁵⁸⁷ denounces Zechariah’s unbelief, and announces a punishment (Luke 1:19–20). Zechariah’s story detours from Abraham’s when the priest questions Gabriel.

Scholars explain these divergent outcomes in various ways. A standard interpretation holds that Zechariah lacks Abraham’s faith and is punished accordingly.⁵⁸⁸ The impetus for this explanation is the appearance of the topos of faith in Abraham’s story. Abraham “believes” God’s promise to give the patriarch many descendants (Gen 15:6). This statement is followed by God’s promise to give Abraham the promised land as well (15:7), prompting the patriarch’s request for confirmation (“How will I know that I will inherit it?”) and the initiation of the Abrahamic covenant (15:7–9). The prefacing of Abraham’s question with a statement of his belief arguably mitigates any doubt his request conveys. In contrast, Luke’s story omits the topos of faith before Zechariah’s question. There is nothing at hand to alleviate the priest’s doubt. In this view, Zechariah lacks Abraham’s trust in God.

⁵⁸⁷ Vernon K. Robbins, “Bodies and Politics in Luke 1–2 and Sirach 44–50: Men, Women, and Boys,” in *Jesus and Mary Reimagined in Early Christian Literature*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins and Jonathan M. Potter, WGRWSup 6 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 53.

⁵⁸⁸ See Mark Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative: Narrative as Christology in Luke 1–2*, JSNTSup 88 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 38; David E. Garland, *Luke*, ZECNT 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 68; Roland Meynet, *L’Évangile de Luc*, RhSém (Paris: Lethielleux, 2005), 47. Fearghus Ó Fearghail presents an option not discussed above: Luke’s combination of Gen 15:8 (κατὰ τί γνώσομαι ὅτι κληρονομήσω αὐτήν;) and 18:11–12 (Ἀβραὰμ δὲ καὶ Σάρρα πρεσβύτεροι προβεβηκότες ἡμερῶν ...) has produced an unintended incongruity. According to Ó Fearghail, “Luke has taken over the motif of disbelief from the story of the birth o[f] Isaac [where it ‘fits naturally into the context’]. It does not fit into its new context perfectly and thus a certain awkwardness has arisen, an awkwardness that is not an uncommon feature of imitation” (“The Imitation of the Septuagint in Luke’s Infancy Narrative,” *PIBA* 12 [1989]: 65–66). I do not object to this theory as an explanation of the Third Gospel’s composition history. However, this theory is not helpful in the context of reading Luke 1 in its present form.

Other scholars view the divergence between Zechariah and Abraham as a sign that something has changed since the patriarch's time.⁵⁸⁹ Mark Coleridge appeals to the progression of salvation history to explain this contrast. Whereas Abraham came at the beginning of this history and had no predecessors to inform his expectations, Zechariah is the last "in a line of childless [Old Testament] figures who are given offspring by divine intervention." Thus, the priest's historical position demands greater faith than Abraham's.⁵⁹⁰ In a different vein, Michael Rydryck explains the difference between Zechariah and Abraham in terms of eschatology. Zechariah asks for confirmation of Gabriel's promise in a manner that seems "formulaic" in light of Gen 15:8. The priest thus reveals his ignorance of the "eschatological nature of [Gabriel's] appearance." Rydryck assumes that Zechariah's response would have been appropriate in an earlier era of biblical history. However, the priest's question does not pass muster in light of Gabriel's appearance and the eschatological fulfillment it entails.⁵⁹¹ This position holds that the contrasting divine responses to Abraham and Zechariah indicate a historical difference.

The first line of interpretation—viz., Zechariah lacks Abraham's faith—is plausible if we restrict our focus to Luke 1 and Gen 15, where the statement of Abraham's faith and his request for divine confirmation appear. However, the parallel between Zechariah and Abraham exceeds how they word their requests for divine confirmation. Upon hearing that Sarah would have a child, Abraham laughed, thought of the couple's age as a barrier to conception, and suggested that God's time would be better spent on Ishmael (Gen 17:17–18). Likewise, Sarah laughed at

⁵⁸⁹ See Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 39; Rydryck, "Miracles of Judgment," 28. Coleridge straddles the fence between the positions described above. For a similarly ambiguous view, see Jean-Noël Aletti, *L'art de raconter Jésus Christ: L'écriture narrative de l'évangile de Luc*, PD 27 (Paris: Seuil, 1989), 69–70.

⁵⁹⁰ Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative*, 39.

⁵⁹¹ Rydryck, "Miracles of Judgment," 28.

the divine promise, thought about her husband's age as an impediment, and tried to deceive the Lord about her response (18:12, 15). Zechariah's doubt is the same as Abraham and Sarah's. He has trouble believing Gabriel's promise given his and his wife's old age (Luke 1:18). If anything, the priest exhibits less doubt than the patriarchal couple. He neither laughs at the divine promise, suggests a better way for God's time to be used, nor dissembles. The resemblance between Zechariah and Abraham exceeds their similarly worded questions. The topos of faith in Gen 15 does not negate the extensive intertextual relationship between Zechariah and Abraham.

This leaves the second line of interpretation. Something has changed since Abraham's time. As I explained above, this difference can be articulated in various ways. Coleridge frames the contrast between Zechariah and Abraham in terms of salvation history. Rydryck understands this contrast in terms of eschatological fulfillment. Both views have merit. However, these positions do not pay adequate attention to the forensic character of Luke 1:20. Gabriel's words in this verse consist of an indictment and announcement of judgment, motifs belonging to the prophetic lawsuit speech. The angel's words are a brief instance of prophetic discourse. The divergence of Zechariah's story from Abraham's can be articulated in terms of the early Christian prophetic rhetorolect and its associated storyline. I do not intend to foreclose the other interpretive avenues just mentioned. In particular, my argument assumes and develops Rydryck's view that Zechariah's experience points to eschatological fulfillment.⁵⁹² Nevertheless, I will argue that reading Zechariah's story in the context of the prophetic storyline casts additional light on the Zechariah-Abraham contrast.

⁵⁹² For the eschatological character of Luke 1–2, see also Paul S. Minear, "Luke's Use of the Birth Stories," in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays Presented in Honor of Paul Schubert*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 125.

A defining feature of the Septuagint's prophetic storyline is obedience to the Mosaic covenant. The establishment of a covenant between God and Israel is when God's kingdom is fully realized in the LXX.⁵⁹³ God calls the Israelites a "royal priesthood" and a "holy people" when they reach Mount Sinai (Exod 19:6), an identity predicated on the people "listening" to God's voice and observing the covenant (19:5). The catalogs of covenantal blessings and curses present the same equation. In Lev 26, God says that obedience will ensure the people's prosperity in the land, culminating in a statement of the covenant formula, "I will be your God, and you will be my people" (Lev 26:3–12). The corollary of this promise appears next: disobedience will cause expulsion from the land (26:14–33). Likewise, Deut 28 presents covenantal fidelity as the path toward enjoyment of the land (Deut 28:1–14). Moses says, "May the Lord raise you up as a holy people for himself ... if you listen to the voice of the Lord, your God, and walk in his ways" (28:9). Conversely, disregarding the Lord's commandments leads to exile (28:15ff.). The Israelites embody the goal of the prophetic storyline—they become a people who "enact God's righteousness and justice"⁵⁹⁴—when they hew close to the covenant.

The Deuteronomistic History shows that Israel's fortunes unfold according to this plan. As it happens, the nation's history is a gradual slide into rank faithlessness. Apart from notable figures, God's people largely disregard their covenantal obligations, and this with increasing frequency as time passes. Consequently, the people are ejected from the land. The loss of Israel's sovereignty coincides with the ending of God's earthly kingdom. The people's hope is not extinguished, as Ezra, Nehemiah, and the post-exilic prophets show. Nevertheless, the Judahites'

⁵⁹³ My view that God's kingdom is realized through the Mosaic covenant depends on Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), esp. 339–95.

⁵⁹⁴ Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 238–39.

restoration to the land does not amount to a new beginning of God's kingdom on the scale of the former one.

Against this background, Luke 1 continues the prophetic storyline. Zechariah and Elizabeth are "righteous before God" and "blameless" in terms of God's commandments, connecting them to the prophetic storyline as model members of the divine kingdom. The priestly couple resembles Abraham and Sarah in terms of their need, the barriers to this need's fulfillment, and their unexpected hope of a miraculous conception. More broadly, the discourse of Luke 1 exudes continuity. John receives a prophetic task like Samson's and is portrayed as Elijah *redivivus*. Jesus's task consists of ruling as David's heir in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.⁵⁹⁵ Luke invites us to read his story as the prophetic storyline's continuation. We are witnessing a renewal of God's kingdom.⁵⁹⁶

Given the Third Gospel's relationship to the prophetic storyline, Luke 1 forecasts what type of continuation to expect. Zechariah's likeness to Abraham and status as a model member of the covenant community establish his bona fides in the context of the prophetic storyline. His doubt and questioning of Gabriel recapitulate Abraham's response to God at this storyline's beginning. However, the evangelist accents the topos of unbelief, which was implicit yet undeveloped in Genesis, by pairing it with a punitive miracle. The stressing of this topos indicates that Luke's continuation of the prophetic storyline is also a reconfiguration.

The prominence given to unbelief in Luke 1 reflects the development of God's kingdom. Luke's emphasis on Zechariah's unbelief moves the prophetic storyline's emphasis from

⁵⁹⁵ For Jesus's prophetic task, see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 299, concerning Luke 4:16–19.

⁵⁹⁶ See Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 226.

covenantal observance to the belief proper to God's kingdom.⁵⁹⁷ Zechariah is punished when Abraham was not because the priest lives in a different, reconfigured phase of the prophetic storyline. This development does not signify the covenant's invalidation. Other evidence in Luke-Acts suggests that the evangelist affirms the covenant's enduring force.⁵⁹⁸ Zechariah's story shows that unbelief—and by association, belief—have heightened consequences in God's renewed kingdom.

Zechariah's muting produces a deft introduction to the Third Gospel. The lead-up to this miracle adapts the story of Abraham and Sarah's journey to parenthood, revealing that Luke is continuing the prophetic storyline. However, the priest's story diverges from Abraham's when he asks for confirmation of Gabriel's promise. Rather than receiving accommodation, the priest is indicted for unbelief and subjected to a miraculous judgment. Luke has accented the topos of unbelief by pairing it with a punitive miracle. The development of this topos indicates that this continuation of the prophetic storyline is also a reconfiguration. Unbelief—and by association, belief—have heightened consequences in this renewal of God's kingdom.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁷ For belief as the appropriate response to God's "eschatological rule" in Luke-Acts, see Rydryck, "Miracles of Judgment," 28–29.

⁵⁹⁸ See Jacob Jervell, "The Law in Luke-Acts," in *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), 133–51.

⁵⁹⁹ A primary way that Luke associates faith and divine blessings is by featuring the topos of belief in stories of miraculous healing (see Luke 7:9; 8:48, 50; 17:19; 18:42; Acts 14:9–10). Belief emerges in these stories as a factor granting access to God's healing powers. Luke also links faith and divine blessings by connecting belief to forgiveness (see Luke 5:20; 7:47–48, 50; Acts 10:43; 13:38–39). The association of unbelief and divine curses is less evident in Luke's corpus than its positive counterpart. There are no punitive miracles after Luke 1 that feature the topos of unbelief, nor does Luke explore the connection between unbelief and remaining in one's sins inherent in the positive association of belief and forgiveness (see John 8:24). The link between unbelief and divine disfavor only rises to the surface of Luke's discourse in three texts, each involving Paul's "turn" to the Gentiles (Acts 13:14–52; 18:5–11; 28:17–28). In each case, unbelief exhibits a definite, albeit ill-defined relationship to divine disfavor.

4.2.3. Zechariah's Healing

After Zechariah has been silenced, the story advances by a half-year. Elizabeth has conceived and is well into her pregnancy (Luke 1:24–25, 36), and God sends Gabriel to Nazareth (1:26). Luke directs our attention to a woman in this town named Mary. Mary lacks Zechariah and Elizabeth's social and religious status; Luke simply calls her a virgin.⁶⁰⁰ She is also more terrified when Gabriel appears to her than Zechariah was (διεταράχθη; 1:29 // ἐταράχθη; 1:12).⁶⁰¹ Yet the angel makes a promise to Mary that resembles what we heard in the temple. According to Gabriel, Mary will give birth to a child who will complete a task greater than John's (1:31–33). This message causes Mary to question the angel. However, she avoids making the same mistake as Zechariah. Rather than seeking confirmation, Mary asks how God will produce this outcome (1:34). Gabriel clarifies the Holy Spirit's role in her conception (1:35) and then articulates the primary rule of miracle discourse, “nothing from God will be impossible” (1:37).⁶⁰² Gabriel has confronted Mary with a message more incredible than what Zechariah heard. Whereas God enabled Zechariah and Elizabeth to conceive via intercourse, God will forgo the standard means of conception in Mary's case. Mary accepts Gabriel's explanation (1:38), meaning she responds to the promise with “belief” (see 1:45). This encounter began like Zechariah's, but it has a different outcome. Mary's response exhibits her trust in God. She thus escapes from the encounter unscathed, and the angel departs from view (1:38).

⁶⁰⁰ Joel B. Green, “The Social Status of Mary in Luke 1,5–2,52: A Plea for Methodological Integration,” *Bib* 73 (1992): 461–66.

⁶⁰¹ The use of διαταράσσω (δια + ταραύσσω) to describe Mary's reaction indicates an intensification vis-à-vis Zechariah; see Smyth §1685.3.

⁶⁰² Robbins, “Argumentative Textures,” 37–38: “A major Rule underlying miracle discourse is: ‘All things are possible with God.’” Luke presents the rule in its negative form.

Mary's story becomes more remarkable in the next scene. The expectant mother travels to the hills of Judea and makes her way to Zechariah's home (Luke 1:39–40). We first see Mary greeting Elizabeth as she enters the home (1:40). Elizabeth responds with a blessing (1:42–45). The narrative then turns unexpectedly as Mary erupts into a song (1:46–55). The outstanding feature of this song is the series of reversals at its center. As Mary tells it, God has produced stunning inversions: the arrogant, powerful, and wealthy are humiliated, while the humble and hungry are exalted. Since Mary has prefaced this series by referring to her own "humility" (*ταπείνωσις*; 1:48), she effectively identifies herself as one of the humble (*οἱ ταπεινοί*; 1:52) whom God has favored. Given Mary and Zechariah's contrasting responses to a divine promise, the priest falls onto the other side of this binary. He is neither powerful nor necessarily wealthy, but his response to Gabriel does not exhibit the same reliance on God as Mary's. By the end of her song, Mary has eclipsed Elizabeth and Zechariah. She has dramatically presented herself at the couple's house, supplanting Elizabeth as the mother of interest and filling in for Zechariah as the one to sing the priestly song of God's praise. Luke records no further interactions between Mary and Elizabeth after the song ends. Mary remains in Zechariah and Elizabeth's home for three months and then departs for Nazareth (1:56).

Our passage concludes with another shift, this time three months into the future. Luke keeps our focus on Elizabeth, who has now given birth to the promised child (Luke 1:57). Elizabeth's neighbors and relatives have gathered for the child's circumcision (1:59). These friends recognize the birth as evidence of God's mercy (1:58). However, they perpetuate the convention of naming the infant after his father (1:59). God has selected a different name (see 1:13). The friends' effort threatens the fulfillment of divine plans. Fortunately, Elizabeth rejects "Zechariah" in favor of the divinely given name, "John" (1:60; see 1:13). Luke now directs our

attention to Zechariah, who has been witnessing the entire scene. The friends make motions to Zechariah to give him a chance to overrule Elizabeth (1:62), but he writes, “His name is John,” much to their astonishment (1:63). Luke does not tell us why the friends react this way. Since Zechariah’s ailment does not preclude writing, it is unlikely that the friends think he and his wife miraculously chose the same name.⁶⁰³ The friends are astonished because Zechariah has abandoned the standard naming practice for the child’s prophetic name.⁶⁰⁴ They perceive what the birth portends as Zechariah rejects his patronymic in favor of “John.”

Zechariah regains his speech after confirming John’s name. His subsequent discourse reveals what a profound change has come over him. The priest first uses his speech to bless God, stunning the friends and all they tell (Luke 1:64–65). The priest then sings a song of God’s praise (1:68–79). The song is framed as a Spirit-inspired utterance (1:67), begins with a blessing of God (1:68–75), and concludes with an address to John that elaborates Gabriel’s message (1:76–79; see 1:16–17). Zechariah operates in a priestly-prophetic mode of discourse, showing he has come to terms with John’s priestly-prophetic destiny.⁶⁰⁵ The priest now relies on God like Mary.⁶⁰⁶

Luke does not describe Zechariah’s final condition as faith, but the priest’s resemblance to Mary indicates that he believes the divine promise. This outcome resembles the divine recognition sequence (offense → punishment → divine recognition) I have described in previous chapters. The signs and wonders of the exodus event form the basis of this pattern. These

⁶⁰³ Cf. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 109–10.

⁶⁰⁴ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 108–9.

⁶⁰⁵ Robbins, “Priestly Discourse,” 23–24; Robbins, “Bodies and Politics,” 55. Robbins argues that John’s role is priestly and prophetic because his prophetic task concerns a priestly goal, forgiveness (“Priestly Discourse,” 24).

⁶⁰⁶ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 110.

miracles make the Lord known to Israel's oppressors. Once God's pact with Israel is in place, the sequence becomes fully "covenantal," meaning that the relevant miracles instantiate covenantal blessings during seasons of obedience. This dimension is evident in Sennacherib's defeat. The annihilation of the Assyrian army is a "blessing" in consequence of Hezekiah's reform of Judah's cult. An important byproduct of this event is divine recognition among the nations. The pattern also appears in 2–3 Maccabees. These books describe punitive miracles as "epiphanies" or "manifestations" of divine power that make God known among the Gentiles. Finally, this pattern occurs in the Old Greek edition of Daniel. God punishes Nebuchadnezzar for destroying the temple, resulting in the king's promotion of Judean monotheism. In each case, the blameworthy act of one of Israel's enemies is retributed by miraculous punishment, resulting in the opponent's recognition of God.

Zechariah's story broadly exhibits this pattern. The experience of miraculous punishment leads Zechariah to a newfound recognition of God. Nevertheless, at one point, the Lukan recognition sequence diverges from the Septuagintal pattern. In the LXX sequence, miraculous punishments neutralize Israel's opponents during seasons of covenantal observance. As such, these events make Gentiles aware of God as Israel's covenant deity. In Luke 1, the punitive miracle moves Zechariah from a priestly role grounded in the covenant to a prophetic role oriented toward God's renewed kingdom.⁶⁰⁷ Just as Zechariah's muting for unbelief communicates the prominence of belief in this stage of the prophetic storyline, his transformation into a prophet who proclaims the divine agenda expresses a similar message. The divine activities that once caused outsiders to recognize God as Israel's covenant deity now move

⁶⁰⁷ See Michael K. W. Suh and Vernon K. Robbins, "From Prophetic Hymns to Death at the Altar: Luke 1–2 and the Protevangelium of James," in *Jesus and Mary Reimagined in Early Christian Literature*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins and Jonathan M. Potter, WGRWSup 6 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 137–40, 164.

covenantal insiders to a posture of “belief” appropriate to God’s renewed kingdom. Luke’s discourse reconfigures a familiar pattern to align the prophetic storyline with the renewal of God’s kingdom in Luke-Acts.

Zechariah’s healing has consequences that extend beyond the priest. Many scholars observe that Zechariah’s muting functions as the sign he requested from Gabriel (Luke 1:18).⁶⁰⁸ I propose that Zechariah’s healing also has a sign-like quality with respect to those around him. This dynamic becomes evident by comparing the effects of his healing (1:64–66) to the effects of the announcement of Jesus’s birth (2:8–12):

Table 4: Zechariah’s Healing as a Sign

	<u>Zechariah’s healing</u>	<u>The angelic announcement</u>
Sign at the birth	ἀνεώχθη δὲ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ παραχρῆμα ... καὶ ἐλάλει εὐλογῶν τὸν θεόν. (1:64)	καὶ τοῦτο ὑμῖν τὸ σημεῖον, εὐρήσετε βρέφος ἐσπαργανωμένον καὶ κείμενον ἐν φάτνῃ ... καὶ ἀνεῦραν ... τὸ βρέφος κείμενον ἐν τῇ φάτνῃ. (2:12, 16)
Outward response	Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐπὶ πάντας φόβος τοὺς περιοικοῦντας αὐτούς, καὶ ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ ὀρεινῇ τῆς Ἰουδαίας <u>διελαλεῖτο πάντα</u> <u>τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα</u> , (1:65)	ιδόντες δὲ ἐγνώρισαν <u>περὶ τοῦ</u> <u>ῥήματος</u> τοῦ λαληθέντος αὐτοῖς περὶ τοῦ παιδίου τούτου. καὶ πάντες οἱ ἀκούσαντες <u>ἐθαύμασαν</u> περὶ τῶν λαληθέντων ὑπὸ τῶν ποιμένων πρὸς αὐτούς. (2:17–18)
Inward response	καὶ <u>ἔθεντο</u> πάντες οἱ ἀκούσαντες ἐν <u>τῇ καρδίᾳ</u> αὐτῶν (1:66)	ἡ δὲ Μαριάμ πάντα <u>συνετήρει</u> τὰ <u>ῥήματα ταῦτα συμβάλλουσα ἐν τῇ</u> <u>καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς</u> . (2:19)

In both cases, an unusual turn of events after a birth reveals the event’s gravity. The restoration of Zechariah’s speech (1:64) provokes fear among the priest’s friends and the broadcasting of

⁶⁰⁸ For example, see Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)*, 328; Rydryck, “Miracles of Judgment,” 28–29; Michael Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, trans. Wayne Coppins and Cristoph Heilig, 2 vols., BMSEC (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016–2017), 1:69.

recent events (1:65), culminating in rumination over John's identity (1:66). Likewise, the shepherds discover Jesus in an unlikely location per the angel's instructions (2:16; see 2:12), spurring the dissemination of the message about the child (2:17), the astonishment of hearers (2:18), and Mary's rumination (2:19). The restoration of Zechariah's speech precipitates a series of events that parallels the one unleashed by the announcement to the shepherds. This resemblance indicates that Zechariah's healing is a "sign" (σημεῖον; 2:12). The priest's experience alerts others to God's activity in the simultaneous event, John's birth.⁶⁰⁹

Zechariah's story communicates continuity with a twist. When this episode is read in light of the Septuagint's prophetic storyline, Zechariah appears as the latest in a series of figures with whom God has communicated to accomplish the divine plan. Moreover, the priest closely resembles Abraham, who stood at this storyline's beginning. Zechariah occupies a moment when the prophetic storyline is set to resume. However, the continuity of Luke 1 with the prophetic storyline makes the moments of discontinuity in this text all the more striking. Zechariah responds to a divine promise by parroting Abraham's words in Gen 15:8, and this based on the same doubt Abraham expressed in Gen 17:17–18. Yet unlike Abraham, Zechariah receives divine punishment rather than accommodation. The divergence of Zechariah's story from Abraham's expresses how Luke has reconfigured the prophetic storyline. The basis of divine blessings and curses has been expanded from covenantal observance to the belief proper to

⁶⁰⁹ Bovon cites Ezekiel's muteness (in its capacity as a sign) as a parallel to Luke 1 (*Luke 1*, 39 n. 4). He is right that Ezekiel's experience resembles Zechariah's. However, the salient parallel is between Ezekiel and Zechariah's healings, not their muteness. God silenced Ezekiel (Ezek 3:26) and restored his speech just before the news of Jerusalem's fall reached Babylon (33:21–22). The prophet's loss of speech was not a punishment but a constraint that God imposed as necessary (see 3:27). The analogy to Zechariah is a feature of Ezekiel's healing. God explained that the restoration of Ezekiel's speech would be a "sign" for the people, causing them to recognize "that I am the Lord" (Ezek 24:26–27). This statement presupposes that the people would observe Ezekiel's restored speech and deduce God's responsibility for the simultaneous event, Jerusalem's fall. The prophet's muteness may function as a sign on its own, but the book of Ezekiel does not develop this line of thought.

God's renewed kingdom. Zechariah is punished when Abraham was not because he lives in a different, reconfigured phase of the prophetic storyline. This development is paralleled by how Zechariah's experience of muting and healing adapts the Septuagint's offense → punishment → divine recognition sequence. Whereas punitive miracles formerly moved outsiders to an awareness of God as Israel's covenant deity, such a miracle moves Zechariah, a covenantal insider, from doubt to belief. Through Zechariah's muting for unbelief and the role this miracle plays in his transformation, Luke 1 shows that belief is the response appropriate to God's present activities. Zechariah's story prepares readers for the roles played by belief and unbelief in the rest of Luke's account.

4.2.4. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

The opening of Luke's Gospel continues and reconfigures the prophetic storyline. It does so by rerunning the story of Abraham and Sarah's journey to parenthood and changing the consequences of the protagonist's response to a divine promise. The substitution of a punitive miracle for divine accommodation portrays Luke 1–2 as a watershed in the prophetic storyline. Belief and unbelief have heightened consequences in this renewal of God's kingdom.

The miracle in Luke 1 ultimately aligns Zechariah with this reconfigured storyline. Zechariah comes to resemble Mary in her trust in God. He also embraces a prophetic role in relation to God's renewed kingdom. Zechariah models an appropriate response to God's actions in this chapter of biblical history.

Characterization. Several prophetic figures appear in the opening of Luke's Gospel. However, none of these characters relate to the punitive miracle in Luke 1 in a typical way. These prophets neither announce nor implement the penalty that befalls Zechariah. The miracle

does not defend these characters. At most, Gabriel fills a prophetic role with respect to this miracle by announcing it. However, he is not a prophet as commonly understood. This miracle's distance from prophetic figures signifies that God is intervening in history to generate momentum in the prophetic storyline.

Notwithstanding the above, the miracle in question plays an essential role in Zechariah's transformation. The priest emerges from his divinely imposed silence "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Luke 1:67), ready to "prophesy" (1:67), and able to elaborate Gabriel's words (1:76–79). Zechariah's muting does not simply lead him to believe Gabriel's message; it makes him a prophet with respect to God's renewed kingdom. Punitive miracles do not play this role in the Septuagint's prophetic storyline. The calling of LXX prophets occasionally entails a summons to perform such miracles, but my investigation of the Septuagint did not uncover a punitive miracle that produces a prophet. This development represents the adaptation of the Septuagint's offense → punishment → divine recognition sequence to Luke's story. God's activities now produce prophets who broadcast the divine agenda.

The development of prophetic topoi. The punitive miracle in Luke 1 develops the topoi of divine action through a select individual and blessedness. First, "divine action" is adjacent to Zechariah's muting. Zechariah is silenced when he doubts Gabriel's message. This message includes two predictions: Zechariah and Elizabeth will have a son (Luke 1:13–15), and this son will complete a prophetic task (1:16–17). When Zechariah regains his speech, his faith is not a matter of believing a promise about an unlikely birth (prediction 1). This event has already occurred. Instead, Zechariah's faith concerns John's prophetic task (prediction 2). The miracle in Luke 1 brings Zechariah to terms with God's action through John. Divine action through prophetic figures demands assent. Second, blessedness is also a feature of the miracle in Luke 1.

Zechariah and Mary have similar encounters with Gabriel that end differently: Zechariah's results in punishment, while Mary's results in the pronouncement of her blessedness. This juxtaposition associates belief with divine blessings and unbelief with divine disfavor. Luke does not eliminate covenantal observance as a source of blessing for God's people. Nevertheless, Zechariah and Mary's stories entail that the locus of divine blessings has expanded from covenantal observance to the belief proper to God's renewed kingdom.

The thematic development of God's kingdom. The discourse of Luke 1 indicates that the prophetic storyline is moving into a new phase. Zechariah responds to a divine promise like Abraham but experiences a different outcome. The priest's punishment communicates that God's renewed kingdom differs from its former manifestation. I will probe the opening of Luke's Gospel to determine the substance of this difference.

The Third Gospel's opening only gives glimpses of what God's kingdom now entails. Luke's discourse indicates that God is taking the initiative to restore Israel and fulfill the ancestral promises. The novelty of God's kingdom in these chapters is not a matter of national restoration. God has intervened in the past toward this end. Instead, Zechariah's story is related to the ancestral promises. Zechariah lives in the time of "eschatological consummation,"⁶¹⁰ when the promises associated with the ancestral covenants will be realized (see Luke 1:54–55, 68–75).⁶¹¹ His muting reveals that belief is the response appropriate to this stage of the prophetic

⁶¹⁰ Green, "The Problem of a Beginning," 77.

⁶¹¹ Green, "The Problem of a Beginning," 77–78, 79 n. 40; Robert L. Brawley, "Abrahamic Covenant Traditions and the Characterization of God in Luke-Acts," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, ed. J. Verheyden, BETL 142 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 131–32. Brawley insightfully explains the relationship between the ancestral covenants in Luke-Acts: "The Abrahamic covenant is a characterization of God with respect to history. God promises to bless all the families of the earth at canonical narrative beginnings (Gen 12,1–3). Davidic and Mosaic covenants are related to the Abrahamic covenant as part of a sequence. They are particular ways God moves the promises toward their term. For Luke-Acts, Mosaic, Davidic, and Abrahamic covenants do not compete with each other but function properly when they play their role in a holistic program."

storyline. Belief has surfaced at various points in this storyline (e.g., Gen 15:6),⁶¹² but it has never attained the same prominence as obedience. Faith is essential to God's renewed kingdom.

Zechariah's story also presupposes an association consequential for Luke's corpus. Zechariah experiences a miraculous punishment for unbelief despite his covenantal observance. The priest's adherence to God's "commandments and regulations" (Luke 1:6) does not spare him from the consequence of doubting a divine promise. The corollary of this development is the possibility of receiving divine blessings by faith. Luke does not explore this possibility in his opening chapters (cf. Luke 2:32). Nevertheless, a noteworthy Gentile receives God's blessing by faith in Luke's Gospel (see 7:1–10). This phenomenon becomes the outstanding feature of the latter half of Acts. Zechariah's muting hints that the emphasis of the prophetic storyline has expanded from covenantal observance to the belief proper to God's renewed kingdom.

4.3. The Death of Judas (Acts 1:12–26)

4.3.1. Introduction

I must take stock of what happens in the body of Luke's Gospel before moving to Judas's death. It is beyond the scope of my study to explore this intervening section in detail. What requires attention is how the events of Luke 3–24 affect my interpretive lens. Mary's song guided my interpretation of Zechariah's muting. Mary claims that God has "scattered the arrogant," "dethroned the powerful," and "sent the rich away empty" (Luke 1:51–52a, 53b).

⁶¹² See Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 240–42.

Simultaneously, God has “exalted the humble” and “filled the hungry with good things” (1:52b–53a). Given my transition from Luke to Acts, the question arises as to whether Jesus’s career and its results should alter the interpretive lens I use for the punitive miracles in Luke’s second volume.

The answer to this question can be supplied by reviewing Luke’s approach to salvation. Joel Green has developed a compelling model of Lukan soteriology, which he calls “salvation as reversal,”⁶¹³ that illuminates how the events of the Third Gospel and Acts fit together. The details of this model need not detain us. I will synthesize the salient points of Green’s work to show how his perspective focuses my interpretive lens for the punitive miracles in Acts.

Green grounds Luke’s soteriology in the theme of reversal. This theme is the focus of Jesus, who “proclaim[s] God’s coming as a reversal of status.” On the positive side, Jesus’s ministry entails “[including] people in God’s reign who otherwise have no claim on God.” He elevates those that society marginalizes, like the disabled, the disadvantaged, and the despised (see Luke 4:16–30; 5:27–32; 7:21–22; 19:1–10). On the negative side, “Jesus’ teaching ... undercut[s] the authority and social position of those who dominate his world.” He lowers those that society elevates, whether by pronouncing woes on the rich, the satiated, the happy, and the well-respected (6:24–26) or by critiquing “the *modus operandi* of the Gentile elite” (22:25). Jesus’s ministry generates conflict with those he has lowered, resulting in his crucifixion. This outcome is significant because of its shame (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; see Deut 21:22–23). The

⁶¹³ Joel B. Green, “‘The Message of Salvation’ in Luke-Acts,” *ExAud* 5 (1989): 27.

preaching of “God’s coming as a reversal of status” leads Jesus to “the ultimate disgrace” vis-à-vis the Mosaic law and a death “reserved for those of low status.”⁶¹⁴

Shame and death do not have the final word in Jesus’s career. In what Green describes as “the definitive reversal,” God vindicates Jesus by “exalting” him—that is, by raising him from the dead and seating him at God’s right hand. This divine act is where the reversal theme intersects with Luke’s soteriology. Green probes a series of texts in Acts (2:33; 5:30–31; 10:43), showing that the benefits of salvation (the Holy Spirit; repentance; forgiveness) are possible because of Jesus’s exalted position. To take the first example, Peter preaches that “God raised this Jesus ... Therefore, having been exalted to God’s right [hand], he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father [and] poured out what you are seeing and hearing” (2:32–33). The decisive point of this sermon is the availability of salvation through Jesus’s new position. Jesus was rejected by people and subjected to a shameful death, yet God reversed their decision by exalting Jesus and making him the source of salvation. “Reversal” reaches its apex in Jesus’s exaltation. Salvation results from this development.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹⁴ Green, “The Message of Salvation,” 27–29; Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, NTT (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 65–66, 68; Joel B. Green, “‘Salvation to the Ends of the Earth’ (Acts 13:47): God as Saviour in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 100–101.

⁶¹⁵ Green, “The Message of Salvation,” 24–25, 31; Green, *Theology of Luke*, 68; Joel B. Green, “‘Was It Not Necessary for the Messiah to Suffer These Things and Enter into His Glory?’ The Significance of Jesus’ Death for Luke’s Soteriology,” in *The Spirit and Christ in the New Testament and Christian Theology*, ed. I. Howard Marshall, Volker Rabens, and Cornelis Bennema (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 82–84. Green’s interpretation of Acts 10:43 as a reference to Jesus’s exaltation depends on Acts 2, where an OT citation about the “Lord” (Joel 3:5) is applied to the risen Christ (Acts 2:36). In keeping with Acts 2, Peter’s reference to the prophets’ testimony about Jesus and the forgiveness of sins (10:43) presupposes that “what is asserted of God ‘in all the prophets’ can now be asserted of the exalted Jesus” (“The Message of Salvation,” 25, quoting I. Howard Marshall, “The Resurrection in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on His 60th Birthday*, ed. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970], 104).

Given the basis of Luke's soteriology in the reversal theme, there is no need to abandon Mary's song as the framework for interpreting the punitive miracles in Acts.⁶¹⁶ These miracles manifest the reversals at the heart of God's renewed kingdom, sometimes directly and other times remotely. The miracles in Acts differ from Zechariah's muting simply in their relationship to Jesus's exaltation. Whereas the miracle in Luke 1 anticipates the reversals produced by God's renewed kingdom in a general sense, those in Acts are the consequences of God's "definitive reversal." The miracles in Acts are the exalted Jesus's acts of "benefaction" toward his nascent community.⁶¹⁷

4.3.2. The Nascent Community in Jerusalem

The first independent episode in Acts begins with a close-up view of the apostles (Acts 1:12).⁶¹⁸ Luke shows the Eleven walking back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives to the city's east. They have just seen Jesus ascend into the clouds (1:9), and they are obeying his command to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit (1:4–5). The apostles enter the city and make their way to an upper room (1:13a). As they enter this familiar space (see Luke 22:12),⁶¹⁹ Luke enumerates

⁶¹⁶ See Green, "The Message of Salvation," 27.

⁶¹⁷ See Green, "God as Saviour," 92–94, 105–6. Green expounds on "the meaning of salvation in Acts" by proposing a fourfold division of the "content of salvation." The salient category is "salvation as rescue from our enemies." Green does not relate this category to the Lukan punitive miracles. Nevertheless, all of the relevant miracles in Acts fit under this heading, particularly in light of Green's observation that "for Luke, the real enemy from which deliverance is needed is not Rome but the cosmic power of evil resident and active behind all forms of opposition to God and God's people" ("God as Saviour," 90–94).

⁶¹⁸ Luke summarizes his previous book's contents in Acts 1:1–2. He then reworks the final scenes of his Gospel in 1:3–11 (see Luke 24:36–53). The first independent episode begins in Acts 1:12.

⁶¹⁹ Luke calls this location τὸ ὑπερῶον (Acts 1:13), whereas he used ἀνάγαιον to describe the site of the Last Supper (Luke 22:12). C. K. Barrett notes that the use of different terms to describe these venues means that "[Luke] does not go out of his way to identify them" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the*

the members of Jesus's inner circle (1:13b). The evangelist presented a similar list in his Gospel (Luke 4:14–16). Aside from rearranging some names, the main difference in this list is the absence of “Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor” (6:16). Judas turned on Jesus and departed from the Twelve near the end of the Third Gospel. The presentation of this emended list at the beginning of Acts is a reminder that some problems from Luke's Gospel are unsettled. Judas is still at large, and Jesus's inner circle has been depleted.

Despite these problems, the apostles are not on their own. Luke broadens his focus to show other people in the upper room (Acts 1:14). A group of women is present in this space. Luke does not name these characters, but they are most likely the women who became followers of Jesus in Galilee (Luke 8:2–3) and were the primary witnesses of his death and its aftermath (23:49, 55; 24:2–10). Jesus's mother and brothers are also here. Mary figured prominently in the Lukan nativity narratives (Luke 1–2), but she only appeared once more in Luke's Gospel (8:19–21). In this later scene, Mary and her sons tried to see Jesus, which occasioned his redefinition of his family as “those who hear and do the word of God” (8:21). This statement left the status of Jesus's physical kin undefined.⁶²⁰ However, the presence of Mary and Jesus's brothers in this upper room confirms that they too are among his spiritual family.⁶²¹ A nascent community of the most important people in Jesus's life has gathered around the apostles.

The gathered believers are engaged in a priestly activity, prayer (Acts 1:14). Prayer is their way of “waiting for the promise of the Father” (1:4). This activity is not surprising. While

Apostles, 2 vols., ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994–1998], 1:86). However, Marguerat rightly observes that the location of Acts 1:13 is reminiscent of the Last Supper, despite the distinct terms (*Les Actes des apôtres* (1–12), CNT 2/5a [Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2007], 49). This setting is fitting because Luke must now solve problems that cropped up during and immediately after the Last Supper.

⁶²⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 330.

⁶²¹ Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2 vols., EKKNT 5 (Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1986), 1:81.

teaching the disciples to pray, Jesus said that God is eager to “give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” for it (Luke 11:13; see 11:1). The believers are occupying themselves by waiting for the Spirit in the manner Jesus prescribed.

The community’s prayer is interrupted when Peter rises (Acts 1:15). Peter is the evident leader of this group. He appeared at the head of the apostolic list (1:13b; see also Luke 6:14), and he will be the only individual to speak in this episode (cf. Acts 1:24–25). The apostle stands up “among the brothers,”⁶²² apparently as one of their number.⁶²³ In this capacity, he is about to “strengthen [the] brothers,” as Jesus commanded (Luke 22:32).⁶²⁴ Luke directs Peter’s speech to a spiritual family. This framing identifies the ensuing speech as wisdom discourse.⁶²⁵

Peter begins with the claim that “it was necessary for the scripture to be fulfilled ... concerning Judas” (Acts 1:16a).⁶²⁶ Before clarifying what text he has in mind, Peter states two

⁶²² I have translated ἀδελφοί literally to convey the sense of fictive kinship basic to Luke’s view of the early community. Nevertheless, this designation probably includes the women disciples given their appearance in Acts 1:14 (Carl R. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary*, NTL [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016], 82 n 15).

⁶²³ Luke says that Peter “stood up among the brothers” (Acts 1:15). This verse does not necessarily identify Peter as one of the “the brothers” since Luke can distinguish “the apostles” and “the brothers” (see 11:1). However, there are other grounds for including the apostles among “the brothers.” In Acts 15:23, the leaders in Jerusalem identify themselves as οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἀδελφοί. It is possible that “brothers” is in apposition to “elders” alone (Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. Bernard Noble et al. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 451, 451 n. 4; see 441 for the translation “elder brethren”). However, it is much more natural to take “brothers” as an appositive to “apostles” and “elders” as this accords best with the parallel references to these leaders in Acts 15–16 (see 15:2, 4, 6, 22; 16:4; H. Hayman, “On Acts XV. 23,” *CR* 3 [1889]: 73–74, cited in Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994], 385 n. 12). The apostolic letter establishes that the apostles are a subset of “the brothers.”

⁶²⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, SP 5 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 38. For evidence that Luke 22:32 envisions more than the apostles, see Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann, eds., *Peter in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), 122–24.

⁶²⁵ See Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 192.

⁶²⁶ For the identification of τὴν γραφήν in Acts 1:16, see Jacques Dupont, “La destinée de Judas prophétisée par David (Actes 1, 16–20),” in *Études sur les Actes des Apôtres*, LD 45 (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 309–20. Dupont surveys four possible referents of τὴν γραφήν and persuasively argues that Peter is anticipating “the scripture” he will quote in 1:20a (Ps 68:26 LXX).

facts. First, Judas “became a guide for the people who seized Jesus” (1:16b). Second, Judas “was counted among us [apostles], and he received the lot of this ministry” (1:17). Peter mentions these facts to contextualize his upcoming interpretation of scripture (1:20ff.). However, these facts also have an analeptic function. The latter statement recalls Judas’s selection as an apostle in Luke 6:16, while the former statement adumbrates his treachery in 22:47–48. It is unnecessary to recall Judas’s whole story to understand the essentials of Peter’s argument. Nevertheless, these analepses presuppose the reader’s familiarity with the Third Gospel. Given this presupposition, taking an excursion to Luke’s Gospel is appropriate before continuing with Peter’s speech.

4.3.3. Excursus: Judas in Luke’s Gospel

Peter’s statement in Acts 1:17—that Judas “was counted among us, and he received the lot of this ministry”—recalls Luke 6:12–16. In this text, Jesus gathers his disciples and designates twelve of them as “apostles” (Luke 6:13). Judas appears at the end of the following apostolic list with the remark that he “became a traitor” (6:16). Luke does not state how the betrayal will occur. However, this announcement stands near the first report of a scheme against Jesus. Jesus just healed a man’s hand on the Sabbath (6:6–10), causing his opponents to start formulating a plot against him (6:11). The proximity of Judas’s introduction to this plot is an initial clue that his treachery will intersect with such opponents.

Peter’s statement in Acts 1:16b—that Judas “became a guide for the people who seized Jesus”—takes us to Judas’s next appearance in the Gospel. The occasion of Judas’s reappearance

is Luke's summary of some previous schemes against Jesus (Luke 22:2).⁶²⁷ The chief priests and their associates have been looking for a way to end Jesus's ministry (19:47–48; 20:19–20, 26).

The evangelist recapitulates these plots in Luke 22:2 and explains their failure in terms of the leaders' fear of the people (see 19:48; 20:19).⁶²⁸ The leaders are wary of arresting Jesus publicly given his popular support. The crowd has frozen in place a "status quo" consisting of the leaders' futile scheming and Jesus's free movement among the people.⁶²⁹

This state of affairs changes with Satan's appearance (Luke 22:3). Satan was last active when he abandoned his effort to tempt Jesus (4:13).⁶³⁰ He now reappears to facilitate the leaders' schemes. Luke describes Satan as "entering into" Judas, denoting the apostle's possession (see

⁶²⁷ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:445. Wolter observes that Luke 22:1–2 is not a separate scene from 22:3–6. The former section (vv. 1–2) summarizes the previous efforts against Jesus in preparation for the latter section (vv. 3–6). Wolter points to the use of verbs in 22:1–2 (viz., all iterative imperfects) to support this position. I would add that the indicatives in 22:3–6 are almost all aorists. Luke 22:1–2 should be read as a summary of the previous efforts to kill Jesus.

⁶²⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson notes that the evangelist has obscured the relationship between the leaders' search for a way to eliminate Jesus and their fear of the people by deleting the direct discourse introduced by γάρ in Mark 14:2 (*The Gospel of Luke*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, SP 3 [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991], 332). Despite this state of affairs, the meaning of γάρ in Luke 22:2 can be clarified by related passages that explain the leaders' inhibition in terms of Jesus's popularity with the crowd (Luke 19:47–48; 20:19).

⁶²⁹ Wolter, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:446.

⁶³⁰ Hans Conzelmann holds that Luke 4:14–22:2 is "a period free from Satan ... an epoch of a special kind in the centre of the whole course of redemptive history" (*The Theology of St Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell [New York: Harper & Row, 1960], 28). This perspective has many detractors. Schuyler Brown reads 4:13 as a statement that Satan has determined to avoid confrontation with Jesus ἄχρι καιροῦ. Satan must now defend himself, yet he will resume a frontal assault on Jesus later in the narrative (*Apostasy and Perseverance in the Theology of Luke*, AnBib 36 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969], 7–8, 10). Similarly, Susan Garrett denies that 4:13 and 22:3 delineate a "bounded interim epoch utterly free from Satan's activity and presence." She allows that ἄχρι καιροῦ may be proleptic but argues that this phrase need not entail "that Jesus' ministry was therefore Satan-free" (*The Demise of the Devil*, 42). Brown and Garrett have the stronger argument. Passages like Luke 8:12 and 13:16 presuppose Satan's activity. Satan is operating behind the scenes during Jesus's ministry.

8:30).⁶³¹ Satan then leads Judas to the chief priests, where he strikes up a conversation (22:4).⁶³²

Judas expresses his interest in helping the leaders achieve their goal.⁶³³ The leaders are thrilled at this development, and they agree to pay Judas for private access to Jesus (22:5; see 22:6). Judas now begins to watch for the “right moment” to betray Jesus (22:6), which will coincide with the “time” Satan has been seeking (see 4:13).⁶³⁴

The Last Supper occurs before Judas can implement his plan (Luke 22:14ff.). Judas attends this meal with the other apostles (22:21),⁶³⁵ and he cannot hide his plot from Jesus. Jesus

⁶³¹ The possessed man tells Jesus his name is “Legion” in Luke 8:30. According to the evangelist, this designation means that “many demons entered into [the man]” (εἰσῆλθεν δαιμόνια πολλὰ εἰς αὐτόν). By using the same language in 22:3 (Εἰσῆλθεν ... σατανᾶς εἰς Ἰούδαν), Luke clarifies that Judas has been possessed. For a different assessment of Satan and Judas’s relationship, see Matthew S. Monnig, “Satan in Lukan Narrative and Theology: Human Agency in the Conflict between the Authority of Satan and the Power of God” (Duke University, PhD diss., 2019), 181–89, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (2238303346). Monnig distinguishes Satan’s act of “entering” Judas from other cases of possession. Thus, whereas “the effect of the demons [in Luke 8] is the total corruption of the agency of the thing entered, be it human or beast, leading to their destruction,” Satan’s entry into Judas does not “displace[] Judas’s identity or agency by taking over his body as a kind of instrument.” The upshot of this argument is that Judas retains his agency throughout Luke’s Gospel and is appropriately punished in Acts (“Satan in Lukan Narrative and Theology,” 181, 183–84). Whether Satan fully possesses Judas is not crucial to my argument. Nevertheless, it is not evident that Luke has developed the distinction that Monnig posits. Luke holds Judas culpable for his actions. Yet this blame may be a reflexive response to Judas’s crime. The formal similarity between the supernatural “entries” in 8:30 and 22:3 suggests that Luke has not distinguished between satanic and demonic possession.

⁶³² Wolter notes that Satan is the grammatical subject in Luke 22:4 (*The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:446). This observation can be extended to cover the masculine singular verbs and pronouns in 22:5–6. It is no longer merely Judas who betrays Jesus, as in Mark (see Mark 14:10–11). Satan acts through Judas in Luke 22:4ff.

⁶³³ The religious leaders formerly wondered how they could get rid of Jesus (τὸ πῶς ἀνέλωσιν αὐτόν; Luke 22:2). Judas now discusses with these leaders how he will hand Jesus over to them (τὸ πῶς αὐτοῖς παραδῶ αὐτόν; 22:4). The parallel construction of these phrases emphasizes that Judas wishes to help the leaders reach their goal.

⁶³⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 753. Green observes that Judas’s search for the εὐκαιρία (Luke 22:6) is reminiscent of Satan’s withdrawal from Jesus ἄχρι καιροῦ (4:13). He plausibly suggests that the affinity between these terms points to the coincidence of Judas’s betrayal of Jesus and the moment Satan has been seeking.

⁶³⁵ Johnson claims that Luke 22:21–22 need not entail Judas’s attendance at the Last Supper since “hand” (Luke 22:21) may denote Judas’s “power,” in keeping with other biblical uses of the term (*The Gospel of Luke*, 340). According to this reading, “hand” is a metonym rather than a statement of Judas’s presence. I find this claim highly unlikely. First, Johnson’s suggestion entails that the apostles have misunderstood Jesus. The apostles hear Jesus’s statement and wonder which of them will betray the Lord (22:23)—that is, they think the traitor is in their midst. However, Luke never suggests that the disciples have misunderstood Jesus. Second, that Judas’s “hand”—and thus, his whole person—is present is indicated by the phrase “on the table” (22:21). If “hand” were a metonymy of “power” in this context, then the reference to the table would be meaningless.

says that his betrayer's "hand ... [is] with me on the table," and he pronounces a "woe" against this person (22:21–22). This statement makes Judas the last in a series of people against whom Jesus pronounces woe (see 6:24–26; 10:13–15; 11:42–44, 46–47, 52; 17:1; 21:23). The initial woes in the Gospel provide the context for appreciating this development. At the beginning of the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus pronounced woes against the rich, the satiated, the happy, and the well-respected (Luke 6:24–26). These statements contrast with the preceding pronouncements of blessedness on the poor, the hungry, the mourning, and the persecuted (6:20–23). The juxtaposition of blessedness and woe in these verses exhibits the theme of reversal that surfaces in Mary's song and recurs throughout Luke-Acts.⁶³⁶ Since 6:24–26 contains the first woes in the Gospel, these statements should guide the interpretation of later woes. Jesus's woe at the Last Supper implicates Judas in the "eschatological reversals" of God's kingdom.⁶³⁷

Jesus's exit from the upper room (Luke 22:39) provides the opportunity Judas has been seeking.⁶³⁸ Jesus has been spending his nights at the Mount of Olives (see 21:37), and Judas evidently knows that the Lord will come here again "according to custom" (22:39).⁶³⁹ Thus, Judas fulfills his end of the bargain with the chief priests by leading them to this place (22:47; see 22:52). This act gives the leaders private access to Jesus, and they arrest him without incident (22:54; cf. 22:50). This scene's significance comes to the fore with Jesus's last statement before his arrest (22:53). He observes that his opponents could have arrested him in the temple. Instead,

⁶³⁶ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 264–66.

⁶³⁷ York, *The Last Shall Be First*, 54–55.

⁶³⁸ Wolter observes that Judas must be present for the Last Supper in Luke 22:21 and must have departed by 22:28 given the content of this verse (*The Gospel according to Luke*, 2:442). Readers must assume that Judas left the Last Supper between vv. 21 and 28 to fill this gap and make sense of Luke's narrative.

⁶³⁹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke (X–XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 28A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1440–41.

they have waited for what he describes as “your hour, and the authority of darkness.” By equating the “hour” his opponents act with “the authority of darkness,” Jesus identifies his antagonists as “instruments of Satan” (see Acts 26:18).⁶⁴⁰ Judas and the leaders have a shared affinity in their relation to Satan’s plan, and they naturally cooperate to set Jesus on the path to the cross.⁶⁴¹

Judas does not appear in the Third Gospel after the betrayal scene. He has led the chief priests to Jesus, and they take matters in hand from this point forward. However, Judas’s departure leaves two issues unresolved at the end of Luke’s Gospel. First, Judas has betrayed Jesus without any immediate repercussions. Second, Jesus pronounced a woe against Judas that has not been fulfilled. It is possible to narrate Judas’s betrayal without resolving these issues, as evidenced by the other Gospels.⁶⁴² Nevertheless, Luke cannot avoid these matters if he wants to write a compelling sequel to Jesus’s story.

⁶⁴⁰ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 785.

⁶⁴¹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 785.

⁶⁴² The other evangelists record Judas’s betrayal (Mark 14:10–11, 43–45; Matt 26:14–16, 47–50; John 18:2–3), and two of them include Jesus’s woe (Mark 14:21; Matt 26:24). However, none of these writers give Judas his just desserts. Concerning Matthew’s Gospel, W. D. Davies and Dale Allison tentatively argue for the actual repentance of Judas, noting that his change of heart (Matt 27:3) is accompanied by confession (27:4), the return of his profit (27:5a), and his execution of “the fitting sentence” through suicide (27:5b). On this reading, Judas’s repentance reverses the condemnation of Matt 26:24 (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., ICC [London: T&T Clark, 1988–1997], 3:562). If this is correct, Matthew resolves the issues raised by Judas’s betrayal, albeit differently than Luke.

4.3.4. Judas's Death and Its Effects

Peter completes Judas's story by reporting new developments to the gathered disciples.⁶⁴³ Peter transports his listeners from the upper room to a field in Jerusalem's vicinity in the recent past (Acts 1:18). Judas has purchased this field with his profit from betraying Jesus (see Luke 22:5). As Judas is standing in the field, he falls to the ground for no apparent reason.⁶⁴⁴ His stomach bursts open, and his intestines spill out. Judas eventually dies, and his corpse remains in this spot. Someone finally happens upon the scene, and they tell others in Jerusalem what they have found (Acts 1:19). The news of Judas's death circulates from person to person, and his fate becomes known throughout the city. God has given the apostate his just desserts.

⁶⁴³ Acts 1:18–19 is commonly identified as a parenthesis (e.g., Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 160–61; Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 35–36; Steven M. Sheeley, *Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup 72 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992], 132–33). Arie Zwiep supports this position by identifying several features of these verses that would be inappropriate for Peter's rhetorical context: the identification of Aramaic as a foreign language; the translation of Ἀεὶ δαμάχ into Greek; the remark that Judas's death became known throughout Jerusalem; and the general sense that Judas died a long time ago (*Judas and the Choice of Matthias*, WUNT 2/187 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004], 88). Notwithstanding this evidence, I refer to Peter as the speaker of these verses because Luke does not explicitly indicate a change of speakers (thus Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1:88; Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:98–99; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres* (1–12), 61).

⁶⁴⁴ Some authors claim that Judas dies after falling from a height (e.g., Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 160; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp and Christopher R. Matthews, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel, Herm [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 11; Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 36). This interpretation seems to have originated with Herman Strack and Paul Billerbeck's treatment of Acts 1:18 (Str-B 2:595; see Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 160 n. 8; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 11 n. 9). Strack and Billerbeck cite the following anecdote: "A gentile once saw a man fall from the roof to the ground so that his belly burst open and his entrails protruded. [The gentile] thereupon brought the son [of the victim] and by an optical illusion made out as if he slaughtered him in the presence of the father. The father became faint, sighed deeply and drew in his entrails; whereupon his belly was immediately stitched up" (b. Hul. 56b–57a [Cashdan, HEBT]). Adin Steinsaltz cites Rashi to explain the meaning of this incident: "Rashi explains that the Roman did not want to insert the man's intestines himself out of fear that he might jumble them and cause the man to die. He therefore pretended to kill the man's son in order to cause him to go limp, which would enable the intestines to return naturally to their proper position" (*Hullin: Part One*, vol. 37 of *Koren Talmud Bavli: The Noé Edition* [Jerusalem: Koren, 2018], 317). Unlike Judas, the fallen man in this episode does not die. The Talmudic anecdote is a poor parallel to Acts 1:18. Absent other evidence, scholars should abandon the claim that Luke depicts Judas as falling from a height.

It is not uncommon to interpret this version of Judas's death as a story of divine punishment.⁶⁴⁵ However, it is necessary to articulate the basis of this position in light of the common impulse to reconcile Luke's account with Matthew's (see Matt 27:3–10). Judas's story features the hallmarks of a punitive miracle: the apostle commits an identifiable offense (Luke 22:47–48) and falls victim to a death that has no evident natural cause (Acts 1:18). The most natural way to correlate these data is to infer that God punished Judas for his betrayal. Luke neither hints at Judas's remorse nor reports anything resembling a suicide, as in Matthew. The Lukan Judas is an apostate from his visit to the chief priests until his grisly demise.⁶⁴⁶

Peter brings his audience back to their own time and place in Acts 1:20a. He proceeds to ground Judas's fate in scripture by quoting Ps 68:26 LXX, "Let his residence be deserted and let no one dwell in it."⁶⁴⁷ In its original context, this statement is one of many imprecations that "David" (Ps 68:1) directs against his persecutors (68:23–29). David asks God to permanently vacate his enemies' residences (68:26),⁶⁴⁸ apparently through their deaths (68:29: "Let them be wiped out of the book of the living"). Peter assumes that David is speaking about Jesus in this

⁶⁴⁵ For example, see Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:93; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 62; Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1:88, 91–92.

⁶⁴⁶ Luke Timothy Johnson persuasively argues that Judas's purchase of the field is a "symbol of his apostasy." Thus, whereas the apostles are "those who have left τὰ ἴδια in their following of Jesus" (see Luke 18:28), Judas reverses course by purchasing this property (*The Literary Function of Possessions in Luke-Acts*, SBLDS 39 [Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977], 180). Attempts to harmonize Matthew and Luke's accounts obscure this and other features of Luke's portrait of Judas.

⁶⁴⁷ For Luke's use of the LXX in Acts 1:20, see Gert Jacobus Steyn, *Septuagint Quotations in the Context of the Petrine and Pauline Speeches of the Acta Apostolorum*, CBET 12 (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 61. According to Steyn, it is equally possible on the evidence of 1:20 that Luke's quotations come from the LXX or "the MT." Steyn endorses the former possibility given Luke's evident preference for the LXX elsewhere. The quotation of Ps 68:26 LXX is reasonably similar to the Göttingen reading. The salient difference between these texts concerns αὐτός (Ps 68:26: γενηθήτω ἡ ἔπαυλις αὐτῶν ἡρημωμένη; Acts 1:20a: γενηθήτω ἡ ἔπαυλις αὐτοῦ ἔρημος). Whereas the psalmist has multiple persecutors, Luke's quotation has just one.

⁶⁴⁸ Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*, 180–81. Johnson observes that David's imprecation targets the opponents' property rather than their persons.

psalm,⁶⁴⁹ and the apostle consequently applies 68:26 to Jesus's opponent. Thus, "it was necessary" (Acts 1:16) for Judas's "residence," apparently located in his field,⁶⁵⁰ to become vacant. Judas turned against Jesus, and scripture dictated that the price of this act would be, as Luke Johnson puts it, "the desolation of the field ... as a sign of [Judas's] perdition."⁶⁵¹

A second imperative emerges in Acts 1:20b. To complement the "necessity" of Judas's death, Peter quotes Ps 108:8 LXX, "Let someone else receive his position."⁶⁵² Like the previous quote, the context of this statement is a series of imprecations against "David's" persecutor(s) (Ps 108:6–19, 28–29; see 108:1).⁶⁵³ David prays that God will give his opponent an untimely death ("Let his days be few"; 108:8a) and cause someone else to assume his "position" (108:8b). Peter again reads David's words in this psalm as a prophecy about Jesus.⁶⁵⁴ The imprecation

⁶⁴⁹ Yuzuru Miura, *David in Luke-Acts*, WUNT 2/232 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 157–58.

⁶⁵⁰ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 161. Haenchen notes that the application of Ps 68:26 to Judas entails that he bought a "farmstead"—i.e., a farm with a residence.

⁶⁵¹ Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*, 181.

⁶⁵² Luke's quotation of Ps 108:8 LXX is nearly identical to the Göttingen reading (cf. Luke's λαβέτω instead of λάβοι).

⁶⁵³ The identity of the speaker in vv. 6–19 is disputed. Erich Zenger summarizes four options vis-à-vis the Hebrew text (Ps 109 MT): 1. The psalmist is imprecating his persecutors in vv. 6–19; 2. The psalmist is quoting his persecutors in vv. 6–19; 3. The psalmist is quoting his persecutors in vv. 6–15 and imprecating them in vv. 16–19; 4. God is speaking in vv. 6–19 (Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150*, ed. Klaus Baltzer, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Herm [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011], 126, 128–30). Similar options exist vis-à-vis the Greek text (Ps 108 LXX). Eberhard Bons and Carl Holladay identify the psalmist's persecutors as the speakers in vv. 6–19 (Bons et al., "Psalmoi / Das Buch der Psalmen," in *Septuaginta Deutsch: Erläuterungen und Kommentare zum griechischen Alten Testament*, ed. Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2011], 1811; Holladay, *Acts*, 83). In contrast, John Carroll and Robert Brawley describe the psalmist as the speaker of these verses (Carroll, "The Uses of Scripture in Acts," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1990 Seminar Papers*, ed. David J. Lull, SBLSPS 29 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990], 517–18; Brawley, *Text to Text Pours Forth Speech: Voices of Scripture in Luke-Acts*, ISBL [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995], 68–70). No reading of the psalm is self-evident. Ancient readers likely had conflicting interpretations of this text as well. I describe David as the speaker of vv. 6–19 because Luke seems to have held this view.

⁶⁵⁴ Miura, *David in Luke-Acts*, 158.

mandates that someone should replace Judas. This quotation advances Peter's argument by showing that the vacancy created by Judas's death must be filled.

The conclusion of Peter's speech flows directly from the second quotation. Peter claims someone must assume Judas's position among the apostles as "a witness of [Jesus's] resurrection" (Acts 1:21–22). He leaves it to the community to select this person. However, Peter establishes one qualification for this role: Judas's successor must be someone who was present for the events of Luke 3–24 ("from the baptism of John until the day [Jesus] was taken up"; Acts 1:22). The new apostle will come from the large body of disciples present throughout Jesus's ministry (see Luke 6:13, 17; 10:1; 19:37). With this, Peter sits down and allows the community to deliberate.

Luke finishes the episode by broadening his focus to encompass the entire crowd again. The believers propose two people who fit Peter's criterion: Joseph and Matthias (Acts 1:23).⁶⁵⁵ They subsequently return to prayer to solicit divine guidance (1:24–25). The salient feature of their prayer is what it reveals about Judas. The believers ask God to show who should "receive the place [τὸν τόπον] of this ministry and apostleship," which Judas abandoned for "his own place" (τὸν τόπον τὸν ἰδίον). The former place is metaphorical, consisting of the obligation to fulfill the prophetic task common to the Twelve.⁶⁵⁶ The latter place is literal—Judas's field—

⁶⁵⁵ Marguerat notes that the subject of the main verbs in Acts 1:23–26 is not stated; he identifies the 120 (see Acts 1:15) or the group designated by the first person plural pronouns in 1:21–22 (apparently, the apostles) as possibilities (*Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 64, 64 n. 37; similarly, Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 162). No grammatical clues tip the balance of probability one way or another. I identify "the believers" (i.e., the 120) as the subject of these verbs because Peter directed his speech to them (1:15–16).

⁶⁵⁶ For the apostles' prophetic task, see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 240. In Luke's Gospel, the apostles' prophetic task is to "proclaim God's kingdom" and "heal" (Luke 9:2). In Acts, their task is to witness to the risen Jesus (Acts 1:8; see also 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39–42; 13:31). For the relationship between the content of the apostles' preaching in Luke and Acts, see I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian & Theologian*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988), 159–61. Marshall observes that the apostles participate in Jesus's

which has become a site of judgment.⁶⁵⁷ In this final destination, God's kingdom manifests not in healing—as in Judas's apostolic commission (see Luke 9:2)—but in destruction.⁶⁵⁸

Immediately following the prayer, Luke shows the believers casting lots to choose the new apostle (Acts 1:26). This process results in Matthias's selection and enrollment among the apostles. The apostles will henceforth be "the Twelve" again (see Acts 6:2; cf. 2:14) rather than "the Eleven." Peter has "strengthened [the] brothers" (Luke 22:32) by guiding them through the first crisis after Jesus's death. Through his appeals to scripture, Peter has persuaded the community of the necessity of Judas's death and replacement, restoring the apostles to their full number.

Since my project concerns how Luke's punitive miracles relate to the early Christian prophetic storyline, only Judas's death requires further attention. Luke presents the "necessities" in this episode (Acts 1:16, 21) as a unified sequence: Judas's death inexorably leads to Matthias's appointment, in keeping with Peter's scriptural interpretation. Nevertheless, Matthias has no independent significance; Luke blends this character into the amorphous group of apostles to make them "the Twelve" again (see 2:14; 6:2).⁶⁵⁹ Thus, I will focus on the significance of Judas's death for the prophetic storyline in the rest of this section.

Judas's death is intimately related to Jesus's vindication. This aspect of Judas's death is easily overlooked since Luke foregrounds other features of Jesus's vindication, like his

proclamation of God's kingdom in the Third Gospel. Their focus (and that of other early Christian speakers) turns from God's kingdom as such to Jesus's identity as "king" in Acts.

⁶⁵⁷ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 65.

⁶⁵⁸ See Miller, "The Character of Miracles," 201–5.

⁶⁵⁹ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:102. Jervell has persuasively argued that the need for twelve apostles is tied to their mission to Israel ("The Twelve on Israel's Thrones: Luke's Understanding of the Apostolate," in *Luke and the People of God: A New Look at Luke-Acts* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972], 83–96).

resurrection, exaltation, and dispensing of salvation (see Acts 2:24, 32–33). Nevertheless, if we view Judas’s death in light of the Lukan reversal theme, this event also figures in Jesus’s vindication.

“Reversal” is evident in Judas’s story. Jesus pronounced a woe against his betrayer at the Last Supper (Luke 22:22). This woe should be interpreted in light of the pronouncements of blessedness and woe in the Sermon on the Plain (6:20–26). Jesus’s woe effectively associated Judas with the reversals that characterize God’s renewed kingdom. Luke does not immediately clarify the nature of Judas’s fate. However, the evangelist’s subsequent discourse implicates Judas in what John York calls a “bi-polar reversal.” Whereas York uses the term “polar reversal” to describe sequences “in which only one reversal of opposites takes place, i.e., *good* becomes *bad* [without] ... *bad* becoming *good*,” a “bi-polar reversal” describes a sequence where “*good* becomes *bad* and *bad* becomes *good*.”⁶⁶⁰ What is telling about Judas’s death is that the evangelist postpones this event until after Jesus’s resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:18; see 1:3–11). Regardless of the chronology of these events,⁶⁶¹ this sequence promotes the interpretation of Judas’s death in light of Jesus’s vindication. The reversal of Jesus’s crucifixion entails his betrayer’s death. God reconstitutes Jesus’s crucified body and reduces Judas to what Robert Brawley calls “a bloody pile of the organs that produce feces.”⁶⁶² Jesus’s exaltation and Judas’s death go hand in hand.

⁶⁶⁰ York, *The Last Shall Be First*, 42, 42 n. 2, emphasis original.

⁶⁶¹ The question of when Judas dies can be answered within limits. Judas must be dead before Peter’s speech in Acts 1 and thus before Pentecost (see Acts 2:1). He must have died sometime after the betrayal scene (Luke 22:47–48). Judas presumably dies after the crucifixion, set just a few hours after Jesus’s arrest, since it would take some time to retrieve his money from the chief priests and arrange the purchase of a field.

⁶⁶² Brawley, *Text to Text*, 63.

This interpretation receives special impetus from David's early career. I argued previously that Hannah's song (1 Sam 2:1–10) should guide the interpretation of the punitive miracles in 1 Samuel.⁶⁶³ Hannah's song features a series of bi-polar reversals (strong/weak; well-fed/hungry; fertile/barren woman; 2:4–5), which promotes the interpretation of the miraculous judgments in David's early career as God's support of the "weak" David over his "strong" antagonists. The miracle of interest appears in David's encounter with Nabal. Nabal mistreated David, yet David chose not to retaliate because of Abigail's intervention (1 Sam 25:4–11, 32–35; cf. 12–13, 34). God complemented David's rejection of vengeance by killing Nabal (25:37–38). In light of Hannah's song, I interpreted this miracle as God's vindication of David, who entrusted Nabal's fate to the deity (see 25:39). I also argued that Nabal's death anticipated God's deposition of Saul, who similarly abused David. Nabal's death is relevant to the present discussion because this event set a precedent for how reversals work. Jesus's case differs from David's in many respects.⁶⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Jesus's career is introduced by a song that features bi-polar reversals (Luke 1:46–55, esp. vv. 51–53), like David's. Since Jesus entrusts his fate to a God whom Luke profiles in the basic terms of Hannah's song,⁶⁶⁵ David's experience is relevant

⁶⁶³ See "2.6.2.1.1. David's Early Career."

⁶⁶⁴ The most apparent difference between David and Jesus concerns the time of their antagonist's death: Nabal dies before David, while Judas dies after Jesus.

⁶⁶⁵ Stephen Farris argues that scholars exaggerate the similarities between Hannah and Mary's songs (*The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives: Their Origin, Meaning and Significance*, JSNTSup 9 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985], 116). He marshals four arguments to substantiate this claim: 1. Most lines of the Magnificat have a more apparent resemblance to various other OT intertexts than to Hannah's song; 2. Much of Hannah's song is not paralleled in Mary's; 3. The reversal theme was widespread in antiquity; 4. Hannah and Mary's songs exhibit different takes on the reversal theme. Notwithstanding this evidence, the parallel between Hannah and Mary's songs is not illusory. Steven Weitzman has established an affinity between these songs in terms of a shared function in similar narrative contexts (*Song and Story in Biblical Narrative: The History of a Literary Convention in Ancient Israel*, ISBL [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997], 66–67). More broadly, both songs feature the reversals that God produces, and they do so programmatically at the beginning of extended narratives. In the context of the early Christian prophetic storyline, Hannah's song is the preeminent analog to Mary's.

for understanding Jesus's. David's vindication vis-à-vis Nabal warrants viewing Judas's death as a divine reversal that vindicates Jesus.

The final aspect of Judas's death to examine is its relationship to the apostles' prophetic task of witnessing to the risen Jesus (see Acts 1:8). This relationship emerges from the remark that Judas's death "became known to everyone living in Jerusalem" (Acts 1:19). Two observations about this remark are in order. First, this statement associates Judas's fate with other public divine acts in Luke's story, such as Jesus's miracles (see Acts 2:22). Judas's death belongs to the body of common knowledge that facilitates early Christian preaching (see esp. 26:26). Second, the identity of the group that learns of Judas's fate is critical. "Everyone living in Jerusalem" discovers what happened to Judas. According to Paul, "the people living in Jerusalem and their rulers" sought Jesus's death (Acts 13:27–28). Peter addresses "everyone living in Jerusalem" in his Pentecost sermon (2:15; see also 2:4).⁶⁶⁶ More broadly, the inhabitants of Jerusalem are the special focus of the apostles' ministry (see Acts 2:14; 5:28).⁶⁶⁷ It is not incidental that everyone in Jerusalem learns about Judas's fate. The audience of Jesus's passion and the apostles' early preaching knows what happened to Judas.

This public awareness forms part of the context in which the Twelve carry out their prophetic task. The people in Jerusalem may not realize that God orchestrated Judas's death. However, they know that Jesus's betrayer came to an untimely end. This knowledge combines with the recollection of Jesus's miracles (Acts 2:22) and his crucifixion (2:23) to prepare the people for the apostles' preaching. Accordingly, Peter's Pentecost sermon provides his auditors

⁶⁶⁶ For the identity of these people as Jews living in Jerusalem, see Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 168, 168 n. 7, 174–75; similarly, Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 75, 75 n. 25.

⁶⁶⁷ See Jervell, "The Divided People of God," 45–46; Jervell, "The Twelve on Israel's Thrones," 77.

with a framework for interpreting what they already know.⁶⁶⁸ Peter does not mention Judas's death on this occasion. Nevertheless, his speech makes "everyone living in Jerusalem" aware that the bloody field they recently discovered signifies Jesus's vindication. Judas's death is among the public deeds God has performed to prepare the people for the apostles' preaching.

Judas's career articulates how "downward and upward reversals" work in God's renewed kingdom.⁶⁶⁹ His arrangement to betray Jesus makes him the target of a woe. In the economy of Luke's Gospel, this woe entails that Judas will experience a downward reversal. The evangelist's subsequent discourse clarifies that Judas is implicated in a bi-polar reversal alongside Jesus. Whereas God reconstitutes Jesus's crucified body, the deity retributes Judas by disemboweling him. Judas's death is a divine act of humiliation that naturally attends Jesus's exaltation.

4.3.5. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

The reversals at the heart of God's renewed kingdom are a primary focus of Luke-Acts. God exalts some people and humiliates others. Chief among those whom God has exalted is Jesus. Jesus's adherence to God led to his shameful death, yet God reversed this outcome by raising

⁶⁶⁸ Additional support for this interpretation comes from some parallel uses of *γνωστός*. In Acts 4:16–17, the members of the Sanhedrin acknowledge that a *γνωστόν σημεῖον* occurred and fear the further dissemination of its report (following Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 219 n. 2). In 9:42, Tabitha's resuscitation "becomes known" (*γνωστόν ... ἐγένετο*) in Joppa, causing many people to believe. In 19:17, a failed exorcism "becomes known" (*ἐγένετο γνωστόν*) in Ephesus, which produces fear among the Jews and Greeks and redounds to Jesus's honor. The common denominators among these passages are an unusual event that becomes "known" and the spread of God's word. As in the parallels, Judas's death becomes known. However, unlike these parallels, Luke does not immediately report the effect of this public knowledge. Given the use of *γνωστός* elsewhere in Acts, it is reasonable to associate the people's knowledge of Judas's death with their readiness to repent at Pentecost (2:37).

⁶⁶⁹ I borrow "downward and upward reversals" from Amanda C. Miller, *Rumors of Resistance: Status Reversals and Hidden Transcripts in the Gospel of Luke*, ES (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 9, who uses these terms to explicate York's "bi-polar reversals." York does not appear to use these apt phrases in his monograph.

Jesus and exalting him to God's right hand. Judas's humiliation is a corollary of this divine act. These events go hand in hand as a premier case of bi-polar reversal.

The relationship between Jesus and Judas can be stated more explicitly in terms of the prophetic storyline. This storyline entered a new phase at the beginning of Luke's Gospel. This phase is when the ancestral promises will be realized. The Davidic promises are at issue in the fates of Jesus and Judas. Gabriel told Mary that Jesus "will reign over the house of Jacob forever" as David's heir (Luke 1:32–33; see 2 Sam 7:12–16). Peter's Pentecost sermon clarifies that the exaltation is when Jesus assumes David's throne (see Acts 2:33–36).⁶⁷⁰ Judas figures in this scheme as the first "enemy" whom God subjects to Jesus in fulfillment of scripture (Acts 2:35, quoting Ps 109:1 LXX). Judas's death signals the beginning of Jesus's messianic reign.

Characterization. Judas's death establishes Jesus's prophetic profile in two ways. First, this event confirms Jesus's prophetic credentials. Jesus pronounced a woe against Judas at the Last Supper. The swift fulfillment of this woe establishes Jesus's authority to pronounce God's judgment. Judas's case is particularly significant because he is not the only target of a woe in Luke's corpus but is the only person against whom a woe is carried out. Judas's demise prefigures the judgment awaiting everyone else in this unfortunate group.

Second, Judas's death associates Jesus with earlier prophets who benefitted from punitive miracles. In the LXX prophetic storyline, God regularly assists those called to prophetic tasks by defending them. This defense often takes the form of punitive miracles. A prominent effect of these miracles is the exhibition of divine support for the prophetic agents. Judas's death performs a similar function. This event is not defensive because it does not prevent the crucifixion.

⁶⁷⁰ Mark L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and Its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology*, JSNTSup 110 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 140–45.

Nevertheless, Jesus's prophetic task persists beyond the cross.⁶⁷¹ In light of Jesus's enduring task, Judas's death can be conceived as God's endorsement of Jesus as a prophetic individual.

A final issue to probe is how Judas's death affects his characterization. Judas is a prophetic figure in his own right. Jesus selected Judas as one of the Twelve (Luke 6:13, 16) and later gave him a prophetic task along with the other apostles (9:1–2). Judas presumably expected to leave this role behind with his departure from the Twelve. However, God does not allow the betrayer to abandon his prophetic identity. Judas exchanges one prophetic relationship to God's kingdom (proclamation, healing) for another (judgment). He can be understood as an errant prophetic figure. Like the man of God from Judah (1 Kgs 13) and Jonah, Judas has strayed from his task. Accordingly, he is punished more swiftly and severely than others responsible for Jesus's death.

The development of prophetic topoi. Judas's death develops the topos of divine action through a select individual. Jesus's experience vis-à-vis Judas goes against the norms of the prophetic storyline. God does not defend Jesus as God has protected other prophetic figures in times past. Notwithstanding the necessity of Jesus's death, the longstanding association of prophetic figures and divine protection makes it critical for God to vindicate Jesus. This vindication occurs, in part, through Judas's death. This event is a belated divine endorsement of Jesus. This development expands how punitive miracles relate to prophetic figures. Punitive miracles may defend these figures or provide post-mortem vindication.⁶⁷²

⁶⁷¹ Jesus's task includes "reigning over the house of Jacob forever" on David's throne (Luke 1:32–33). He only begins to perform this part of his task upon his exaltation (Acts 2:36).

⁶⁷² I have not discovered any miracles in the LXX prophetic storyline that can be interpreted as God's post-mortem vindication of a prophet. The closest analog is Antiochus's death in 2 and 4 Maccabees. The salient difference between these events is that Antiochus's death vindicates the martyrs, while Judas's vindicates a prophet.

The thematic development of God's kingdom. Susan Garrett's monograph, *The Demise of the Devil*, lays the groundwork for how I approach the development of God's kingdom in Acts. In this work, Garrett sketches the "struggle for authority" between God and Satan in Luke's corpus. What is relevant to my purpose are Satan's activities during and after the passion. According to Garrett, Satan's authority reaches its apex during the passion narrative. Satan recruits Judas (Luke 22:3), arranges the crucifixion, tries to ensnare the apostles (22:31), and publicly exhibits his authority with a display of darkness (23:44). However, this situation changes after Jesus's death. The risen Lord expels Satan from heaven—as established by Jesus's "proleptic vision" to this effect in Luke 10:18—stripping the adversary of his authority over Jesus's followers. Satan's threat is not eliminated; he still attacks believers and their missionary efforts. Nevertheless, Satan is now fighting a losing battle, as shown by the victories of the early Christians over him in Acts. Garrett establishes that Jesus's exaltation is a watershed in the conflict between God and Satan in Luke-Acts.⁶⁷³

Garrett's work is only marginally related to Luke's punitive miracles since she focuses on magicians, whom Luke portrays as satanic "servants."⁶⁷⁴ However, her analysis is suggestive:

By defeating the magicians and winning away their adherents, who include the Samaritans, Sergius Paulus, and the residents of Ephesus, Christian preachers demonstrate that their authority surpasses the authority of Satan. The downfall of each of the magicians functions ... to confirm the truth of the Christian proclamation, in which the demise of the devil's authority figures prominently.⁶⁷⁵

The "downfall" of magicians displays Satan's loss of authority. This idea readily transfers to other adversaries in Acts, as Garrett observes. She identifies Judas, Ananias and Sapphira, Saul

⁶⁷³ Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 37, 46–58, 136 n. 58.

⁶⁷⁴ See Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 74–76, 106; cf. 148 n. 58.

⁶⁷⁵ Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 102.

qua persecutor, and Bar-Jesus as Satan's "servants" or "agents."⁶⁷⁶ She hints at this identification vis-à-vis Herod Agrippa I in an article contemporary with *Demise of the Devil*.⁶⁷⁷ In this and the following "thematic development" sections, I will assume Garrett's identification of these figures as "satanic agents" and her understanding that their swift defeat adumbrates Satan's loss of authority.⁶⁷⁸ I will provide additional justification for identifying these figures as satanic collaborators when necessary and develop Garrett's findings as appropriate. Considering Garrett's work, each of the punitive miracle episodes in Acts is reasonably read as a story about the defeat of a satanic agent and the impotence of the one they represent.⁶⁷⁹ In these events, God's kingdom collides with Satan's dominion, causing the latter to recede before the former.⁶⁸⁰

Judas's death comes into focus in this context. Judas became a satanic agent when he was possessed. Readers who recall his backstory will likely perceive his grisly end as indicating

⁶⁷⁶ Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 50, 84–86 148 n. 58.

⁶⁷⁷ Susan R. Garrett, "Exodus from Bondage: Luke 9:31 and Acts 12:1–24," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 656–80, esp. 675–77.

⁶⁷⁸ For the application of Garrett's thesis to specific punitive miracle episodes, see Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 50, 102–3, 79–87, 148 n. 58; Garrett, "Exodus from Bondage," 670–80.

⁶⁷⁹ See Carl L. Park, "Judge of the Living and the Dead: Divine Judgment Scenes in the Book of Acts" (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, PhD diss., 2017), 288–90, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (2027374346); Monnig, "Satan in Lukan Narrative and Theology," 256, 256 n. 17. Park notes that "divine judgment" afflicts three satanic agents (Judas, Ananias, Bar-Jesus), but he does not seem to view Herod's miraculous death as that of a satanic collaborator (see "Judge of the Living and the Dead," 290 n. 7). Monnig makes a more direct observation concerning punitive miracles and the judgment of Satan's collaborators vis-à-vis Acts 5 and Acts 13. However, he also fails to classify Herod's death as the miraculous punishment of a satanic collaborator. I aim to build on Park and Monnig's findings by interpreting every punitive miracle in Acts as the judgment of a satanic collaborator.

⁶⁸⁰ See Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 39–46, 64–65, 91, 95; Monnig, "Satan in Lukan Narrative and Theology," 1–2, 59, 66, 138, 164, 197, 207, 211–13, 256, 280–83; similarly, Miller, "The Character of Miracles," 205–10. Garrett's salient insight concerns what exorcisms reveal about God's kingdom ("As the Kingdom of Satan diminishes, the Kingdom of God grows proportionately"; *The Demise of the Devil*, 45). Monnig builds on this finding by describing the relationship between God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom as a "conflict" in which the former "displaces" the latter. In particular, Monnig contextualizes punitive miracles like the deaths of Judas, Ananias, and Sapphira in terms of the contest between these realms.

Satan's loss of authority.⁶⁸¹ From this vantage, Judas's death has special significance given its timing. Judas dies as the prophetic storyline moves from Jesus's ministry to the apostles'. The betrayer's fate establishes the potency of God's kingdom in the apostolic period. Given this dimension, Judas's demise anticipates what is to come. The remaining punitive miracles in Acts occur when God's kingdom collides with Satan's dominion. Judas's death prefigures the interaction of the divine and diabolical realms in Luke's second volume.

4.4. The Death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4:32–5:11)

4.4.1. Introduction

The community's story after Acts 1 is marked by precipitous growth. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fills the believers, enabling them to speak in unfamiliar languages (Acts 2:1–4). This spectacle draws a crowd (2:5–13), which becomes the audience of Peter's first public sermon (2:14–36). The result of Peter's preaching is 3000 new believers (2:37–41). Next, Peter and John visit the temple and heal a man who has never walked (3:1–8). The man's mobility astounds everyone present (3:9–11), and they eagerly listen to Peter's second sermon (3:12–26). Peter moves his listeners to belief, resulting in 2000 additional disciples (4:4). The coordination of divine acts and apostolic preaching in Acts 2–3 allows the community to multiply rapidly.

An unfortunate consequence of this growth appears in Acts 4. Some religious leaders learn what Peter and John have been doing in the temple, and they compel these apostles to

⁶⁸¹ See Monnig, "Satan in Lukan Narrative and Theology," 197, 201, 204.

appear before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1–3, 5–7). After hearing from the apostles, the Sanhedrin commands them to stop testifying about Jesus (4:8–18). However, the members of this body face a problem: they cannot act against Peter and John given the public’s knowledge of the recent healing (4:21–22). These leaders settle for making vague threats and dismissing the apostles (4:21). The apostles’ testimony generates conflict. So long as the apostles are diligent in their prophetic task, they will encounter opposition from the religious authorities.

The Sanhedrin episode is followed by the twelve apostles’ prayer (Acts 4:23–31).⁶⁸² The salient feature of this prayer is the apostles’ requests (4:29–30). First, they ask God to “look upon the threats [ἀπειλὰς]” they face (4:29). This request identifies Peter and John’s appearance before the Sanhedrin, which culminated in threatening speech (4:21: *προσαπειλησάμενοι ... αὐτούς*), as the impetus of the prayer. Second, the Twelve ask God to enable them “to speak your word with all boldness” (*μετὰ παρρησίας πάσης λαλεῖν τὸν λόγον σου*) in the context of divine healings, signs, and wonders (4:29–30).⁶⁸³ The coordination of miracles and testimony in this petition mirrors the pattern of Acts 2–3. By making these requests, the apostles indicate that the Sanhedrin threatens the union of divine acts and apostolic preaching that has spurred the community’s growth. The apostles perceive the leaders’ threats as a hindrance and ask God to guard them against timidity. God swiftly demonstrates the intention to comply: the Spirit fills the apostles and causes them to start “speaking the word of God with boldness” (*ἐλάλουν τὸν λόγον*

⁶⁸² For the speakers of this prayer as the Twelve, see Jacques Dupont, “La prière des apôtres persécutés (Actes 4, 23–31),” in *Études sur les Actes des Apôtres*, LD 45 (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 521–22; Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 90.

⁶⁸³ For the Twelve as the referent of “your servants,” see Dupont, “La prière des apôtres persécutés,” 522.

τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ παρρησίας; 4:31).⁶⁸⁴ God empowers the Twelve to perform the very activity they prayed about, confirming that the Sanhedrin cannot prevent their work.

Ananias and Sapphira's story occurs after the events described above. This couple must be viewed in the context of the community's growth, its first experience of opposition, and the apostles' empowerment. The community faces a new threat in Ananias and Sapphira. This couple acquaints the disciples with internal division, much like the Sanhedrin episode introduced them to external antagonism.⁶⁸⁵

4.4.2. The Unified Community

Luke prefaces Ananias and Sapphira's story with a vignette of the community's idyllic life.⁶⁸⁶ Despite the community's precipitous growth, Luke paradoxically reports that the "multitude" of disciples have "one heart and soul" (Acts 4:32a).⁶⁸⁷ With respect to an individual, the pairing of "heart" and "soul" focuses on the inner life, particularly one's deliberations and intentions (e.g., Exod 35:21; Deut 11:18).⁶⁸⁸ Applied to the community, "one heart and soul" depicts the

⁶⁸⁴ ἐλάλουν should be interpreted as an inceptive imperfect given its appearance after two aorist verbs (ἐσαλεύθη; ἐπλήσθησαν). The apostles' bold speech continues into the indefinite future.

⁶⁸⁵ Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 161–63.

⁶⁸⁶ The main verbs in Acts 4:32–35 are imperfects, while most of those in 4:36–5:11 are aorists. The only non-aorists in the latter section appear in direct discourse. 4:32–35 portrays the community's habitual behavior.

⁶⁸⁷ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 168.

⁶⁸⁸ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 230–31; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 168. Marguerat claims that "le binôme cœur/âme ... ajoute à l'intériorité (âme) la note volontariste du cœur (siège de la décision pour les Hébreux)" (*Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 169). Luke's use of the relevant terms supports these definitions. Several passages presuppose a distinction between the "soul" and the whole person, indicating that ψυχή denotes an individual's interiority (see Luke 2:35; 12:19; Acts 14:2, 22; 15:24). Likewise, Luke often associates the καρδιά with deliberation and intention (see Luke 1:66; 2:19, 51; 3:15; 5:22; 12:45; 21:14; Acts 5:4; 7:23, 39; 8:21–22). Applied to the community, these terms reveal that the believers prioritize the collective in their decision-making.

believers as a unified organism. The thousands of new disciples share an outlook according to which the community is more basic than the individual.

As a result of this outlook, the community embodies an ideal of Lukan wisdom discourse. The believers think of their belongings as common property rather than personal possessions (Acts 4:32b).⁶⁸⁹ The reference to “possessions” (τὰ ὑπάρχοντα) in this verse associates the believers with Jesus’s sayings about this topos. In the Third Gospel, Jesus warned against greediness, claiming that a person’s life is not a matter of having many possessions (Luke 12:15). He told his disciples to “sell [their] possessions and give alms” to gain heavenly treasures (12:33). Most trenchantly, he asserted that discipleship is off-limits for “everyone ... who does not give up all their possessions” (14:33). Detachment from possessions is fundamental to discipleship. The believers in Acts 4 are enacting Jesus’s teachings.

Luke takes a brief detour in Acts 4:33.⁶⁹⁰ He mentions that the apostles are persevering in their prophetic task of testifying to the resurrection and are doing so with “great power” (Acts 4:33a). Luke’s reference to “power” (δύναμις) expresses the Holy Spirit’s operation (see 1:8: λήμψεσθε δύναμιν ...), presumably in the form of the apostles’ effective speech.⁶⁹¹ Closely associated with the apostles’ testimony is the reality of “great grace upon” the believers (χάρις ...

⁶⁸⁹ For possessions as a wisdom topos, see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 299–300.

⁶⁹⁰ Some scholars claim that the contents of Acts 4:33 were initially foreign to the material in 4:32, 34–35; see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 312–13; Jacob Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 17th ed., KEK 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 192. This position is based on the different focuses of 4:33 (the apostles’ testimony; the community’s favor) and the surrounding verses (the community’s use of possessions). As matters stand in the present version of Acts, 4:33 is a brief detour.

⁶⁹¹ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:254.

μεγάλη ἦν ἐπὶ πάντας αὐτούς; 4:33b).⁶⁹² Luke used the construction χάρις + ἐπὶ τινα in his infancy narrative to describe God’s favor upon Jesus (χάρις θεοῦ ἦν ἐπ’ αὐτό; Luke 2:40). He is conveying the same idea here.⁶⁹³ The believers enjoy divine favor as the young Jesus did.

This mention of God’s favor occasions a renewed focus on possessions in Acts 4:34. As a manifestation of divine favor,⁶⁹⁴ Luke writes that “there was not a poor person among” the believers (οὐδέ ... ἐνδεής τις ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς; Acts 4:34a). This report recontextualizes Deut 15:4a LXX, “There will not be a poor person among you” (οὐκ ἔσται ἐν σοὶ ἐνδεής). In its original context, this statement follows a regulation about debt forgiveness among the Israelites every seven years (Deut 15:1–3). The Deuteronomist links 15:4a to this regulation with the conjunction ὅτι, meaning the cancellation of debts is a way of eliminating poverty among the people.⁶⁹⁵ The Deuteronomist builds on the statement in question with another ὅτι clause that describes God’s blessing upon the people (15:4b). John Wevers clarifies the relationship between these clauses: “What LXX is saying is that there must be no ἐνδεής among you, which there would be if debts were never cancelled. But such release will not really be a burden in view of the second ὅτι

⁶⁹² Luke connects the two halves of Acts 4:33 with τε. This conjunction closely associates the apostles’ testimony (Acts 4:33a) with the community’s favor (4:33b; see Smyth §2968). Luke does not clarify the precise relationship between these situations (cf. Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 170, who claims that the community’s favor results from the apostles’ testimony). At most, Luke’s discourse permits the claim that the apostles’ testimony and the community’s favor go hand-in-hand.

⁶⁹³ Johnson makes a similar point, distinguishing the (divine) favor upon (ἐπὶ) the believers in Acts 4:32 from the believers’ favor with (πρός) the people in 2:47 (*The Literary Function of Possessions*, 199–200).

⁶⁹⁴ The initial γάρ in Acts 4:34 associates this and the following verse with 4:33b. I interpret this γάρ as explanatory (see Smyth §2808): the verses introduced by γάρ explicate the reference to God’s grace in 4:33b. For a similar view, see Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2 vols., HThKNT 5 (Freiburg: Herder, 1980–1982), 1:366.

⁶⁹⁵ Wevers, *Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, 256. Wevers glosses Deut 15:3b–4a as follows: “You must cancel the debt owed you by your brother because there must not be anyone in need among you.” As this translation indicates, the tense of ἔσται in 15:4 should be understood as a jussive future (see Smyth §1917).

clause.”⁶⁹⁶ The Deuteronomist regards the absence of poor people among the Israelites as the result of the septennial practice of forgiving debts. God’s blessing makes this practice sustainable. The common denominator in Deut 15 and Acts 4 is the lack of need among God’s people. These passages differ on how this ideal is achieved. Whereas the Deuteronomist eliminates long-term debts among the Israelites to prevent their impoverishment, Luke explains the absence of poor people in the community in terms of the practice he describes next.

The ideal situation of Acts 4:34a is a result of the believers’ redistribution of wealth.⁶⁹⁷ Believers with fields or houses sell these possessions and entrust the proceeds to the apostles (Acts 4:34b–35a). The apostles, in turn, distribute this money to community members according to their needs (4:35b).⁶⁹⁸ Luke previously reported the practice of selling possessions to meet needs after the Pentecost sermon (2:44–45). That he now reiterates this practice leads to two conclusions. First, the redistribution of wealth is a hallmark of this community. What transpired among the believers after Pentecost persists despite communal growth (4:4) and opposition (4:5–23). Second, the Spirit is the stimulus of the actions adumbrated in 4:34–35, just as in 2:44–45.⁶⁹⁹ The redistribution of wealth in the earlier account followed the Spirit’s arrival (2:1–4), Peter’s address about the believers’ pneumatic speech (2:14–36, esp. vv. 16–21, 33), and his listeners’ reception of “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (2:38, 41). In this context, the actions in 2:44–45 are

⁶⁹⁶ Wevers, *Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, 256.

⁶⁹⁷ The second γάρ in Acts 4:34 is causal (see Smyth §2810). The statement introduced by this conjunction explains the absence of impoverished people in the community.

⁶⁹⁸ Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*, 201. Although Luke does not identify the agent of the distribution (διεδίδετο ... ἐκάστῳ; Acts 4:35), Johnson rightly notes that “the insertion of the Apostles here at the receiving end [in 4:35a] would imply that they also carried out the distribution [in 4:35b].”

⁶⁹⁹ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 168. I disagree with Marguerat’s understanding of Acts 4:31 as an instance of the Spirit’s filling the community. The salient aspects of his view are “l’ancrage des sommaires [2:42–47; 4:32–35] dans la pneumatologie” and the analogy between these summaries.

naturally understood as the Spirit's work. The same understanding applies to 4:34–35. Although the Spirit does not explicitly appear in this later passage, the discourse of Acts 2 has prepared readers to identify the redistribution of possessions as the Spirit's handiwork.⁷⁰⁰ The experiences of “one heart and soul” (4:32b) and “great grace upon” the community (4:33b) move believers to redistribute their wealth, eliminating need among God's people.

Luke adopts a different narrative mode in the next verse, shifting from vignette to exemplum.⁷⁰¹ He focuses our attention on a single disciple, Joseph (Acts 4:36). Three pieces of information characterize Joseph. First, the apostles have given him the nickname “Barnabas,” which Luke glosses as υἱὸς παρακλήσεως. Given Joseph/Barnabas's later role in the narrative as an evangelist (see chs. 13–15), this gloss is best translated as “son of exhortation.”⁷⁰² The apostles have identified Joseph as an important community member. Second, Luke identifies Barnabas as a Levite. Barnabas possesses a heritage likely to garner honor within the community.⁷⁰³ Third, Luke traces Barnabas's origin to Cyprus. Barnabas is a Diaspora Jew and is the first such individual among the believers whom Luke identifies by name. Given the role that Diaspora Jews will play in Luke's narrative (e.g., the Seven, including Stephen and Philip [6:5];⁷⁰⁴ Paul [chs. 13–28 passim]), Barnabas's introduction anticipates the prominence of this group. Two of the details in 4:36 are consequential for the present narrative. Barnabas's

⁷⁰⁰ Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*, 199–203.

⁷⁰¹ See n. 686 for the grammatical contrast between Acts 4:32–35 and 4:36ff.

⁷⁰² Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:258–59 (translation his; emphasis removed).

⁷⁰³ See Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 32.

⁷⁰⁴ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 267.

reputation among the apostles and Levitical heritage suggest he is a prominent community member.

Luke supplements Barnabas's characterization with a description of his conduct. Barnabas sells a field he owns per the community's practice (Acts 4:37). He then travels to where the apostles are gathered and places the proceeds of his sale at the apostles' feet. This narration depicts the community's "one heart and soul" in action. Despite his prominence, Barnabas's first narrated acts prioritize the community. Having "one heart and soul" means that the disciples tend to the community's wellbeing rather than asserting their privileges or preserving their possessions.

4.4.3. Ananias and Sapphira's Deaths

Luke introduces Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. He does not directly characterize these figures as he did Barnabas. He simply describes them as "a certain man by the name of Ananias" and "Sapphira, his wife" (Acts 5:1), allowing their characterization to develop as the episode unfolds. This couple performs the same basic actions as Barnabas. Ananias and Sapphira sell a field (5:1).⁷⁰⁵ The husband then travels to where the apostles are gathered and places money at their feet (5:2). By all outward appearances, Ananias and Sapphira mirror Barnabas. Their gift ostensibly reflects their sharing of the church's "one heart and soul."

Despite this resemblance, Luke mentions a detail that distinguishes this couple. Ananias has held onto some proceeds from his land sale, and Sapphira knows about this (Acts 5:2).

⁷⁰⁵ Ananias and Sapphira sell a *κτῆμα*, which can denote "that which is acquired or possessed" or "landed property, field, piece of ground" (BDAG, s.v.). The latter definition applies here given Peter's reference to the couple's *χωρίον* (Acts 5:3, 8).

Consequently, Ananias has given the apostles “a certain part” of what he and his wife received. It is not immediately evident whether a partial gift accords with the community’s practice.⁷⁰⁶

However, Ananias’s actions disrupt the rhythm of the previous verses:

Table 5: Repetitive-Progressive Texture of Acts 4:34–5:2

4:34–35	πωλοῦντες	ἔφερον	ἐτίθουν
4:37	πωλήσας	ἤνεγκεν	ἔθηκεν
5:1–2	ἐπώλησεν	ἐνοσφίσατο	ἐνέγκας <u>μέρος τι</u> ἔθηκεν

Luke’s vignette (4:34–35) and Barnabas’s example (4:37) established a pattern: believers “sell” possessions, “bring” their proceeds, and “place” them before the apostles. Ananias alters this sequence by performing an additional action, “keeping back.” He is not in full agreement with the community.

Luke now focuses on Peter (Acts 5:3). The apostle has watched Ananias bring his gift and has discerned this man’s divergence from the community. As a result, Peter probes this would-be donor with a series of three questions. These questions do not gather information; Peter never allows Ananias speak. Instead, these questions elucidate Ananias’s offense.

⁷⁰⁶ Cf. Ivoni Richter Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 6–11. Reimer makes a detailed yet ultimately unconvincing argument that the mere presence of νοσφίζω in Acts 5:2 reveals Ananias’s delict. She analyzes the use of this term in a range of ancient texts and concludes that this term denotes “an action that can only be done with respect to community property or the property of another, not with respect to one’s own property.” Consequently, she claims that “Ananias’s action [denoted by νοσφίζω] ... presumes an obligation toward the community that must have been agreed upon before the sale ... It must have been decided in the Jerusalem community ... both that the proceeds would be transferred to the control of the community and what would be done with them” (*Women in Acts*, 9, 11). In this reading, Ananias and Sapphira have mishandled the community’s property. Marguerat identifies the chief problem with taking νοσφίζω as “the diminution of possessions already renounced”: nothing in Luke’s discourse supports this interpretation (*The First Christian Historian*, 173). Apart from the proposed lexical meaning of νοσφίζω, nothing in Acts 5:1–11 indicates that Ananias is obliged to surrender the total proceeds of his land sale. It is not feasible in the present context to invalidate Reimer’s position since doing so would require an extensive word study. Regardless, whether νοσφίζω suggests a preexisting obligation is immaterial to my argument.

First, Peter reveals the source of Ananias's offense by asking, "Why has Satan filled your heart to deceive the Holy Spirit and keep back [money] from the price of the field?" (Acts 5:3).⁷⁰⁷ Satan is the ultimate agent behind Ananias's gift. The adversary filled Ananias's "heart," meaning this man does not share the community's "one heart" (4:32). Satan induced two acts: "deceiving the Holy Spirit" and "keeping back [money]." Determining the relationship between these acts raises the complicated question of what Ananias did wrong, which I will address momentarily.⁷⁰⁸ For now, it suffices that Ananias's partial gift is the devil's work.

Second, Peter establishes the deliberateness of Ananias's act by probing, "Did [the field] not remain yours when it remained unsold,⁷⁰⁹ and was [the value] not under your control after being sold?" (Acts 5:4a). This question looks back to two moments in Ananias's life. Before the land sale, the field was Ananias's to do with as he pleased. He could have kept the field and avoided trouble. After the sale, the proceeds remained under Ananias's control. He could have spent this money on anything else he wanted. Peter focuses on these moments as times when alternate choices were available. Ananias would not have incurred guilt if he had chosen one of these options. As it stands, Ananias selected a third choice, a partial gift. He has not arrived at this choice for lack of better options.

Third, Peter confirms Ananias's culpability by asking, "What happened that you put this deed in your heart?" (Acts 5:4b).⁷¹⁰ The apostle renews his focus on Ananias's heart. Whereas

⁷⁰⁷ For ψεύδομαι + τινά as "to attempt to deceive by lying," see BDAG, s.v. "ψεύδομαι."

⁷⁰⁸ The simplest reading of Acts 5:3b is to take the infinitival clauses (ψεύσασθαι σε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον; νοσφίσασθαι ἀπὸ τῆς τιμῆς τοῦ χωρίου) as distinct. For the possibility that these clauses describe the same activity, see Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1:199, 199 n. 1; Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:266.

⁷⁰⁹ The translation of μένον as "remained unsold" follows BDAG, s.v. "μένω."

⁷¹⁰ The translation of τί ὅτι as "what happened that" follows BDAG, s.v. "ὅτι." This entry identifies τί ὅτι as an ellipsis of τί γέγονεν ὅτι.

Peter just told Ananias that “Satan filled your heart” (5:3), he now says, “you put this deed in your heart.” Ananias is responsible for his conduct, despite Satan’s influence.⁷¹¹ This man cooperated with Satan, making his ensuing punishment condign.⁷¹²

Peter’s questions sharpen and obscure Ananias’s story. On one hand, these questions clarify that Ananias committed a grievous offense. He outwardly resembles Barnabas but is actually an actor in a diabolical scheme. On the other hand, the apostle supplies new data that complicate this episode. Peter claims that Ananias tried to “deceive the Holy Spirit” (5:3). The apostle reiterates a similar point at the end of his speech (5:4c). The narration in Acts 5:1–2 does not include any words from Ananias, making it unclear how this man has “lied to God” (5:4c). Peter’s statements press the question of what Ananias has done wrong.

A closer look at Ananias’s offense is warranted. The obscurity of this offense stems from Luke’s failure to answer two questions: 1. Does the practice described in Acts 4:34–35 require complete gifts? 2. Is Ananias’s deception (5:3, 4c) implicit in his actions or explicit in his words?⁷¹³ Concerning the first question, the description in 4:34–35 gives the impression that the believers sell their possessions and bring the total proceeds of these transactions to the apostles. However, Luke does not say whether this behavior is normative or simply normal. Concerning the second question, the discourse in 5:3–4 makes it evident that Ananias has lied to God. Nevertheless, whether this deception is identical to the actions in 5:2 or refers to statements Luke

⁷¹¹ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 175; Monnig, “Satan in Lukan Narrative and Theology,” 210–11.

⁷¹² Monnig, “Satan in Lukan Narrative and Theology,” 205, 210–11.

⁷¹³ For the possibility of Ananias’s deception as implicit, see Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:267.

has not recorded is debatable. How one resolves these questions leads to four possible interpretations:

1. The practice in 4:34–35 requires complete gifts. Ananias’s lie is implicit.⁷¹⁴
2. This practice requires complete gifts. Ananias’s lie is explicit.⁷¹⁵
3. This practice does not require complete gifts, but such gifts are normal. Ananias’s lie is implicit.⁷¹⁶
4. This practice does not require complete gifts. Ananias’s deception is explicit.⁷¹⁷

While it is impossible to determine Ananias’s offense conclusively, some interpretations are more plausible than others. The most plausible reading is the one that accords best with Luke’s vignette (4:32–35) and requires the fewest conjectures.

The practice in Acts 4:34–35 seems to require complete gifts. First, the logic of Luke’s discourse entails this position. In 4:32, Luke claims that the believers have “one heart and soul,” as a result of which they view their possessions as common property. The sale of possessions in 4:34 flows from this understanding. Selling fields and houses is how the believers make their property available to the community. This act manifests the believers’ “one heart and soul.” It would violate the spirit of 4:32–35 to sell one’s property yet retain some proceeds for personal use. Second, Peter’s question in 5:4 presupposes this position. Peter mentions two alternatives to what Ananias has done: keeping the field or retaining the field’s proceeds. He does not entertain the option of presenting a portion of the proceeds and declaring the gift as partial. The most

⁷¹⁴ See Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*, 206–8; Reimer, *Women in Acts*, 6–14; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 316, 323.

⁷¹⁵ I have not discovered any scholars who hold this position.

⁷¹⁶ See Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:266–67, who straddles the fence between this and the next view.

⁷¹⁷ See I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 112; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, Rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 104–5; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (I–12)*, 175.

straightforward interpretation of 4:34–35 is that the believers naturally bring the total proceeds of their sales to the apostles.

It is more difficult to determine how Ananias lied to God. Since lying is typically a verbal activity, it is a reasonable conjecture that Ananias claimed to present the total proceeds of his land sale. Nevertheless, avoiding an interpretation based on inferred speech is preferable when an alternative without conjectures is available. There is no barrier to identifying Ananias's deception with his presentation of a partial gift. Given the believers' custom of presenting the total proceeds of their sales to the apostles, Ananias's deception likely consists in his mere participation in this practice.

Luke supplements Peter's speech with a report of its proximate and remote effects.⁷¹⁸ The proximate effect of the apostle's discourse is judgment. Upon hearing Peter's speech, Ananias falls to the ground and dies (Acts 5:5a). The description of this man's death is ironic: Luke reports that Ananias "gave up his soul" (ἐξέψυχεν, from ἐκψύχω), creating a contrast with the earlier statement about the community's "one soul" (ψυχὴ μία; 4:32). Ananias has not shared the community's ethos of "one heart and soul," and the cost of this difference was his soul. The remote effect of Peter's speech appears next: "Great fear came upon everyone who heard" about Ananias (5:5b). Luke often identifies fear as a response to the display of divine power (see Luke

⁷¹⁸ David R. McCabe, *How to Kill Things with Words: Ananias and Sapphira under the Prophetic Speech-Act of Divine Judgment (Acts 4.32–5.11)*, LNTS 454 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 215–16. McCabe observes that the tense of ἀκούων (present) makes Ananias's death "cotemporaneous" with Peter's words. Thus, "Luke is indicating a direct relationship between Peter's utterances ('these words') and Ananias' death." McCabe describes the people's fear in Acts 5:5b as "the corresponding result among the populace." I refer to the events in 5:5 as the "proximate" (5:5a) and "remote" effects (5:5b) of Peter's speech for the sake of clarity and simplicity.

1:65; 5:26; Acts 2:43). That this response occurs in the present episode certifies that those who learn of Ananias's fate perceive this event as God's doing.⁷¹⁹

Sapphira's story begins with the conclusion of Ananias's. Shortly after her husband is buried (Acts 5:6), Sapphira travels to where the apostles are gathered and stands before Peter (5:7). Her encounter with Peter is predicated on dramatic irony. When we last saw Sapphira, she "shared knowledge" (συνειδίης) with Ananias of the withheld funds (5:2). At present, she "does not know" (μὴ εἰδύῃα) what happened to her husband (5:7). Sapphira has gone from possessing secret information to being ignorant of recent developments. Peter will exploit this knowledge gap in the dialogue that follows.

Peter begins his conversation with Sapphira by establishing her complicity with Ananias. The apostle asks her whether the amount Ananias gave the apostles was what the couple gained from their sale (Acts 5:8a). In the context of Luke's vignette (4:32–35), this question calls on Sapphira to articulate whether her family's gift was born out of sharing the believers' "one heart and soul." Sapphira answers in the affirmative (5:8b). She thus commits the same basic offense as her husband. Sapphira has not personally offered a partial gift, yet she maintains the pretense that her family's property sale was a disinterested transaction for the community's sake.

Sapphira's lie leads to an interrogation like Ananias's. Peter asks, "What happened that it was agreed by you [two] to test the Lord's Spirit?" (Acts 5:9).⁷²⁰ This question reveals that Sapphira was not reluctant to participate in Ananias's scheme; she cooperated. The apostle identifies the object of the couple's cooperation as "testing" (πειράσαι) the Holy Spirit. This act

⁷¹⁹ See Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:268.

⁷²⁰ For the translation τί ἔστι, see n. 710. My translation of συνεφωνήθη ὑμῖν follows Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:270, who suggests the unusual dative may be the result of the preceding συν prefix.

aligns Sapphira and her husband with the devil, who “tested” Jesus at the start of his ministry (Luke 4:2: *πειραζόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου*).⁷²¹ Sapphira’s testing of the Spirit signifies that she, like her husband, has colluded with the devil. Accordingly, Peter pronounces the same sentence on Sapphira that befell her husband: “Look, the feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out” (Acts 5:9b). Sapphira maintained Ananias’s lie, so she must share his fate.

The conclusion of Sapphira’s story is nearly identical to Ananias’s. Luke shows Sapphira falling and dying upon hearing Peter’s words (Acts 5:10a). She is then removed from where the apostles are gathered and buried beside her husband (5:10b). Sapphira’s death profoundly impacts those who learn about it: “Great fear came upon the whole church and everyone who heard about these things” (5:11). Her death reinforces the perception of God’s activity.

The narration of Sapphira’s death is not entirely repetitive. Two details in Acts 5:10–11 add depth to this episode. First, Luke records that Sapphira “fell to [Peter’s] feet” before she died (Acts 5:10). Johnson observes that this remark locates Sapphira’s—and evidently Ananias’s—death where Ananias set his gift (see 5:2), making their fate a fitting punishment.⁷²² This observation can be coordinated with additional inversions of the pair’s offense:

⁷²¹ Robert F. O’Toole, “‘You Did Not Lie to Us (Human Beings) but to God’ (Acts 5,4c),” *Bib* 76 (1995): 205–7; Jonathan Kienzler, *The Fiery Holy Spirit: The Spirit’s Relationship with Judgment in Luke-Acts*, JPTSup 44 (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2015), 112, 114.

⁷²² Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*, 209.

Table 6: Repetitive-Progressive Texture of Acts 5:2–10

Stages of the offense (reversed)	παρὰ τοὺς πόδας τῶν ἀποστόλων ἔθηκεν (5:2)	ἐνέγκας μέρος τι (5:2)	ἐπώλησεν κτῆμα (5:1)
Ananias's death	πεσών [πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ] (5:5; see 5:10)	ἐξενέγκαντες (5:6)	ἔθαψαν (5:6)
Sapphira's death	ἔπεσεν ... πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ (5:10)	ἐξενέγκαντες (5:10)	ἔθαψαν (5:10)

In 5:1–2, Ananias sold a field, “brought” (φέρω) some proceeds to where the apostles were gathered, and placed this money “at the apostles’ feet.” This process is reversed in 5:5–6 and 5:10. Ananias and Sapphira fall “at the feet” of Peter, are “carried out” (ἐκφέρω) from the apostles’ gathering place, and are returned to the earth. Sapphira’s death—and by analogy, Ananias’s—initiates the reversal of this couple’s gift.

Second, Luke’s first use of the term ἐκκλησία occurs in Acts 5:11 (“great fear came upon the whole church [ἐκκλησία] ...”).⁷²³ Daniel Marguerat judiciously assesses the meaning of this term in the present context: “Acts 5. 1–11 recounts *how the community of believers, which up to this point is labelled with the indeterminate term πλήθος ... acquires the status of the assembly of the people of God (ἐκκλησία)*. This status is acquired through the action of God’s judgement, which excludes from the assembly those who are not ‘of one heart and soul’ (4. 32).”⁷²⁴ The appearance of ἐκκλησία in 5:11 makes this episode foundational to Luke’s ecclesiology. Ananias and Sapphira’s story culminates in the realization that the church is a community whose integrity is guarded by God.

⁷²³ Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 163.

⁷²⁴ Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 164, (emphasis original).

The salience of Ananias and Sapphira's story in the context of the prophetic storyline emerges from its likeness to two pivotal moments in Israel's history. One of these moments, Achan's sin (Josh 7), is a frequent topic of discussion among scholars. The other moment, the period of Israel's wilderness wanderings (Exod 32—Num 25), is less frequently observed but equally relevant. Reading Acts 5:1–11 in light of both moments produces a more robust understanding of what is at stake in this story.

Scholars regularly probe the intertextual relationship between Acts 5 and Josh 7. This practice is due to two features of Ananias and Sapphira's story. First, an unmistakable verbal parallel associates the offenses in these episodes. Just as Achan retains some illicit spoils from Jericho (ἐνοσφίσαντο ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀναθέματος; Josh 7:1), Ananias retains some proceeds from his land sale (ἐνοσφίσατο ἀπὸ τῆς τιμῆς; Acts 5:2). Second, these episodes exhibit a similar function. F. F. Bruce writes, "The story of Ananias is to the book of Acts what the story of Achan is to the book of Joshua. In both narratives an act of deceit interrupts the victorious progress of the people of God."⁷²⁵ Achan halts the conquest of Canaan, while Ananias and Sapphira disrupt the church's growth. Associating the offenses of Ananias/Sapphira and Achan is natural.

The basic parallel between Acts 5 and Josh 7 is beyond doubt. Nevertheless, the differences between these passages are extensive.⁷²⁶ The critical difference concerns the offenders' fates: the Israelites destroy Achan and his household per the Lord's instructions (Josh 7:15, 25), while Ananias and Sapphira die miraculously (Acts 5:5, 10). Achan's story does not culminate in a punitive miracle, meaning the resemblance between Josh 7 and Acts 5 is primarily

⁷²⁵ Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 102.

⁷²⁶ For an accounting of these differences, see Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 173 n. 45; Holladay, *Acts*, 137.

a matter of the offenses committed. Given this single point of contact, a more robust investigation of Achan's offense is in order.

A frame of reference broader than Josh 7 is necessary to illuminate Achan's sin. What I identify as the phase of the prophetic storyline prior to Achan's, found in Exodus–Deuteronomy, informs my understanding of this episode. A prominent occurrence at the beginning of this period is the appearance of “signs” (σημεῖα) and “wonders” (τέρατα). God uses such miracles to rescue Israel from bondage. Once Israel reaches the wilderness, these miracles become a point of contention. When the people refuse to enter Canaan, God exclaims, “How long [will] this nation provoke me, and how long [will] they not believe me in all the signs [σημεῖοις] I did among them?” (Num 14:11). The people's recalcitrance at Kadesh, in particular, and the wilderness, in general, reveals their failure to heed the signs performed in their midst and on their behalf. This obstinance causes further signs and wonders to be postponed for many years until the conquest (see Deut 7:18–19).

The threat of Achan's story emerges in this context. Achan disrupts the renewed proliferation of signs and wonders. His offense raises the prospect that Israel is headed for another period when exodus-like miracles will be absent. Consequently, God instructs Joshua and the Israelites to destroy Achan and his household to regain divine assistance (Josh 7:12, 15). Once Achan is killed, Israel captures Ai (Josh 8). More to the point, a series of exodus-like miracles soon helps the Israelites defeat a coalition of kings (10:10–14), clearing the way for the people to complete the conquest in short order (10:28–41). Achan's death is necessary for signs and wonders to resume.

The threat to divine signs and wonders, which unites Israel's wilderness wanderings and Achan's story, illuminates what is at stake in Acts 5.⁷²⁷ "Signs" and "wonders" are initially prominent in Luke's discourse. Luke uses these terms to refer retrospectively to Jesus's miracles (Acts 2:22) and presently to those performed by the apostles (2:43; see also 4:16, 22 [without *τέρας*]). The prayer before the present episode focuses on the apostles' bold speech in the context of *σημεῖα* and *τέρατα* (4:29–30), suggesting that more such miracles are forthcoming. However, Ananias and Sapphira's story intervenes before these miracles occur. This couple provokes God despite the recent divine activity. Considering Israel's history, Ananias and Sapphira's story may portend further disruptions to God's plans for the church.⁷²⁸ Ananias and Sapphira threaten the proliferation of "signs and wonders," like Achan. Israel's wilderness wanderings, marked by the prolonged deferral of such miracles, underwrites this threat.

The novelty of Luke's discourse is that God's intervention is effective and decisive. Ananias and Sapphira's story does not introduce a protracted period of recalcitrance among God's people, as in the wilderness. Moreover, this couple's punishment intensifies Achan's fate. This couple commits an offense that resembles Achan's. Yet God dispatches the couple rather than leaving their fate to the community. God now takes it upon Godself to remove every

⁷²⁷ For "signs and wonders" in Acts and the expectation of further such miracles following the apostles' prayer, see Park, "Judge of the Living and the Dead," 205–22. However, see n. 729 below about Park's interpretation.

⁷²⁸ There is no reason to dissociate Ananias and Sapphira from the church. Bruce rightly cautions that it is impossible to determine whether Luke thinks of these two as genuine believers. However, he also observes that the church's response of "fear" after Sapphira's death points in this direction (*Book of Acts*, 107). I would supplement Bruce's observation with additional details that Luke presupposes: Ananias and Sapphira are welcome among God's people and voluntarily associate with this group.

obstacle to the signs and wonders that advance the prophetic storyline. Accordingly, “signs” and “wonders” return immediately after Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths (see Acts 5:12).⁷²⁹

The story of Ananias and Sapphira concerns the church’s integrity amid growth. The community multiplies rapidly in Acts 2–4 due to the coordination of divine acts and bold apostolic speech. The Sanhedrin opposes the church’s growth by challenging the latter part of this combination—the apostles’ speech—but to no avail. The apostles pray for continued boldness in the context of miracles, and God grants their request. Now, Ananias and Sapphira threaten the other ingredient of the church’s growth—divine acts, which Luke dubs “signs and wonders.” Ananias and Sapphira make a travesty of the community’s practice of redistributing wealth, provoking God despite the recent proliferation of miracles. Considering Israel’s wilderness experience, this offense raises the prospect that signs and wonders will disappear. Nevertheless, God staves off this possibility by dispatching Ananias and Sapphira directly, which intensifies the divine response compared to a similarly precarious moment under Joshua. Signs and wonders resume after the expiration of the offending couple. God swiftly and decisively resolves offenses among God’s people in this stage of the prophetic storyline.

4.4.4. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

One of Luke’s interests in the opening chapters of Acts is to exhibit God’s concern for the church. Luke shows God growing, maturing, and protecting this group. These divine actions indicate the community’s significance. God is devoting the same energy to the church that has

⁷²⁹ Cf. Park, “Judge of the Living and the Dead,” 205–37, which seems to portray Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths as instances of divine “signs and wonders.”

henceforth been the prerogative of God's relationship with Israel at large. The community of believers is now the center of God's attention.

Ananias and Sapphira's story communicates the same message. This couple makes a travesty of their fellow believers' practice of redistributing wealth, a practice that expresses the community's shared "heart and soul." The deity strikes down this pair to protect the church. God is preserving the believers' integrity much as God has done with Israel in times past. Indeed, God's actions in this story are intensified compared to a parallel episode. Achan's story in Josh 7 features a similar offense but concludes with a more mundane outcome. The miracle in Acts 5 expresses the deity's increased investment in the church.

Characterization. Peter's dealings with Ananias and Sapphira show that he is a prophet. The apostle exhibits prophetic insight into the inner workings of Ananias's heart (Acts 5:3).⁷³⁰ He engages in prophetic speech when he indicts the offending couple (5:3, 4c, 9). Finally, God supplements Peter's words with a display of divine power. Peter's relationship with Ananias and Sapphira is thoroughly prophetic.

Identifying Peter's relationship to the punitive miracles in Acts 5 is more challenging. Punitive miracles generally relate to prophetic individuals in one of four ways: such miracles may protect a prophet, enhance a prophet's task, afflict a prophet, or be announced by a prophet. The first, third, and fourth categories do not fit both miracles in Acts 5.⁷³¹ This leaves the second category. Notwithstanding the possibility that the existing categories do not apply, there is reason to think that the miracles in this episode promote Peter's prophetic task.

⁷³⁰ See Jürgen Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 17th ed., NTD 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 199 for the prophet's role in disclosing the contents of one's heart.

⁷³¹ See Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 167: Peter obliquely announces Sapphira's fate (Acts 5:9), but no such declaration precedes Ananias's death.

Peter has a prophetic task broader than the other apostles.⁷³² As a member of the Twelve, Peter shares the common task of witnessing to the risen Jesus (Acts 1:8). He also has a special task of “strengthen[ing] his brothers” (Luke 22:32). In the context of Peter’s post-Easter career, he does so by leading the church.⁷³³ Peter strengthened the believers in Acts 1 by guiding them through the crisis created by Judas’s defection. The apostle now strengthens the church by preserving its integrity. From this vantage, the miracles in Acts 5 empower Peter’s special task. These miracles place the divine imprimatur on Peter’s leadership of the early community.

The development of prophetic topoi. The punitive miracles in Acts 5 develop the topoi of divine action through a select individual and the hardness of people’s hearts. Since I explored how Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths relate to Peter’s prophetic task above, only the latter topos requires attention here. The miracles in Acts 5 are occasioned by the condition of Ananias and Sapphira’s hearts. This situation is explicit in Ananias’s case. Whereas all the early believers share a common “heart and soul” (Acts 4:32), Satan and Ananias have cooperated in the realm of the latter’s heart to make a mockery of the community’s redistribution of wealth (5:3, 4c). Ananias is secretly at odds with the work of God’s Spirit among the believers, and a miraculous judgment is necessary to heal this rift in the community. The condition of Sapphira’s heart is less evident than Ananias’s. Luke does not say that Sapphira set her heart against the community. However, that she has done so is implied by Peter’s claim that she and her husband tried to test the Holy Spirit (5:9). Like Ananias, Sapphira has conspired in her heart with Satan against the community. Her death heals this breach.

⁷³² For Peter’s prophetic task, see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 240, concerning Matt 16.

⁷³³ Brown, Donfried, and Reumann, *Peter in the New Testament*, 122–24.

Like the Israelites in the wilderness, Ananias and Sapphira exhibit a hardness of heart in the context of God's work among the community and on its behalf. The swift removal of this couple from the community demonstrates God's concern for the church's integrity. God will not allow the church to repeat Israel's repetitive cycles of disobedience, punishment, repentance, and restoration. Ananias and Sapphira's deaths communicate that "hardness of heart" is not an enduring feature of God's people in this stage of the prophetic storyline.

The thematic development of God's kingdom. I argued previously that Judas's death reflects the development of God's kingdom. This event shows that God's kingdom is growing at the expense of Satan's dominion. Ananias and Sapphira's story challenges this assessment. Luke profiles the husband and wife as satanic agents, meaning their offense is a satanic effort to establish a "beachhead" within the church.⁷³⁴ The enemy is looking to "hold onto what authority he has,"⁷³⁵ in this case by reclaiming lost territory.

Notwithstanding Satan's activities, the ineffectiveness of his efforts is evident. No sooner does Ananias lay his gift at the apostles' feet than he falls dead there. Sapphira expires at the same spot when she confirms her husband's deception. Satan influences individual church members, but his efforts are fruitless. It is perhaps due to the divine resolve in this episode that Satan never again threatens the church from within. The adversary will reappear in Luke's narrative, but he does not resort to the tactics in Acts 5. God's kingdom has become internally resilient against Satan's attacks.

⁷³⁴ Green, *Theology of Luke*, 66, concerning Judas in Luke 22:3; also Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 57, 103, on Acts 5 as a satanic offensive within the church.

⁷³⁵ Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 57.

4.5. The Blinding of Saul (Acts 9:1–25)

4.5.1. Introduction

The church's story after Ananias and Sapphira initially follows the same course as before this couple's appearance. The apostles perform signs and wonders (Acts 5:12, 15–16), the believing community expands (5:14), and the Sanhedrin compels the Twelve to appear before it (5:17ff.). The Sanhedrin is more hostile toward the Twelve than they were toward Peter and John. Whereas the members of this body threatened Peter and John, they now want to kill the Twelve and only settle for torture after Gamaliel calms them down (5:33–40). Nevertheless, the Sanhedrin's efforts are fruitless, as before. The Twelve no sooner leave the Sanhedrin than they resume their testimony about Jesus (5:42). The Sanhedrin cannot hinder the church's progress.

This situation changes with Stephen's ministry. Stephen, one of the Seven whom the apostles appoint to tend to widows' needs (Acts 6:1–7), rises to prominence by performing signs and wonders (6:8). These deeds bring him into conflict with some Diaspora Jews, and he is eventually brought before the Sanhedrin (6:9–12). The cycle of miracles, public testimony, and official antagonism is repeating itself. However, it soon becomes apparent that this cycle will break new ground. According to some "false witnesses," Stephen "does not stop speaking words against the holy place and the law," as evidenced by his statements that Jesus will destroy the temple and change the Mosaic customs (6:13–14). These charges are more extensive than those against the Twelve.⁷³⁶ The Sanhedrin allows Stephen to defend himself, at which point he gives a

⁷³⁶ The Twelve were accused of teaching in Jesus's name and blaming the religious leaders for his death (Acts 5:28).

speech that culminates in a searing indictment. Stephen alleges that his listeners “always resist the Holy Spirit,” are descended from those who persecuted and killed the prophets, have betrayed and murdered Jesus, and are lawless (7:51–53). These charges infuriate the audience. However, it is not until Stephen claims to see Jesus standing next to God (7:56) that his fate is sealed.⁷³⁷ The members of the Sanhedrin,⁷³⁸ having heard apparent blasphemy,⁷³⁹ expel Stephen from Jerusalem and stone him to death (7:58–60). Stephen pushes the leaders to a new degree of violence.

The religious leaders adopt a new stance toward the church after Stephen’s death. Following this event, a “great persecution” unfolds (Acts 8:1). All the believers, apart from the Twelve, must flee from Jerusalem for safety. Although Luke does not explicitly attribute this persecution to the leaders, his discourse reveals that it takes place under their auspices (see esp. 26:10).⁷⁴⁰ Saul’s story comes into focus in this context. Saul is passive in Stephen’s death (7:58; 8:1a), yet he rapidly emerges as the main antagonist of the disciples in the persecution that follows (8:3).⁷⁴¹ Since Saul wields authority from the high priests in this role (see 9:2, 14), he is

⁷³⁷ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 295. Haenchen notes that the Sanhedrin members, though upset by Stephen’s indictment, do not harm him in Acts 7:54. These leaders act after hearing about Stephen’s vision.

⁷³⁸ The subject of the verbs in Acts 7:54, 57–58b is not stated. It is reasonable to identify the Sanhedrin members as the agents who perform these actions since Stephen has just spoken to them (see Acts 6:12, 15). For the same position, see Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 292; Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*, 51 n. 3; Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 253. The Sanhedrin’s response to the Twelve supports this view. The Sanhedrin members were furious after Peter’s second sermon (Οἱ δὲ ἀκούσαντες διεπρίοντο; 5:33), and they now respond similarly to Stephen (Ἀκούοντες δὲ ταῦτα διεπρίοντο ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν; 7:54). It is immaterial to my argument whether Stephen is lynched (see Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 149; cf. 148; Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 252; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 275), or officially executed (see Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 157–59). The Sanhedrin now uses lethal violence against the disciples, whether officially sanctioned or not.

⁷³⁹ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 292.

⁷⁴⁰ Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 162, 434.

⁷⁴¹ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 294.

essentially implementing their new policy toward the church.⁷⁴² What happens to Saul in Acts 9 represents God's response to the religious leaders' heightened antagonism.

4.5.2. Saul's Blinding

Saul enters the church's story during Stephen's stoning. While narrating Stephen's death, Luke introduces Saul as the person responsible for watching the cloaks of certain "witnesses" (Acts 7:58; see 22:20). These are the "false witnesses" who accused Stephen before the Sanhedrin (6:13–14),⁷⁴³ and they are now fulfilling their obligation to initiate Stephen's execution (see Deut 13:9–10; 17:7).⁷⁴⁴ By guarding these people's cloaks, Saul shows support for Stephen's death. Luke describes Saul's attitude to emphasize this point. After Stephen has died, Luke reports that Saul "was approving of [Stephen's] killing" (Acts 8:1). Saul ardently supports the Sanhedrin's heightened aggression toward the disciples.

This characterization develops in the furor following Stephen's death. As a "great persecution" unfolds (Acts 8:1), Saul becomes the face of this campaign.⁷⁴⁵ Luke shows Saul searching "house to house" in Jerusalem for disciples (8:3).⁷⁴⁶ When Saul locates believers, he takes them to prison (παρεδίδου εἰς φυλακὴν), where they presumably wait to stand trial before

⁷⁴² Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 162, 434; Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody*, vol. 3 of *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 100–102.

⁷⁴³ Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 140.

⁷⁴⁴ Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 158.

⁷⁴⁵ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 297–98. Haenchen quips about the journey to Damascus: "Paul is not the commander of a striking-force, an *Einsatz-Kommando*: he *is* the persecution *in person*" (emphasis original). Although exaggerated, Haenchen's remark rightly emphasizes that Saul is the face of the persecution campaign.

⁷⁴⁶ My translation of κατὰ τοὺς οἴκους as "house to house" follows BDAG, s.v. "κατά."

the Sanhedrin (see 26:10; similarly 9:21).⁷⁴⁷ These actions fulfill a prediction in the Third Gospel. Jesus told his disciples their opponents would “cast their hands on you, persecute [you], and hand you over to the synagogues and prisons (παραδιδόντες εἰς τὰς συναγωγὰς καὶ φυλακάς)” (Luke 21:12). Saul is the first character to persecute the community in this manner (cf. Acts 4:3; 5:17–18). He has swiftly emerged as a severe threat to the church.

After a brief account of Philip’s activities (Acts 8:4–40),⁷⁴⁸ Luke returns to Saul and describes this figure’s movement beyond Jerusalem. Saul, persisting in his “murderous threats” against the believers,⁷⁴⁹ visits the high priest and obtains letters granting him authority to extend his persecution to Damascus (9:1–2a). He intends to search the synagogues there for believers and bring them back to the high priests in Jerusalem (9:2b; see 9:21). The persecution in Jerusalem has caused believers to flee and proclaim the gospel elsewhere (see 8:4), so Saul must carry this persecution to them.⁷⁵⁰

What happens next alters the purpose of Saul’s trip. Luke shows Saul traveling from Jerusalem to Damascus (Acts 9:3a). As Saul approaches his destination, something obscures his view of the city. A brilliant light “encompasses” Saul,⁷⁵¹ which halts his journey by bringing him

⁷⁴⁷ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 298.

⁷⁴⁸ Marguerat emphasizes the continuity of the episodes in Acts 8–10: “Acts 9 comes at the climax of a series of conversions (Simon, then the Ethiopian eunuch, then Saul) which show how God has widened the circle of the elect; the decisive step will be made in the encounter of Peter and Cornelius ... The common theme is God’s surprising initiative in the choice of converts” (*The First Christian Historian*, 189–90). I omit a discussion of Philip’s activities above because these episodes are not immediately relevant to Saul’s story.

⁷⁴⁹ My translation of ἀπειλῆς καὶ φόβου as “murderous threats” follows Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 422, who reasonably interprets these terms as a hendiadys.

⁷⁵⁰ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light: Aspects of Conversion in the New Testament*, OBT (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 57.

⁷⁵¹ BDAG, s.v. “περιαστράπτω”: “to shine brightly on an area that is all around a pers[on].”

to the ground (9:3b–4a). Saul’s experience now shifts from visual to auditory.⁷⁵² A voice calls Saul’s name and asks, “Why are you persecuting me?” (9:4b). Saul does not answer this question but inquires into the speaker’s identity (9:5a). The voice gives a stunning reply: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (9:5b). Jesus has not participated in Luke’s narrative since the ascension (1:9–10; cf. 7:55). Saul’s threat is so acute that Jesus has returned to confront him. How the Lord will intervene is not immediately apparent. Jesus simply ends this dialogue with concise commands: “Stand up, enter the city, and you will be told what you must do” (9:6).⁷⁵³ Saul must proceed to Damascus. However, rather than arresting the disciples in this city, Saul must wait for instructions from the one whose movement he sought to suppress.

Luke supplements Jesus’s appearance by reporting its effects. He first describes the people accompanying Saul on this trip (Acts 9:7). These travelers are standing around Saul, who is still on the ground. They heard the voice speaking to Saul but did not see the person to whom it belonged.⁷⁵⁴ The perception of a disembodied voice leaves these companions perplexed. Luke next focuses on Saul. Saul stands up and cannot see anyone (9:8a).⁷⁵⁵ The encounter with Jesus

⁷⁵² Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 170; Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1:304–5. These scholars observe that the opening of Saul’s eyes (Acts 9:8) entails that he closed them upon seeing the light (9:3). Saul’s experience in Acts 9:4–6 is entirely auditory.

⁷⁵³ The language of Acts 9:6 (ἀνάστηθι καὶ εἰσελθε εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ λαληθήσεται σοι ὃ τί σε δεῖ ποιεῖν) resembles Ezek 3:22 (Ἀνάστηθι καὶ ἔξελθε εἰς τὸ πεδῖον, καὶ ἐκεῖ λαληθήσεται πρὸς σέ). For the relationship between the accounts of Saul’s calling in Acts and the book of Ezekiel, see Dale C. Allison Jr., “Acts 9:1–9, 22:6–11, 26:12–18: Paul and Ezekiel,” *JBL* 135 (2016): 807–26. Allison hypothesizes that the three versions of Saul’s calling in Acts were based on a pre-Lukan account that contained a thick density of allusions to Ezekiel. He writes: “In moving its pieces around, he [Luke] inadvertently scattered the links to Ezekiel, thereby drastically diminishing the odds that readers would espy the allusive anthologizing” (“Paul and Ezekiel,” 823). This finding entails that the allusion to Ezek 3:22 in the present passage, though real, is not very productive. In my judgment, Allison’s description of the minimalist explanation of the Paul-Ezekiel parallels—i.e., “Paul’s call was [simply] like that of a biblical prophet” (“Paul and Ezekiel,” 820)—fittingly describes Acts 9.

⁷⁵⁴ It is unclear whether the travelers see the light; Luke writes that they see “no one” (μηδένα; Acts 9:7).

⁷⁵⁵ My summary of Acts 9:8a follows the ECM (οὐδὲνα εβλεπεν) rather than NA28 (οὐδὲν ἑβλεπεν).

has left him blind, forcing him to rely on his friends for guidance (9:8b). This result is ironic: Saul intended to “lead” (ἄγω) the disciples back to Jerusalem (9:2), but he now needs his fellow travelers to “lead him by the hand” (χειραγωγέω) to Damascus. Jesus has brought Saul to the state that Saul hoped to inflict on others.⁷⁵⁶ Saul’s subsequent behavior illuminates his condition. Once in Damascus, Saul neither sees, eats, nor drinks for three days (9:9). The persecutor has been humbled to the point that he no longer attends to his basic needs.⁷⁵⁷ Saul arrives at his destination in a much different condition than anticipated.

What happens to Saul en route to Damascus bears the hallmarks of a punitive miracle.⁷⁵⁸ Saul violated God’s will by persecuting the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:3). He intends to treat the disciples in Damascus similarly (9:1–2). However, Saul’s blinding prevents him from fulfilling this plan. The evident relationship between Saul’s offense and his vision loss makes it reasonable to interpret the latter event as a miraculous judgment. Saul’s blinding is divine retribution for his conduct in Jerusalem and God’s way of protecting the disciples in Damascus.

⁷⁵⁶ For how Jesus’s appearance “has the effect of reducing Saul to nothingness,” see Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 191–92.

⁷⁵⁷ Chad Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts: The Use of Physical Features of Characterization*, BibInt 94 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 190; similarly, Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 60; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 331. Several scholars have interpreted Saul’s abstinence from food and water as penitential acts (see Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 323; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 426; Holladay, *Acts*, 195). Yet there are reasons to question this assessment. Gaventa cites Luke’s silence about the penitential nature of Saul’s acts and the variegated reasons for fasting in Luke’s corpus and elsewhere (Exod 34:28; Tob 10:7; Luke 4:2; Acts 23:12) as evidence that Acts 9:9 simply denotes “the intensity and importance of what has occurred” (*From Darkness to Light*, 60). Hartsock understands Saul’s abstinence from food as “contributing to the *topos* of blind Saul as helpless, pitiable, and pathetic,” in accordance with how ancient audiences understood the *topos* of blindness (*Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts*, 188, 190, 196). Marguerat points to the sequence of negative clauses in 9:9 (μὴ βλέπων καὶ οὐκ ἔφαγεν οὐδὲ ἔπιεν) as evidence that Luke depicts “un temps intermédiaire vécu sous le signe du manque” rather than “un processus actif de pénitence” (*Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 331). There are ample reasons to claim that Saul’s abstinence from food reflects his humbling rather than repentance.

⁷⁵⁸ For scholars who identify Saul’s blinding as a punitive miracle, see Otto Bauernfeind, *Kommentar und Studien zur Apostelgeschichte*, ed. Volker Metelmann, WUNT 1/22 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 133–34; Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts*, 188, 188 n. 53; Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 160.

Many scholars have been unwilling to describe Saul's blinding in these terms. This reluctance stems from two oft-repeated but seldom-defended arguments. First, Saul's blindness is said to be a consequence of viewing the heavenly light rather than divine retribution.⁷⁵⁹ Second, Saul's blindness is understood as a sign of his helplessness, which seemingly precludes interpreting this event as a punitive miracle.⁷⁶⁰ These arguments should not be dismissed since they can appeal to some ostensible textual support. Nevertheless, the relevant data do not undermine my identification of Saul's blinding as a punitive miracle.

The first argument against taking Saul's blinding as a punitive miracle generally draws on Saul's retelling of this event in Acts 22. After telling the crowd in Jerusalem about his encounter with Jesus (Acts 22:6–10), Saul mentions he was left blind “from the glory of that light” that appeared to him (22:11). Scholars frequently cite this text to substantiate their claim that Saul's blinding in Acts 9 is not punitive.⁷⁶¹ The presupposition undergirding this position is that an affliction resulting from an identifiable cause is not divine punishment.

There are several problems with this argument. First, it is problematic to interpret Saul's blinding in Acts 9 through the lens of Acts 22. Marguerat plausibly argues that the parallel accounts of Saul's story in Acts 9, 22, and 26 have different degrees of authority in Luke's narrative. Since the “omniscient narrator” tells Saul's story in Acts 9, this version has an

⁷⁵⁹ See Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 323; Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1:304–5; Alfons Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Leipzig: St. Benno, 1989), 133; Josef Zmijewski, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 1994), 380–81; Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 281, 281 n. 20; Holladay, *Acts*, 195.

⁷⁶⁰ See Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 150; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 72; Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:452; Zmijewski, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 380–81; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 426.

⁷⁶¹ For example, see Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 323; Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 133; Zmijewski, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 380–81.

“objective status.” Paul recounts his experience as a character in Luke’s narrative in Acts 22 and 26, giving these versions relatively less authority.⁷⁶² Marguerat concludes:

The three accounts do not work together according to the principle of a ‘coinciding of narrative points of view’, but, on the contrary, according to the principle of differentiation of points of view. The narrative device distinguishes the objective and earlier point of view of the omniscient narrator (Acts 9) from the subjective and later point of view of the speaker, Paul, in Acts 22 and 26.⁷⁶³

An interpretation of Acts 9 should generally restrict itself to the data in this chapter. Acts 9 does not promote the view that Saul’s blindness simply results from viewing an intense light. Wilson keenly observes that Saul comes away from his encounter with Jesus with “scales” in his eyes (Acts 9:18), which do not naturally form when a person looks at a bright light for too long.⁷⁶⁴ Saul’s blindness coincides with the heavenly light, but this condition results from the supernatural occlusion of his eyes.

Second, Saul’s blindness in Acts 22 is equally miraculous as in Acts 9. If a reader insists on blending these accounts, there are still grounds for interpreting the later version of Saul’s blinding as a miracle. Saul (now known as Paul) tells the Jerusalem audience that the people traveling with him to Damascus “beheld the light but did not hear the voice of the person speaking to me” (Acts 22:9; cf. 9:7). Since these fellow travelers observe the same sight as Saul yet experience no ill effects (see 22:11), his vision loss cannot be explained simply in terms of the light. The group’s shared experience eliminates the light as a sufficient explanation of Saul’s

⁷⁶² Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 186–87.

⁷⁶³ Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 186–87, quoting Ronald D. Witherup, “Functional Redundancy in the Acts of the Apostles: A Case Study,” *JSNT* 48 (1992): 74.

⁷⁶⁴ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 160; similarly, Dennis Hamm, “Paul’s Blindness and Its Healing: Clues to Symbolic Intent (Acts 9; 22 and 26),” *Bib* 71 (1990): 65.

condition. The light may factor into Saul's blindness in this version. However, if it does, God must have enhanced the light's potency to produce the desired affliction in Saul alone.

Third, if we grant for argument's sake that Saul's vision loss in Acts 9 results from viewing the heavenly light, it does not follow that this outcome is non-punitive. Wilson argues that the light "is not a 'natural' phenomenon, but points to the divine's very presence and, in this case, a presence that causes Saul to lose control of his body."⁷⁶⁵ She proceeds to describe Saul's blindness as a "divinely instigated punishment" and as something "foisted on him from an outside divine source,"⁷⁶⁶ meaning God exposes Saul to this light to punish him. We cannot settle whether Saul has been punished by determining if his blindness has an external cause. Even if such a cause exists, God may have orchestrated this outcome to punish Saul.

The second argument against taking Saul's blinding as a punitive miracle pits his helplessness against a punitive interpretation of this event. Jürgen Roloff's articulation of this view is representative: "Die Blindheit ist nicht als Strafe dargestellt, sondern eben als Ausdruck solcher Hilflosigkeit."⁷⁶⁷ For Roloff, identifying Saul's blindness as a sign of his helplessness excludes the possibility that God punished him. It is difficult to ascertain the reasoning behind this position since its proponents often state it without justification. At any rate, this proposal constructs a dichotomy between Saul's helplessness and divine retribution.

Saul's blindness undeniably reflects his helplessness. Jesus's appearance has, in Marguerat's words, "the effect of reducing Saul to nothingness."⁷⁶⁸ Yet this outcome is

⁷⁶⁵ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 159.

⁷⁶⁶ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 160.

⁷⁶⁷ Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 150.

⁷⁶⁸ Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 191.

consonant with a punitive miracle. The blinding of the men of Sodom leaves them unable to find Lot's door (Gen 19:11). Likewise, the blinding of the Aramean troops searching for Elisha hinders their ability to distinguish friend from foe (2 Kgs 6:19). The purpose of punitive blinding is to restrict an opponent's ability to carry out their ill-intentioned plans. Roloff and others have created a false dilemma by pitting Saul's helplessness against his divine punishment. These interpretations are complementary aspects of Saul's experience.

The miraculous blinding in Acts 9 marks a crossroads in Saul's story. Up to this point, Saul has advanced the interests of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Stephen's "blasphemy" gave the leaders a warrant for adopting suppressive measures against the church. Saul emerged after Stephen's stoning as the face of these leaders' campaign against the believers. He proposed to continue this campaign in Damascus and set out to do so with the high priest's authority. However, Saul's encounter with Jesus throws this plan into doubt. Jesus reveals that he has been the object of Saul's persecution, and the Lord commands this antagonist to proceed to the city for further instructions. This experience disarms Saul, leaving him blind and incapable of finding his way to Damascus, much less to the synagogues of this city and the believers therein. Moreover, this encounter confronts Saul with a choice: whether to continue advancing the religious leaders' interests or side with the one whose disciples he has been pursuing. At the end of the first movement in Saul's story, the answer to this question is unsettled.

4.5.3. Saul's Healing

The second part of Saul's story opens with another encounter with Jesus. Luke transports readers from where Saul is staying to a different part of Damascus, where we meet Ananias (Acts 9:10). Luke introduces Ananias as a "disciple," the type of person Saul has been threatening (see 9:1).

Ananias has just entered a trance-like state when he hears a voice calling his name. He recognizes the voice as Jesus's and expresses his readiness to listen.⁷⁶⁹ Jesus instructs Ananias to visit the house where Saul is staying (9:11). Saul is expecting Ananias, having learned in a vision that this disciple will heal him (9:12).⁷⁷⁰ Jesus indicates Saul's paradoxical condition: although Saul is blind, he has "seen [εἶδεν] ... Ananias coming and placing [his] hands" on him. The persecutor's vision loss has created a context for him to experience a form of "spiritual sight."⁷⁷¹ Saul's blindness has already occasioned a change in his life.

Ananias is openly skeptical about Saul.⁷⁷² First, Ananias tells Jesus he has received reports of what Saul did to "your holy people" in Jerusalem (Acts 9:13). Second, Ananias says that Saul has come to Damascus to arrest "everyone who calls on your name" in this city (9:14). These objections reiterate Luke's narration (see 8:3; 9:1–2), and they are presumably well-intentioned. However, such statements are absurd in light of Jesus's appearance. Ananias

⁷⁶⁹ In Acts 9:17, Ananias clarifies that the "Lord" who spoke to him is Jesus. For the use of ἰδοὺ ἐγώ to indicate one's willingness to receive a divine message, see Gen 22:1, 11.

⁷⁷⁰ The ECM of Acts omits ἐν ὁράματι (Acts 9:12), producing the reading καὶ εἶδεν ἀνδρα ἀνανιαν ὀνοματι. Unlike the text of NA28, this reading does not state that Saul sees a vision. Nevertheless, it is evident that Saul has a visionary experience, even on the ECM reading. Saul is blind when Jesus addresses Ananias. Anything that Saul "sees" at this time, particularly while praying (9:11; see 10:9, 11; Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 324 n. 1), must be a vision.

⁷⁷¹ For Saul's physical blindness as a sign of his "spiritual blindness" and need for "spiritual sight," see Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts*, 184–97, esp. 188–89. Whereas Hartsock holds that Saul's spiritual sight is not fully restored until his physical healing, I take Jesus's reference to Saul's vision (Acts 9:12) as a sign that he indeed has such sight.

⁷⁷² Marguerat cites the objections of Ananias here and those of the disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26–27) as evidence of a Lukan emphasis on "God's initiative in history and the resistance of the community of disciples." He claims this emphasis has its sequel in the disciples' reluctance to include Gentiles in the church in Acts 10–11 (*The First Christian Historian*, 195). These observations are astute. My only quarrel with this reasoning is that it overlooks the resemblance between Ananias (9:13–14) and the Damascene Jews (9:21). The latter individuals have the same response to Saul's about-face as Ananias but do not belong to the church (see esp. 9:23). It is best to describe Ananias's objections in terms of people's general resistance to the divine initiative, of which the believers' attitude is a subset.

presumes to inform the risen Lord of Saul's threat as though Jesus were unaware of what Saul has done. This disciple has not come to terms with who is speaking to him.

Ananias's objections are illuminating in one respect. He applies novel titles to the believers that are grounded in priestly discourse.⁷⁷³ First, Ananias refers to the disciples in Jerusalem as "holy people" (οἱ ἅγιοι; Acts 9:13; see 9:32, 41; 26:10). This designation is rooted in the priestly distinction between the holy and the common (see Lev 10:10).⁷⁷⁴ God and all things closely associated with the deity are "holy" (ἅγιος), unlike everything else, which is "common" (βέβηλος).⁷⁷⁵ Accordingly, the Deuteronomist speaks of Israel as a "holy people" in the context of the Lord's selection of Israel out of the nations (Deut 7:6; 14:2). The people are "holy" because God has chosen them a special divine possession.⁷⁷⁶ By calling the believers "holy," Ananias communicates that they, like Israel, are devoted to God and distinct from all else.⁷⁷⁷

Second, Ananias describes the disciples in Damascus as "those who call on the name [of Jesus]" (οἱ ἐπικαλοῦμενοι τὸ ὄνομά σου; Acts 9:14; see also 9:21). First and foremost, this title

⁷⁷³ Before this point, Jesus's followers have been called "brothers" (Acts 1:15; 6:3), "Galileans" (2:7), "believers" (2:44; 4:32), the "church" (5:11; 8:1, 3), "disciples" (6:1, 2, 7; 9:1, 10), and people "of the Way" (9:2). The titles used by Ananias are the first designations in Acts that are grounded in priestly discourse.

⁷⁷⁴ C. Spicq, *Vie chrétienne et pérégrination selon le Nouveau Testament*, LD 71 (Paris: Cerf, 1972), 20–21; see Milgrom, "The Dynamics of Purity" for the relationship between the holy and the common.

⁷⁷⁵ Spicq, *Vie chrétienne et pérégrination*, 20–21.

⁷⁷⁶ Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 100, 176.

⁷⁷⁷ Spicq, *Vie chrétienne et pérégrination*, 27; Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:455; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 320. For the "eschatological" (i.e., apocalyptic) resonance of οἱ ἅγιοι in Acts 9:14, see Henry J. Cadbury, "Names for Christians and Christianity in Acts," *BegC* 5:381; Paolo Jovino, "L'Eglise communauté des saints dans les «Actes des Apôtres» et dans les «Epîtres aux Thessaloniciens»," *RivB* 16 (1968): 501; Steve Walton, "Calling the Church Names: Learning about Christian Identity from Acts," *PRSt* 41 (2014): 239–40. I do not describe this term as "apocalyptic" because the apocalyptic rhetorolect is not prominent in Acts 9.

characterizes the believers in terms of Peter's Pentecost sermon. In response to his audience's bewilderment at the outpouring of the Spirit, the apostle quoted a text from Joel that culminates in the declaration, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (πᾶς ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται; Acts 2:21 // Joel 3:5 LXX). Peter proceeded to associate the "Lord" in this text with Jesus (see Acts 2:36), effectively showing that Jesus is the κύριος whom people must invoke.⁷⁷⁸ By describing the disciples as "those who call on the name," Ananias portrays them as those who have heeded Peter's exhortation.

This title also resonates with priestly discourse in the Septuagint. Many LXX passages use ἐπικαλέω + τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου (or ἐπικαλέω + τινα) to describe the invocation of God in prayer (e.g., see 1 Sam 12:17–18; Ps 114:4).⁷⁷⁹ This act often occurs at cultic sites.⁷⁸⁰ Abraham "calls on the name of the Lord" at an altar he erects between Bethel and Ai (Gen 12:8; see also 13:4; 26:25).⁷⁸¹ Elijah invokes the Lord's name at the altar he reconstructs on Mt. Carmel while

⁷⁷⁸ Carl Judson Davis, *The Name and Way of the Lord: Old Testament Themes, New Testament Christology*, JSNTSup 129 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 122–28. The end of Stephen's story illustrates the point made above. While being stoned, Stephen "called [ἐπικαλούμενον] and said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'" (Acts 7:59). Stephen just witnessed the dual appearance of God's glory and Jesus (7:58). Critically, he prayed to the latter because he perceived Jesus as the "priestly intercessor" who would receive him into heaven (Robbins, "Priestly Discourse," 36).

⁷⁷⁹ Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "ἐπικαλέω," *TDNT* 3:499–500.

⁷⁸⁰ Roy R. Jeal has observed a correspondence between depicted locations (rhetography) and the "spaces and places indicated by the rhetorolects." Given this correspondence, the locations portrayed in a text may point to the rhetorolects at work ("Presuppositions and Prompts for Writing Rhetography" [paper presented at the Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity January Collegium, Virtual, 22 January 2022]; see generally Jeal, *Exploring Philemon: Freedom, Brotherhood, and Partnership in the New Society*, RRA 2 [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015], 1–54). Thus, the fact that invoking the Lord often occurs at cultic sites suggests that this act is priestly. For the role of priestly spaces in the priestly rhetorolect, see Robbins, "Priestly Discourse."

⁷⁸¹ Speaking of the cultic use of ἐπικαλέω, Spicq characterizes Abraham's acts of building an altar and invoking the Lord as a "célébration liturgique." This event purportedly included "adoration, prière et sacrifice" (*Vie chrétienne et pérégrination*, 46). Thus, Spicq understands the domain of ἐπικαλέω to include worship. For a similar perspective, see Wevers, *Greek Text of Genesis*, 168. It is immaterial to my argument whether Abraham's invocation includes an element of worship or consists of prayer alone. The salient point in Spicq and Wevers is the cultic setting of Abraham's invocation.

challenging Baal's prophets (1 Kgs 18:24, 31–32, 36–37). God describes the wilderness tabernacle as the site where the Israelites will invoke the deity (Exod 29:45).⁷⁸² Finally, the Deuteronomist (proleptically) and Solomon identify the temple in Jerusalem as where people will call on the Lord (Deut 12:5; 1 Kgs 8:52).⁷⁸³ The LXX depicts “calling on the name of the Lord” as a priestly act that often occurs in cultic settings. A LXX-competent audience would likely hear these resonances upon reading Ananias's description of the disciples as “those who call on the name [of Jesus].”

What is surprising about these priestly designations is the point at which they appear in Luke's story. Before Stephen's death, the believers are closely associated with the temple. The early disciples regularly visit the temple (Acts 2:46), evidently to pray there (see 3:1).⁷⁸⁴ Likewise, the Twelve make this cultic site the center of their prophetic ministry (5:12, 19–21, 42).⁷⁸⁵ However, this situation changes after Stephen's death. The persecution following this event forces most believers to flee Jerusalem (8:1). Their flight inevitably means abandoning their “priestly” activities at the temple.⁷⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Ananias now identifies these figures as “holy people” and “those who call on the name.” Their priestly relationship with God endures. I will explore the implications of this development for Saul in due course.

⁷⁸² Wevers, *Greek Text of Exodus*, 487. This text lacks τὸ ὄνομα as the object of ἐπικαλέω.

⁷⁸³ Concerning Deut 12:5, Wevers writes: “What LXX intends is the understanding that God's earthly presence signifies the reality of his invocation” (*Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, 209). It should also be noted that Solomon speaks of the people invoking the Lord (ἐπικαλέσονται σε; 1 Kgs 8:52), not the Lord's name.

⁷⁸⁴ C. K. Barrett, “Attitudes to the Temple in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel*, ed. William Horbury, JSNTSup 48 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 347–48.

⁷⁸⁵ For the location of Solomon's Portico inside the temple, see Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:191–92.

⁷⁸⁶ The believers' presence at the temple does not end after Stephen's death; see Acts 21:23–24, 26. However, Luke never foregrounds their association with the temple after Acts 7.

Jesus responds to Ananias's objections in Acts 9:15–16. The Lord does not deny what Ananias has said. Instead, he repeats his initial command (“go”; Acts 9:15) and elaborates Saul's prophetic task.⁷⁸⁷ According to Jesus, Saul is a “chosen vessel” who will “bear my name before nations and kings and the children of Israel.” Saul will essentially become an object that transports the Lord's name from place to place. In this capacity, he will resemble what he once opposed. Saul came to Damascus to arrest those associated with the “name” of Jesus (9:14). He must now take this “name” to various groups. Indeed, Jesus says that he will “show [Saul] how many things he must suffer on behalf of my name” (9:16). Whereas Saul once caused suffering on account of the “name” (see 9:21), it is now a “divine necessity” (δεῖ) for Saul to experience such suffering.⁷⁸⁸ Saul's task entails his complete reorientation toward Jesus's name.

The revelation of Saul's prophetic task spurs Ananias to action. Luke shows the disciple traveling to the part of Damascus Jesus mentioned (Acts 9:17). Ananias enters the house where Saul is staying and does what Saul foresaw. Ananias places his hands on Saul, calls this man “brother”—that is, a member of the believing community—and says that Jesus sent him to facilitate the restoration of Saul's sight and his filling with the Spirit. The first result ensues at once: scale-like objects fall from Saul's eyes, allowing him to see again (9:18). The second result, filling with the Spirit, is not immediately apparent. Rather than irrupting into pneumatic speech (see 2:4; 10:44–46), Saul consents to baptism and ends his fast (9:19a). This act fully

⁷⁸⁷ For Saul/Paul's prophetic task, see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 240 n. 26.

⁷⁸⁸ John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, SNTSMS 76 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 173–77, esp. p. 174.

incorporates Saul into the church, allowing him to associate with the disciples he recently sought to imprison (9:19b).⁷⁸⁹

The evidence of Saul's filling with the Spirit emerges after his baptism.⁷⁹⁰ For an extended period,⁷⁹¹ Saul visits the synagogues in Damascus. He preaches a provocative message: "[Jesus] is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20).⁷⁹² This preaching perplexes Saul's listeners (9:21a). Like Ananias, they are aware that Saul "destroyed those who call on [Jesus's] name in Jerusalem." They also know that Saul has come to Damascus for a similar purpose (9:21b // 9:13–14). However, rather than visiting the synagogues to arrest Jesus's followers, Saul promotes Jesus's cause there.⁷⁹³ The audience does not know what to make of this discrepancy. Nevertheless, Saul persists in his work, and the Spirit's operation becomes manifest.⁷⁹⁴ Saul is "made strong" (ἐνεδυναμοῦτο; 9:22)⁷⁹⁵—an evident sign of the Spirit's power (δύναμις) at work—and he "confound[s] the Jews living in Damascus, demonstrating that [Jesus] is the Christ."⁷⁹⁶ Barnabas will shortly attest to the Spirit's activity in Saul. In describing how Saul has

⁷⁸⁹ See Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 191, concerning Acts 9:1, 25.

⁷⁹⁰ Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 64, 94 n. 23.

⁷⁹¹ The shift to imperfect verbs in Acts 9:20–22 (ἐκήρυσσεν; ἐξίσταντο; ἔλεγον; ἐνεδυναμοῦτο; συνέχυνεν) communicates the extended duration of Saul's activity in Damascus.

⁷⁹² Scholars often observe that Acts 9:20 contains the only use of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ in the book. This title appears at various points in Luke's Gospel, most consequentially as the charge that seals Jesus's condemnation by the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:70; see also 1:35; 4:3, 9, 41; 8:28). Luke expresses the provocativeness of Saul's early career by having him proclaim one of the most highly charged christological titles in the Third Gospel.

⁷⁹³ Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 191.

⁷⁹⁴ See Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 64, 94 n. 23.

⁷⁹⁵ For the translation of ἐνεδυναμοῦτο, see Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:464. Barrett notes that the voice of this verb may be middle ("Saul grew stronger") or passive ("he was strengthened by God"). I find the latter option more plausible given Luke's frequent association of δύναμις and the Holy Spirit.

⁷⁹⁶ For the association of δύναμις and the Spirit's activity, see n. 691.

changed, Barnabas tells the apostles that Saul “spoke boldly [ἐπαρρησιάσατο] in Jesus’s name” (9:27). Saul does what the Twelve did when the Spirit filled them (ἐλάλουν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ παρρησίας; 4:31). His bold speech in Damascus exhibits his filling with the Spirit.

After staying in Damascus for “many days” (Acts 9:23), Saul provokes a backlash. The Damascene Jews, whom Saul has been “confounding” (see 9:22), decide he must die. They start watching the city gates to seize him (9:24b). This plot comes to Saul’s attention, and his fellow believers secret him away from the city (9:25). These events bring the reversal in Saul’s circumstances to the fore. When Saul set out for Damascus, he was “breathing out murderous threats” against the disciples and planning their arrest (9:1–2). He is now the object of a plot, which he only escapes with the help of “his [own] disciples” (οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ; 9:25).⁷⁹⁷ Saul’s encounter with Jesus has inverted his relationships with those inside and outside the church.

Saul travels to Jerusalem after escaping the plot against his life. What transpires here broadly repeats what happened in Damascus. Luke shows Saul entering the city and trying to associate with the disciples (Acts 9:26a). Like Ananias, they mistrust Saul, and their fears must be calmed before Saul can join them (9:26b–28 // 9:13–15).⁷⁹⁸ Now it is Barnabas who performs this task.⁷⁹⁹ Barnabas brings Saul to the apostles and relates his experience: Saul encountered Jesus en route to Damascus and spoke boldly on the Lord’s behalf (9:27). This testimony

⁷⁹⁷ Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 191. For the problems associated with οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, see Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 321–22. Metzger selects οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ as the best-attested reading of Acts 9:25. However, he conjectures that this verse initially read λαβόντες δὲ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτόν (“the disciples took him”), suggesting that a transcriptional error produced the shift from αὐτόν to αὐτοῦ. Although this explanation is plausible, I retain the NA28 reading to avoid conjectural emendations.

⁷⁹⁸ Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986–1990), 2:116–17, 123–24; Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 195.

⁷⁹⁹ Barnabas performs the same role vis-à-vis the Jerusalem disciples as Jesus concerning Ananias, serving as the Lord’s means of “convert[ing] his own Church with regard to Saul’s new identity” (Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 196; see also 195).

satisfies the Twelve, and Saul can now move among the community freely (9:28a // 9:19b).⁸⁰⁰ As in Damascus, Saul begins to “speak boldly in the name of the Lord,” and he comes into conflict with some Diaspora Jews (9:28b–29a // 9:22; see 6:9).⁸⁰¹ These people want to kill Saul, so he must flee for his life again when their plot comes to light (9:29b–30 // 9:23–25). Saul now heads to his hometown, Tarsus (see 22:3), where he will remain for the time being. Jerusalem is, as Bruce puts it, “too hot to hold Saul,” so he retreats to a less combustible environment.⁸⁰²

Luke concludes the present story with one of his characteristic summary statements.⁸⁰³ According to Luke, the church is “experiencing peace” and “growing” (Acts 9:31). Since Saul’s blindness and healing culminate in a statement of the church’s prosperity, it follows that these events have quelled the persecution that began after Stephen’s death.⁸⁰⁴ The believers will not be exempt from danger in the ensuing period. Nevertheless, the church will no longer be subject to wide-ranging suppressive measures. The Lord’s intervention has brought the church respite.

The salience of Acts 9 for the prophetic storyline can be uncovered by comparing Saul’s experience with some similarly situated predecessors. Wilson observes that what happens to Saul broadly repeats Zechariah’s story. Like the priest, Saul falls victim to a punitive miracle (Acts 9:8–9 // Luke 1:20–23). His ailment is reversed at the appropriate time (Acts 9:17–18 // Luke

⁸⁰⁰ The formula *εἰσπορεύομαι καὶ ἐκπορεύομαι* denotes freedom of movement; see Deut 31:2; 1 Kgs 15:17.

⁸⁰¹ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:470.

⁸⁰² Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 195.

⁸⁰³ Scholars handle the relationship between Acts 9:31 and the surrounding verses in various ways. I follow Marguerat in treating this verse as the conclusion of Saul’s story. Marguerat argues that Luke’s use of οὖν gives this verse an “effet conclusif” relative to 9:1–2 (Saul’s designs against the believers in Damascus) and 8:1–4 (the post-Stephen dispersal of the church) (*Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 344; see 317–18).

⁸⁰⁴ Adapting Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 298: “[Paul] is the persecution in person. It follows that his conversion brings immediate peace to the churches in Judaea, Galilee and Samaria (9.31)” (emphasis original).

1:63). Most critically, this experience moves Saul to a new appreciation of God.⁸⁰⁵ To state this transformation in terms appropriate to my study, Paul embraces a prophetic role oriented to God's renewed kingdom (Acts 9:20–22, 28–29 // Luke 1:67–79). The divine recognition sequence (offense → punishment → divine recognition) underlies Saul's story, like Zechariah's.

There are also prominent differences between Zechariah and Saul. Luke initially characterizes Zechariah as a "righteous" person who "walks blamelessly" in the Lord's requirements (Luke 1:6). In contrast, Saul is abusive and murderous (Acts 8:3; 9:1).⁸⁰⁶ Zechariah diligently performs his priestly duties for the people's benefit (Luke 1:5, 8–11, 23). Saul wields high priestly authority against God's people (Acts 9:14, 21). Finally, Zechariah doubts Gabriel's promise, which in no way hinders its fulfillment (Luke 1:20). Saul persecutes the church, which the risen Lord equates with persecuting Jesus himself (Acts 9:4–5). Zechariah and Saul have sharply different attitudes before their punishment. Zechariah is oblivious to what God is doing in this stage of the prophetic storyline. Saul actively resists the deity's work.

A closer analogy to Saul's experience is available further afield. Some scholars have argued that Acts 9 resembles the Heliodorus episode in 2 Macc 3.⁸⁰⁷ In this story, Seleucus IV tasks his courtier Heliodorus with retrieving funds from the temple in Jerusalem, which leads to the latter's encounter with the Jews' God. Heliodorus's story parallels Saul's at several points:

⁸⁰⁵ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 112, 153, 172, 189, 241–42, 246–47.

⁸⁰⁶ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 279: "Le verbe [λυμαίνω; Acts 8:3] ... contient l'idée de violence physique et morale."

⁸⁰⁷ For this comparison, see Hans Windisch, "Die Christusepiphany vor Damaskus (Act 9, 22 und 26) und ihre religionsgeschichtlichen Parallelen," *ZNW* 31 (1932): 1–9; Karl Löning, *Die Saulustradition in der Apostelgeschichte*, *NTAbh* 2/9 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1973), 64–70; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 323–24, 324 n. 16.

Table 7: Parallels between Acts 9 and 2 Macc 3⁸⁰⁸

	<u>Saul</u>	<u>Heliodorus</u>
“Priestly” invocation	Wants to arrest “those who call on [οἱ ἐπικαλοῦμενοι] the name” of Jesus (Acts 9:14)	Encounters people “calling on” (ἐπικαλέω) the Lord on behalf of the temple (2 Macc 3:22)
Harmful divine appearance	Confronted by the exalted Jesus, leaving him blind and unable to fulfill his plan (9:8–9)	Confronted by heavenly figures who assault him, leaving him moribund and unable to fulfill his plan (3:24–28)
Healing by the menaced	Healed through the imposition of Ananias’s hands (9:17–19)	Healed thanks to Onias’s sacrifice (3:31–33)
Adversary’s proclamation	Preaches that Jesus is the Son of God/Messiah (9:20, 22)	Proclaims God’s power (3:34, 36, 38–39)

The affinities between Saul and Heliodorus are extensive. Both figures try to perform impious acts in the context of the “priestly” invocation of God’s people. They are confronted by divine figures who strip them of their capacity to carry out their plans. They are healed thanks to a member of the group they menaced. Finally, they come to a new understanding of God, which they proclaim.⁸⁰⁹ Saul and Heliodorus’s stories feature remarkably similar expressions of the divine recognition sequence.

Granted these parallels, the differences between Acts 9 and 2 Macc 3 are even more salient. Saul’s story differs from Heliodorus’s on two critical issues:

⁸⁰⁸ The third parallel (“Healing by the menaced”) comes from Windisch, “Die Christusepiphanie vor Damaskus,” 5; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 324 n. 16. Windisch cites other parallels between Acts 9 and 2 Macc 3, including Heliodorus’s fall (2 Macc 3:27 // Acts 9:4), blindness (2 Macc 3:27 // Acts 9:8–9), and reliance on others (2 Macc 3:27–28 // Acts 9:8) (“Die Christusepiphanie vor Damaskus,” 4–5). The first and third points are evident yet incidental. The second point (Heliodorus’s blindness) is more consequential. However, it is questionable whether Heliodorus becomes blind. The epitomist describes “darkness being poured around” Heliodorus, which may simply indicate the courtier’s near-death condition (see 2 Macc 3:29, 31). Heliodorus and Saul fall victim to punitive miracles, yet their afflictions seem distinct.

⁸⁰⁹ In Saul’s case, this new understanding concerns how God relates to Jesus.

Table 8: Differences between Acts 9 and 2 Macc 3⁸¹⁰

	<u>Saul</u>	<u>Heliodorus</u>
Role of the high priest(s)	Unnamed high priest empowers Saul to arrest “those who call on” Jesus’s name (Acts 9:2, 14)	Onias tries to stop Heliodorus (2 Macc 3:10–12), “calls on” God for healing (3:31–32)
What is at stake	Safety of “priestly” believers (9:14, 21) who have been distanced from the temple (8:1)	The temple’s sacredness (primary threat; 3:12, 18); the “temple community” (secondary threat; 3:14–21)

The high priest in the Heliodorus episode tries to defend the temple and sacrifices on the antagonist’s behalf to prevent God’s people from being suspected of wrongdoing (2 Macc 3:32). In contrast, the high priest in Saul’s story authorizes the arrest of the disciples who “call on the name of the Lord.” What is at stake in these stories differs accordingly. Heliodorus threatens the temple’s sacredness and the associated wellbeing of God’s people. Saul menaces a “priestly community” that has been effectively excluded from the temple.⁸¹¹

These differences reflect distinct perspectives on the nexus of the temple, the high priest, and God’s people.⁸¹² In 2 Maccabees, God intervenes in the context of the high priest and the people’s united opposition to a threat against the temple. In Acts, a similar divine intervention

⁸¹⁰ My analysis of what is at stake in 2 Macc 3 depends on Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 324 (“primary threat”); Windisch, “Die Christusepiphany vor Damaskus,” 5 (“secondary threat”). I borrow the term “temple community” from Windisch (who speaks of “die Tempelgemeinde”). Windisch grounds his claim about the threat to the temple community in the people’s extreme anxiety (2 Macc 3:14–21). I agree with this position given the epitomist’s close association of the people and the temple (see 2 Macc 5:17–20). The actions of Antiochus IV are simultaneously a menace to the Jews and their holy site. It is overly reductive to argue, as Weiser does, that the Heliodorus episode “geht nicht um die Rettung der Gemeinde, sondern um die Tabuisierung des Heiligtums” (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, 129). Nevertheless, Weiser’s inclination to emphasize the threat to the temple over that to the community is on point. Thus, I describe the threat to the temple as primary and the threat to the people as secondary.

⁸¹¹ I borrow the term “priestly community” from Robbins, “Priestly Discourse,” 35.

⁸¹² Adapting Löning, *Die Saulustradition*, 67. Löning argues for the transformation of the “temple” topos in Acts 9 vis-à-vis earlier traditions, including 2 Maccabees. Accordingly, “die Damaszener Christen ihre Gemeinde als „Tempel“, was nur heißen kann: als „neuen“, „anderen“ Tempel (gegenüber dem in Jerusalem), sich selbst also als „neue“ Gemeinde in Absetzung von der Kultgemeinschaft des Judentums verstanden hätten.” I see no reason to describe the Damascene believers as a “new temple” based on their characterization in Acts 9. I simply agree that comparing Acts 9 with earlier stories like 2 Macc 3 indicates an altered emphasis in Luke’s story.

occurs when the high priest oversees the harassment of God's people, who are distant from the temple yet persisting in their priestly activities. Compared to 2 Macc 3, Acts 9 deemphasizes the temple and inverts the role of the high priest. A miraculous judgment occurs on behalf of the church, a priestly community that is distant from the temple yet protected by God. The prophetic storyline in Acts retains its focus on God's "priestly" people. However, this people's relationship with the temple and its attendants has been attenuated.

This understanding of Heliodorus and Saul has ramifications for interpreting the latter's blinding and healing. The primary features shared by 2 Macc 3 and Acts 9 are a grievous threat to God's people and a divine recognition sequence. The chief difference between these stories is the object of the threat, whether the temple (primary) and its community (secondary) in 2 Maccabees or God's people alone in Acts. Granted this relationship, Heliodorus and Saul have similar experiences of the divine recognition sequence that lead to different ends. Heliodorus's experience leads him to proclaim God's special relationship with the temple (2 Macc 3:38–39).⁸¹³ Divine punishment changes the antagonist's perspective of how God views the primary object that was threatened. The object of Saul's menace differs from Heliodorus's, and the knowledge Saul gains from his experience differs accordingly. Saul threatens the disciples who "call on the name of the Lord [Jesus]." His effort provokes a miraculous punishment that alters his perspective. The immediate result of Saul's experience is his new perspective on Jesus. However, the analogy between Heliodorus and Saul suggests that Saul will also form a new perspective on the primary object of his threat, the disciples.

⁸¹³ See Doran, *Temple Propaganda*, 47–52; Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 129; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (I–12)*, 323–24.

Luke's discourse indicates that Saul's experience does alter his view of the church. The rehabilitated Saul identifies and associates with the disciples (Acts 9:19b; 25–26, 28, 30). More broadly, Saul embraces Ananias's "priestly" designations for the believers. Saul/Paul informs the crowd in Jerusalem that he has "called on the name" of Jesus (ἐπικαλεσάμενος τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ; 22:16)—the same action he tried to suppress among believers (9:14, 21). Similarly, Paul admits to Agrippa II that he imprisoned "many of the holy people [οἱ ἅγιοι]" in Jerusalem (see 9:13). The object of Saul's threat was a community of "priestly" believers. Accordingly, his experience of blinding and healing opens his eyes to the fact that these believers are indeed "holy" and those who appropriately "call on the name of the Lord."

The outcome of Saul's story resembles Zechariah's in Luke 1. Both characters assume a prophetic role oriented to God's renewed kingdom. Saul, like Zechariah, has undergone a process of divine recognition. However, Saul's starting point is different from Zechariah's. In his capacity as an antagonist of God's people, Saul closely resembles Heliodorus. The salience of this latter parallel is what it reveals about the prophetic storyline. In 2 Maccabees, a miraculous punishment led Heliodorus to reverse his perspective on God's relationship to the temple, which Heliodorus threatened. In Acts, a similar punishment is associated with the reversal of Saul's perspective on God's relationship with Jesus and the church. Luke's version of the prophetic storyline has attenuated the relationship between the temple and God's people in favor of an increased focus on the latter. Accordingly, Saul's eyes are opened not simply to Jesus, who appeared to him, but also to the believers, whom he now perceives as a priestly community favored by God.

4.5.4. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

Saul's transformation is one of the many reversals anticipated by Mary (see Luke 1:51–53). Saul is not inherently powerful when he enters Luke's story, yet he obtains high priestly authority to wield against a community of "weak" believers. As if on script, the exalted Jesus reduces Saul to blindness, inhibiting Saul's ability to navigate the way to Damascus. Saul reaches his destination with assistance, yet he remains unable to see and neglects his basic needs. However, this condition is temporary. Ananias heals Saul per Jesus's instructions. Saul then proclaims Jesus as the "Son of God" and associates with the disciples. The former persecutor has come to identify this community as the locus of divine favor. Here, among Jews driven from the temple, the "priestly" invocation of the Lord occurs. God sides with the people Saul once despised.

Characterization. The relationship between Saul's experience and his characterization approximates what I observed in Luke 1. As with Zechariah, no prophetic figure is associated with Saul's blinding.⁸¹⁴ Similarly, the reversal of Saul's ailment leads to him embracing a prophetic role.⁸¹⁵ After being healed, Saul proclaims Jesus's name in the synagogues of Damascus (9:20–22) and to the Hellenists in Jerusalem (9:28–29). The salient difference between Zechariah and Saul concerns Ananias's role in the latter's healing. Whereas God reversed Zechariah's condition, Jesus tasks Ananias with healing Saul. This delegation inserts the believing community into Saul's transformation, merging the formerly opposed stories of the

⁸¹⁴ The exalted Jesus does not function as a standard prophetic individual in this episode.

⁸¹⁵ For the rapidity of Saul's embrace of a prophetic role, see Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 64–65, 94 n. 23; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 338. These authors plausibly explain Saul's "immediate" activity (see Acts 9:20) in terms of the Spirit's operation in this figure.

church and its persecutor.⁸¹⁶ Saul has a critical role to play in the rest of Acts. His healing anticipates the intersection of his story with the church's in what follows.

The development of prophetic topoi. The punitive miracle in Acts 9 develops the topoi of blindness, the people's rejection of the prophet, and blessedness. The first topos appears quite literally in the form of Saul's vision loss. This ailment intersects with the prophetic topos of blindness since Saul's lack of sight is readily interpreted as a sign of his spiritual blindness.⁸¹⁷ Saul has been "blind" to what God is doing in this stage of the prophetic storyline. Consequently, as Chad Hartsock puts it, the risen Jesus strips Saul of his vision to make "Saul's physical condition ... match his spiritual condition."⁸¹⁸ This turn of events is consequential because of what Saul's eyes are "opened" to see: the real identity of Jesus and the disciples.⁸¹⁹ "Blindness" concerns one's ignorance of the vital association of God, Jesus, and the community of disciples.

Second, the people's rejection of the prophet is evident in Saul's story. Saul no sooner engages in "bearing Jesus's name" in Damascus than some of his compatriots try to kill him (Acts 9:20–23). The same pattern plays out in Jerusalem (9:28–29). What is unusual about this topos is its relationship to Saul's experience. In the LXX prophetic storyline, punitive miracles often occur when people reject prophets like Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. Miraculous judgments are a typical divine response to the denial of prophetic authority. In Acts 9, the punitive miracle does not defend Saul in the context of rejection but leads him to such rejection. This shift accords

⁸¹⁶ Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian*, 191–96; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 345–46.

⁸¹⁷ Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts*, 188. Hartsock defends the symbolic nature of Saul's ailment by describing how ancient audiences would understand the "blind topos": "Saul would be assumed to be helpless and pitiful; Saul would be assumed to be under some sort of divinely-decreed punishment; and Saul would be assumed to be spiritually blind" (emphasis original).

⁸¹⁸ Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts*, 188.

⁸¹⁹ Hamm, "Paul's Blindness and Its Healing," 70.

with the view that Saul's suffering is in some sense "necessary," like Jesus's (9:16 // Luke 9:22; 17:25; 24:26).⁸²⁰ Nevertheless, the relationship between divine punishment and the topos of the rejected prophet in Acts 9 demonstrates how the standard prophetic profile has shifted from times past. Rejection is now part and parcel of what it means to be a prophet.⁸²¹ A punitive miracle may drive a prophet toward this destiny, but it will not rescue them from it.

Third, blessedness is implicated in Luke's summary statement (Acts 9:31). Luke concludes the present story with the report that the church is "experiencing peace" and "growing." What is remarkable about this condition is that the believers remain basically where they fled after Stephen's death (9:31: "Judea and Galilee and Samaria // 8:1b: "Judea and Samaria"). Marguerat observes that the language of the former passage ("they were all scattered" [διεσπάρησαν]; 8:1b) suggests a "diaspora" of the disciples like that of the Jews around the world.⁸²² The "scattering" of God's people has long been understood as the most severe covenantal curse (Lev 26:33; Deut 28:25, 64). In this case, the scattering of the disciples has promoted their mission (see Acts 8:4; 11:19–20).⁸²³ Moreover, Luke's summary establishes that the church thrives in its new settings. The believers are not "cursed" in their diaspora but blessed.⁸²⁴ In this context, Saul's blinding is a divine act that secures the church's prosperity in

⁸²⁰ A. J. Mattill Jr., "The Jesus-Paul Parallels and the Purpose of Luke-Acts: H. H. Evans Reconsidered," *NovT* 17 (1975): 26–27.

⁸²¹ For the prominence of the "rejection" topos in early Christian prophetic discourse, see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 220–21, 227–28, 245, 320, 328, 506. Prophets in the LXX prophetic storyline experience rejection as well. The difference between this storyline and Luke-Acts is one of emphasis. Luke does not use punitive miracles to defend prophetic individuals from rejection.

⁸²² Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 278.

⁸²³ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 289.

⁸²⁴ See Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 289.

its “diaspora.” The diaspora was previously a site of judgment. It is now a site of blessing, where God promotes the disciples’ mission and protects them from harm.

The thematic development of God’s kingdom. The punitive miracles in Acts occur when God’s kingdom collides with Satan’s dominion. Judas’s death marks the initial post-Easter advance of God’s kingdom into enemy territory. Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths coincide with an abortive satanic effort to reclaim lost ground. Saul’s threat should also be contextualized in terms of this struggle. Saul is not explicitly described as a satanic agent, but Luke’s discourse suggests that Saul occupies this role. Susan Garrett argues for this association by noting that Saul, like Satan, has the power to “bind” people (Acts 9:2, 14, 21 // Luke 13:16).⁸²⁵ Matthew Monnig cites as characteristically satanic features Saul’s “scattering” of believers (Acts 8:1 // Luke 8:12; see 8:5; also 22:31), his “authority” to arrest the disciples (Acts 9:14 // Luke 4:6), and his act of “ravaging” or “destroying” the church (Acts 8:3 // 4 Macc 18:8).⁸²⁶ I would supplement these points with Saul’s operation under the auspices of the high priests (Acts 9:14), whom Luke has identified as satanic collaborators (see Luke 22:52–53).⁸²⁷ Luke provides sufficient grounds for viewing Saul as a satanic agent.

Satan has used Saul in another attempt to hinder God’s kingdom.⁸²⁸ The adversary’s last plot was unsuccessful, with Ananias and Sapphira’s deception resulting in their deaths. He has changed tack with Saul, trying to suppress God’s kingdom from the outside. Nevertheless, Satan’s efforts are inadequate, as before. The risen Jesus not only thwarts the attempt to harass

⁸²⁵ Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 83.

⁸²⁶ Monnig, “Satan in Lukan Narrative and Theology,” 248–51.

⁸²⁷ See “4.3.3. Excursus: Judas in Luke’s Gospel.”

⁸²⁸ See Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 57, 103.

the disciples in Damascus but causes Satan's agent to switch sides.⁸²⁹ This exertion of divine power transforms Saul from a radical antagonist of God's kingdom to its chief proponent. The divine kingdom is growing at the devil's expense.⁸³⁰

4.6. The Death of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1–24)

4.6.1. Introduction

Saul's transformation marks the end of the religious leaders' harassment of the church. After this event, the church expands again. Peter visits Lydda and heals a man in this city who has been paralyzed for eight years (Acts 9:32–34). This miracle causes everyone in Lydda and the plain of Sharon to become believers (9:35). Next, the apostle travels to Joppa and raises the disciple Tabitha from the dead (9:36–41). As in Lydda, this event leads many Joppites to join the church (9:42). The end of persecution occasions the church's renewed growth, starting among Jews living along the Mediterranean coast.

The most remarkable signs of the church's vitality appear next. In response to a vision, Peter travels to Caesarea and preaches to Cornelius, a "God-fearing" centurion, and his household (Acts 10:9–43). These Gentiles believe Peter's message and are inducted into the church through baptism (10:44–48). This event represents the initial incorporation of Gentiles

⁸²⁹ See Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 84–86.

⁸³⁰ For this point, see n. 680.

into the believing community.⁸³¹ A similar development soon occurs further north. Some Diaspora Jews who fled Jerusalem (see 8:1) make their way to Antioch and proselytize the “Hellenists” of this city (11:20–21).⁸³² When Barnabas comes to investigate, he observes “God’s grace” among the new believers (11:22–24). Accordingly, he retrieves Saul from Tarsus, and the two devote themselves to teaching this nascent congregation (11:25–26). The word of God is taking root among non-Jewish believers.

Despite these developments, the church’s growth does not go unchallenged for long. Luke introduces a new antagonist in the figure of “Herod” Agrippa I, the client king of Judea (Acts 12:1).⁸³³ Herod renews the threat that hovered over the disciples in Acts 8–9. However, whereas the persecution following Stephen’s death occurred under the religious leaders, Herod’s menace is political.⁸³⁴ The king harasses the church to curry favor with the Jews, who have adopted a hostile attitude toward the Twelve (12:3; cf. 4:21; 5:13, 26).⁸³⁵ The coordination of

⁸³¹ Holladay questions the identification of Cornelius and his family as the first Gentile converts, noting that these conversions are not qualitatively different from the Ethiopian eunuch’s (*Acts*, 246 n. 152). This caution is appropriate. Nevertheless, I retain the description of Cornelius and his associates as the first Gentile converts since Peter, his companions, and the disciples in Jerusalem are unaware of a precedent for such conversions (adapting Holladay, *Acts*, 246 n. 152, who makes this point vis-à-vis the church in Jerusalem alone).

⁸³² For the meaning of Ἑλληνιστάς, see Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:550–51. Barrett plausibly argues that Ἑλληνιστάς in Acts 11:20 refers to the “non-Jewish, Greek-speaking inhabitants of Antioch,” in contrast to how Luke uses the term in 6:1 (for “Greek-speaking Jewish Christians”) and 9:29 (for “Greek-speaking Jews”).

⁸³³ Daniel Schwartz observes that the name “Herod” is not applied to Agrippa I by other extant sources (*Agrippa I: The Last King of Judaea*, TSAJ 23 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990], 120). He reasonably interprets this lack of evidence as a sign that “the king is being viewed typologically [in Acts 12], as another persecutor in the Church’s Judaeon history, following Herod [the Great], Herod Antipas, Herodias and the Herodians.” For a similar perspective, see Frank Dicken, *Herod as a Composite Character in Luke-Acts*, WUNT 2/375 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014); Alexander P. Thompson, “The Death of a Tyrant Type-Scene in Acts 12:20–23: Negotiating Historical Parallels and Narrative Fulfillment in Luke-Acts” (Emory University, MDiv thesis, 2014), 57–63, <https://etd.library.emory.edu/concern/etds/4t64gn387?locale=en>.

⁸³⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 485.

⁸³⁵ Bruce, *Book of Acts*, 233; similarly, Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 188–89; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 431. Jervell claims that “the Jews” is first used “in negativer Distanzierung” in Acts 12:3 (*Die*

Herod's aggression and the people's animosity produces the most acute threat to the disciples thus far.⁸³⁶ The church's safety is now entirely up to God.

4.6.2. Herod's Menace and Peter's Rescue

The present episode opens by introducing a new figure, Herod (Acts 12:1). Luke does little to characterize Herod directly, simply calling him "the king." Instead, he narrates Herod's actions to reveal this man's character. Luke shows Herod "laying hands" (ἐπέβαλεν ... τὰς χεῖρας) on some church members to "harm" them.⁸³⁷ Foremost among Herod's prisoners is James (12:2), one of Jesus's earliest disciples and a member of the Lord's inner circle (Luke 5:10–11; 8:51; 9:28). James's detainment is novel but not unexpected. The Twelve were not affected by the events following Stephen's death (Acts 8:1b), making James's arrest a new stage in the church's experience of persecution.⁸³⁸ Yet Jesus warned his disciples about such hostility, announcing that their opponents would "lay their hands [ἐπιβαλοῦσιν ... τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν] on you and persecute [you]" (Luke 21:12).⁸³⁹ James has fallen victim to this fate. Unfortunately, the rest of Jesus's warning is apropos of James as well. Jesus said that some disciples would lose their lives

Apostelgeschichte, 332). This view is mistaken: Luke's use of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in 9:23, when the Damascene Jews try to kill Saul, has a similar "distancing" effect vis-à-vis the Jewish and Christian communities.

⁸³⁶ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 134–36.

⁸³⁷ My interpretation of ἐπιβάλλω + τὰς χεῖρας + κακῶσαι follows Barrett ("he laid his hands [on them] so as to harm [them]"; *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:574). As Barrett notes, κακῶσαι in this context must be exegetical.

⁸³⁸ Bruce W. Longenecker, *Rhetoric at the Boundaries: The Art and Theology of the New Testament Chain-Link Transitions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 196; also Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 134–36.

⁸³⁹ For the interpretation of Luke 21:12–19, see Scott Cunningham, "Through Many Tribulations": *The Theology of Persecution in Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup 142 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 126–38.

(21:16), and Herod enacts this prediction by killing James “with the sword” (Acts 12:2).⁸⁴⁰ The king fractures the Twelve, who have been central to the church’s story from the start.⁸⁴¹ Herod is the most formidable threat the church has faced.⁸⁴²

Herod’s menace grows in the aftermath of this execution. He observes that the Jews are pleased by James’s death, so he sets out to take similar action against Peter (Acts 12:3–4a).⁸⁴³ The king seizes this apostle and places him in prison. It is the “days of Unleavened Bread”—the week commemorating the exodus from Egypt (see Exod 12:15–20; 13:3–10)—and Herod plans to present Peter to the people after the festival ends (Acts 12:4b).⁸⁴⁴ Peter’s detainment brings the present crisis to a head. James never exercised agency apart from the Twelve in the book of Acts. In contrast, Peter has been the preeminent actor in the church’s story. His death would deal a severe blow to the church. Accordingly, Herod’s actions produce an intense contest. On one hand, Peter is in prison (φυλακή), where he is guarded by soldiers who rotate continuously to maintain their watchfulness (12:5a; see 12:4).⁸⁴⁵ On the other hand, the church has gathered for

⁸⁴⁰ For the view that “with the sword” denotes decapitation, see Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 430; Holladay, *Acts*, 249.

⁸⁴¹ John B. Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany: Prison-Escape in Acts of the Apostles*, BZNW 131 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 205–6.

⁸⁴² Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 135–36.

⁸⁴³ Luke does not say that Herod plans to kill Peter, but this intention is evident. Herod arrests Peter because he perceives that James’s execution pleased the Jews. This motivation implies that Herod plans to treat Peter as he did James to curry additional favor with the people.

⁸⁴⁴ Luke says that Herod will take this action μετὰ τὸ πάσχα (Acts 12:4b). “Passover” in this context refers to the Festival of Unleavened Bread (as in Luke 22:1; Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 382). Regarding Herod’s objective in presenting Peter to the people, see Fitzmyer (“Probably a public trial of some sort is meant”; *The Acts of the Apostles*, 487); Barrett (“ἀναγαγεῖν can hardly mean here bring him up for a public trial ... it will mean for public execution”; *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:577, emphasis original). In either view, Peter’s appearance before the people will likely end in his death.

⁸⁴⁵ Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 93. Conzelmann cites the Roman writer Vegetius to illuminate Acts 12:4: “Because it was clearly impossible for individuals to remain constantly awake in their look-out posts, the

prayer (προσευχή), and the believers are “constantly” interceding on Peter’s behalf (12:5b).⁸⁴⁶

Luke has pitted Herod’s φυλακή against the believers’ προσευχή.⁸⁴⁷ The outcome of this contest will determine the church’s future.

Luke narrows his focus to the prison holding Peter. It is the night before Herod will present Peter to the people, and the apostle is being kept under heavy guard (Acts 12:6). As Peter sleeps, an angel enters his cell,⁸⁴⁸ filling the room with light (12:7). The angel strikes Peter to awaken him and then leads the apostle to safety. Several miracles facilitate this departure. First, the chains that bind Peter to two soldiers (see 12:6) fall to the ground. Next, the angel leads Peter past two more soldiers, who have seemingly fallen under a divinely induced sleep (12:10).⁸⁴⁹ Finally, the formidable gate that prevents egress from the prison opens on its own, allowing the angel and Peter to leave.⁸⁵⁰ When Peter and his guide have traveled a short distance, the latter

night-watches have been divided into quarters by the water-clock, ensuring that it is necessary to be awake for no more than three hours a night” (*Epit. rei mil.* 3.8 [Milner; TTH]). Peter’s assignment to four rotating τετράδιον (BDAG, s.v.: “squad of four soldiers”) ensures that the soldiers’ need for sleep will not jeopardize his custody.

⁸⁴⁶ BDAG (s.v.) glosses ἐκτενῶς as “eagerly, fervently, constantly.” The latter translation is preferable because Luke shows the church praying at night (Acts 12:12–17; see 12:6).

⁸⁴⁷ Two features of Luke’s discourse create a contrast between Herod’s φυλακή and the church’s προσευχή. First, Luke uses a μέν ... δέ construction to juxtapose Peter’s imprisonment and the church’s response. φυλακή and προσευχή stand side by side in this construction, with the former term completing the μέν clause and the latter introducing the δέ clause. The contrast in Acts 12:5 revolves around these terms. Second, the similar endings of φυλακή and προσευχή produce assonance, giving these terms additional emphasis in the verse. Luke’s juxtaposition of “prison” and “prayer” presses the question of whether the φυλακή or προσευχή will prevail.

⁸⁴⁸ My translation of οἴκημα as “cell” follows BDAG, s.v.: “This is one room or cell in a larger detention complex termed φυλακή (vs. 6).”

⁸⁴⁹ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 384, 384 n. 3.

⁸⁵⁰ Reinhard Kratz, *Rettungswunder: Motiv-, traditions- und formkritische Aufarbeitung einer biblischen Gattung*, EH 23/123 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1979), 469. Kratz suggests that σιδηράν denotes the door as “schwer zu öffnen.”

vanishes. This disappearance causes Peter to take stock of his situation (12:11).⁸⁵¹ He previously thought he was seeing a vision (12:9). Now, the angel's departure allows Peter to recognize the truth: "The Lord sent out his angel and delivered me from the hand of Herod and all the expectation of the Jewish people" (12:11).

The church's acceptance of this rescue comes slowly in the following scene. The apostle travels to the home of Mary, where a group of disciples is praying (Acts 12:12; see 12:5). These believers do not receive Peter as we might expect. Rhoda, who hears Peter's voice at the door, excitedly tells those inside that Peter has arrived (12:13–14). These people attribute her claim to madness (12:15a).⁸⁵² When she persists in her report, the believers grant that Rhoda heard someone but assume it is Peter's "angel" (12:15b).⁸⁵³ This group is remarkably slow to accept that God has answered their prayer.⁸⁵⁴ At any rate, Peter keeps knocking on the door, and the disciples investigate (12:16). Finding Peter outside, they listen intently as he recounts his rescue

⁸⁵¹ Literally, the angel's exit makes Peter "come to his senses" (ἐν ἑαυτῷ γενόμενος; BDAG, s.v. "γίνομαι").

⁸⁵² Michael Kochenash has recently argued that the church's disbelief of Rhoda is "nonsensical ... according to conventional interpretations of Acts 12." In his view, Rhoda's character is best understood in light of the Trojan Cassandra, who was fated to deliver prophecies that no one believed. He writes, "Insofar as readers interpret Rhoda as a Cassandra figure ... her inability to convince Mary and her company about the accuracy of her message becomes logical. In this reading, their disbelief and derision are not self-indictments of their lack of faith in the efficacy of prayer; instead, they are standard and expected features in a story about a new Cassandra" ("Unbelievable: An Interpretation of Acts 12 That Takes Rhoda's Cassandra Curse Seriously," *JBL* 141 [2022]: 350–51; see also 339–40). The appeal of Kochenash's argument is its claim to offer a new way of connecting Herod's death to his persecution of the church (see "Unbelievable," 353–55). The weakness of this argument is that it ignores the likeness of the disciples' response in Acts 12 to other episodes in which the church is slow to accept what God has done (e.g., Acts 9:13–14; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres* (1–12), 436). The disciples' unbelief only becomes an interpretive crux if one overlooks the fact that God, as Marguerat says, "surprend les siens par ses initiatives stupéfiantes" (*Les Actes des apôtres* (1–12), 436).

⁸⁵³ Most scholars explain this reference to Peter's "angel" in terms of the ancient belief that every person is assigned an angel who looks like them; see Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 385; Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:585; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 489; also Str-B 2:707–8. Marguerat suggests this phrase may indicate the belief that Peter has died and now visits the church in a spiritual form, as in Luke 24:37 (*Les Actes des apôtres* (1–12), 437, 437 n. 72). Either way, the disciples do not believe Peter has appeared in the flesh.

⁸⁵⁴ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:571.

(12:17a). Luke concludes this scene by saying that Peter goes off to “another place” (12:17b).

Exactly where Peter goes is debatable, but the effect of Luke’s imprecision is clear: Peter is going off to other unknown adventures to make way for Saul to become Luke’s new protagonist (see 13:1ff.).⁸⁵⁵

Luke returns our attention to the prison in the wake of Peter’s escape (Acts 12:18). A new day has begun—the one appointed for Peter’s presentation to the people (see 12:6)—and the soldiers have discovered he is gone. This realization throws them into a panic. However, before they can determine what happened to Peter, Herod arrives (12:19). The king searches for Peter and then, finding him missing, questions the guards. Upon concluding this interrogation, Herod has the guards “led away,” most likely to death.⁸⁵⁶ This reaction reveals Herod’s assessment of the situation. The king punishes the guards because he cannot think of anyone else responsible for Peter’s release; the possibility of a miraculous deliverance apparently never crosses his mind.⁸⁵⁷ He leaves Jerusalem as if nothing unusual happened and decamps to Caesarea.

Before we follow Herod to Caesarea, I must explore an aspect of Luke’s discourse that I have ignored so far. Many scholars perceive a robust intertextual relationship between the events just described and the biblical story of the exodus.⁸⁵⁸ These texts display evident parallels:

⁸⁵⁵ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 438–39.

⁸⁵⁶ Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 95; Holladay, *Acts*, 254.

⁸⁵⁷ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 103.

⁸⁵⁸ See August Strobel, “Passa-Symbolik und Passa-Wunder in Act. XII. 3ff.,” *NTS* 4 (1958): 211–13; Jacques Dupont, “Pierre délivré de prison (Ac 12, 1–11),” in *Nouvelles études sur les Actes des Apôtres*, LD 118 (Paris: Cerf, 1984), 338–41; Walter Radl, “Befreiung aus dem Gefängnis: Die Darstellung eines biblischen Grundthemas in Apg 12,” *BZ* 27 (1983): 87–91; Garrett, “Exodus from Bondage,” 674–75; Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 98–107; Daniel Marguerat, “L’évasion de Pierre et la mort du tyran (Actes 12): un jeu d’échos intertextuels,” in *Intertextualités: La Bible en échos*, ed. Daniel Marguerat and Adrian Curtis, MdB 40 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2000), 226–31. As Allen observes, most scholars limit their investigation of exodus parallels to Acts 12:1–19 (*The Death of Herod*, 98).

Table 9: Parallels between Acts 12 and the Exodus Event⁸⁵⁹

	<u>Acts 12</u>	<u>Exodus Event</u>
Royal threat	Herod acts to “harm” (κακῶσαι) church members (Acts 12:1)	Pharaoh appoints agents to “harm” (κακώσωσιν) the people (Exod 1:11)
Cultic occasion	The Festival of Unleavened Bread (12:3); Passover (12:4)	Passover (12:1–14); the Festival of Unleavened Bread (12:15–20)
Setting	Night (12:6)	Night (12:29–32)
Need for alacrity	Peter must “rise quickly” (ἀνάστα ἐν τάχει; 12:7)	The people must eat the Passover “with haste” (μετὰ σπουδῆς; 12:11)
Dressing instructions	Peter must “gird” himself (ζῶσαι) and “put on sandals” (ὑπόδησαι τὰ σανδάλια; 12:8)	The people must be “girded” (περιεζωσμένοι) and wear sandals (τὰ ὑποδήματα ἐν τοῖς ποσὶν ὑμῶν; 12:11)
Divine “rescue”	“The Lord ... rescued [ἐξείλατο] me from Herod’s hand and the Jewish people’s whole expectation” (12:11) ⁸⁶⁰	“The Lord rescued [ἐξείλατο] them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians’ hands” (18:8)
Divine “leading”	Peter recounts “how the Lord led him out [ἐξήγαγεν] of prison” (12:17)	The Lord will “lead out” (ἐξαγαγεῖν) the people from Egypt (3:8) ⁸⁶¹

The likeness between Acts 12 and the exodus event can be stated in general and specific terms.

Both accounts concern God’s “rescue” of a figure/group from an oppressive king and their

⁸⁵⁹ The table above compiles data from Strobel, “Passa-Symbolik,” 212–13 (“need for alacrity”; “dressing instructions”); Radl, “Befreiung aus dem Gefängnis,” 87–91 (“divine ‘rescue,’” “divine ‘leading’”); Dupont, “Pierre délivré de prison,” 331, 339–40 (“royal threat”; “cultic occasion”); Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 426 (“setting”).

⁸⁶⁰ Acts 12:11: ἐξαπέστειλεν [ό; om. ECM] κύριος τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξείλατό με ἐκ χειρὸς Ἡρώδου καὶ πάσης τῆς προσδοκίας τοῦ λαοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων // Exod 18:8: ἐξείλατο αὐτοὺς κύριος ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραώ καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων. See also Exod 3:8 (κατέβην ἐξελέσθαι αὐτοὺς ἐκ χειρὸς Αἰγυπτίων); 18:4 (ἐξείλατό με ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραώ); Judg 6:9 (ἐξείλαμην ὑμᾶς ἐκ χειρὸς Αἰγύπτου). Some scholars note the likeness of Acts 12:11 to Dan 3:95 Θ (ἀπέστειλε τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξείλατο τοὺς παῖδας αὐτοῦ; see Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 384 n. 9; Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke’s Narrative*, LNTS 404 (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 178–80. The resemblance of these statements is evident. Nevertheless, I judge Dan 3 as less relevant than the exodus event to the interpretation of Peter’s escape (cf. Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke’s Narrative*, 178–80).

⁸⁶¹ See also Exod 18:1 (ἐξήγαγεν ... κύριος τὸν Ἰσραὴλ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου); 20:2 (ἐξήγαγόν σε ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου); 29:46 (ἐγὼ εἰμι κύριος ὁ θεὸς αὐτῶν ὁ ἐξαγαγὼν αὐτοὺς ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου).

“leading out” from hostile territory. More specifically, these episodes depict nocturnal deliverances during the Passover season and feature similar, albeit not identical instructions to those rescued.⁸⁶² These parallels establish the account of the exodus event as the preeminent Septuagintal intertext of Acts 12,⁸⁶³ making Peter’s rescue, as Willy Rordorf puts it, “ein «Auszug aus Ägypten» im kleinen.”⁸⁶⁴ The subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) intertextual references in this episode make Peter’s escape a rerun of Israel’s rescue from Egypt.⁸⁶⁵

I will return to Peter’s rescue in the next section. It suffices to observe what these overtones portend for Herod’s story. Herod has harassed God’s people like Pharaoh, executing James and arresting Peter with a view toward the same outcome. In this context of oppression, God has orchestrated an exodus-like deliverance for Peter, “rescuing” him from “Herod’s hand” and “leading him out” of prison. Herod has played the part of Israel’s paradigmatic oppressor, and God has responded in kind. Nevertheless, what I describe as the pattern of the exodus event has yet to be fully realized.⁸⁶⁶ This pattern consists of the phases oppression/injustice → miraculous affliction → release. Herod has accomplished the first phase, and God has seen to the last phase. The second phase has not yet appeared in Luke’s discourse. The absence of a

⁸⁶² Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany*, 163–64.

⁸⁶³ This statement is not intended to deny other intertexts to Acts 12. I only claim that the biblical account of the exodus event is the preeminent intertext of Acts 12 in the context of the early Christian prophetic storyline.

⁸⁶⁴ Willy Rordorf, “Zum Ursprung des Osterfestes am Sonntag,” *TZ* 18 (1962): 183 n. 65, cited in Marguerat, “L’évasion de Pierre,” 229.

⁸⁶⁵ For the idea of a “rerun,” see n. 582.

⁸⁶⁶ Here I follow the lead of Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 92–108, who finds the “closure” of an exodus-like sequence of events in Acts 12:20–23. As I describe below (see n. 892), I take exception with how Allen articulates this sequence.

miraculous judgment in the context of distinct exodus overtones raises the expectation of further divine action.⁸⁶⁷ This action is what Luke narrates next.

4.6.3. Herod's Death

Luke follows Herod to Caesarea in the aftermath of Peter's escape. Herod is locked in a dispute with Tyre and Sidon (Acts 12:20), cities located north of his kingdom along the Mediterranean coast. The people of these cities rely on Herod's kingdom for food,⁸⁶⁸ and the king has apparently implemented an economic measure that threatens this relationship.⁸⁶⁹ As a result, the Tyrians and Sidonians come to Caesarea seeking "peace"—a return to their former arrangement with the king. These petitioners secure an audience with Herod, and he proceeds to address them from atop a dais (12:21). However, rather than resolving the dispute with the Phoenicians, this speech produces an unexpected result. The Caesarean populace is also present at this meeting,⁸⁷⁰ and upon hearing Herod's speech, they proclaim, "[This] voice belongs to a god, not a human" (12:22). This acclamation brings Herod to a critical juncture. Luke has taken pains to establish that worship belongs to God alone (Luke 4:5–8; Acts 3:9–12; 10:25–26).⁸⁷¹ While Luke has not stated the consequences of violating this principle, nothing good can come from such action.

⁸⁶⁷ See Garrett, "Exodus from Bondage," 675.

⁸⁶⁸ Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 215. Luke writes that Tyre and Sidon are fed *ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλικῆς* (Acts 12:20). Johnson reasonably interprets *βασιλικός* as modifying an implied noun, "country" (presumably, *χώρα*). Luke may have suppressed this term to avoid repetition (i.e., *διὰ τὸ τρέφεσθαι αὐτῶν τὴν χώραν ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλικῆς χώρας*).

⁸⁶⁹ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:589.

⁸⁷⁰ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:590; similarly, F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 288. Barrett argues that the people who acclaim Herod in Acts 12:22 are Caesareans since the term *δῆμος* denotes an assembly of local citizens.

⁸⁷¹ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 110–14.

Herod's response to the Caesareans leads to his undoing. Luke reports that Herod does not "give glory to God" (Acts 12:23), meaning he accepts the acclamation. This action contrasts with Herod's arrest of Peter, a step he seemingly took to exhibit his devotion to Judaism (see 12:3).⁸⁷² The king now shows his true colors. If Herod has no scruple against being called a god, Peter's detainment must have been a simple act of political expediency.⁸⁷³ In response to Herod's hubris, an angel of the Lord strikes him, initiating his demise. Following the angelic blow, the king's body teems with worms, which eat and soon kill him.⁸⁷⁴ Herod has accepted worship that belongs to God. Accordingly, he experiences the type of death reserved for God's most notorious enemies (e.g., Jehoram, 2 Chron 21:18–19; Antiochus IV, 2 Macc 9:5–11, 18, 28).⁸⁷⁵

The present episode concludes with a Lukan summary: "The word of God was growing and multiplying [ἡϋξανεὺν καὶ ἐπληθύνετο]" (Acts 12:24).⁸⁷⁶ The summary at the end of Saul's story (viz., the church was "experiencing peace" and "growing"; 9:31) signaled the conclusion of the persecution that began after Stephen's death. Saul was a leading figure in the campaign to suppress the church. His blinding, healing, and call to prophetic service meant the return of the church's prosperity.⁸⁷⁷ The summary in Acts 12 performs a similar function. Herod remained a threat to the church after he left Jerusalem.⁸⁷⁸ The king's death extinguishes this threat, allowing

⁸⁷² Dupont, "Pierre délivré de prison," 332–33; similarly, Marguerat, "L'évasion de Pierre," 225.

⁸⁷³ Dupont, "Pierre délivré de prison," 332–33.

⁸⁷⁴ Gk. γενόμενος σκωληκόβρωτος ἐξέψυξεν.

⁸⁷⁵ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 30–74, esp. 46–50, 58–66, 70–74.

⁸⁷⁶ For the inclusion of Acts 12:24 in the present episode, see Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 421. Marguerat notes that the complementary reports concerning Barnabas and Saul's journey to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27–30; 12:25) define this unit.

⁸⁷⁷ See "4.5.3. Saul's Healing"; also, n. 804 above.

⁸⁷⁸ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 90–91.

God's word to flourish once more.⁸⁷⁹ The summary in 9:31 is facially different from 12:24: whereas the former statement addresses the church's prosperity, the latter concerns the "word of God." However, Jerome Kodell has shown that 12:24 has the church's growth in view, like other Lukan summaries. The key to this identification is the use of *αὐξάνω* and *πληθύνω*: just as these terms convey the growth of God's people in the LXX (e.g., Exod 1:7; Lev 26:9) and Stephen's speech (Acts 7:17), they are used in 12:24 to express the church's growth.⁸⁸⁰ Herod's death reestablishes the idyllic situation of 9:31.

I must explore a curious feature of Luke's discourse to penetrate the salience of Herod's death in the context of the prophetic storyline. The events of Acts 12:20–23 seem unrelated to the church's story.⁸⁸¹ Most interpreters intuit a relationship between Herod's persecution of the church and his death, yet Luke does not make this relationship explicit.⁸⁸² Luke claims simply that the Lord's angel "struck [Herod] ... because he did not give glory to God" after the crowd's proclamation (Acts 12:23). A punitive miracle undoubtedly causes Herod's death. Yet it is not evident that this miracle is linked to James's killing and Peter's arrest.

Some scholars claim that Herod's death is punishment for his hubris, tout court.⁸⁸³ For example, Jörg-Dieter Gauger dissociates Herod's persecution of the church from his death scene,

⁸⁷⁹ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 91.

⁸⁸⁰ Jerome Kodell, "'The Word of God Grew': The Ecclesial Tendency of Λόγος in Acts 1,7; 12,24; 19,20," *Bib* 55 (1974): 505–19, esp. 510–12. Using "God's word" to denote the church is metonymical: "Luke sees the word so bound up with community life and witness that he can say 'The word of God grew' when the church adds new members'" ("The Word of God Grew," 518).

⁸⁸¹ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 3.

⁸⁸² Kochenash, "Unbelievable," 353–54.

⁸⁸³ Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:572; Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 336–37; Jörg-Dieter Gauger, "Der ,Tod des Verfolgers': Überlegungen zur Historizität eines Topos," *JSJ* 33 (2002): 51 n. 25, 52.

emphasizing the decisive conclusion at the end of the former episode (Herod's departure from Jerusalem; Acts 12:19) and the introduction of a new situation at the beginning of the latter episode (Herod's dispute with the Phoenicians; 12:20). He writes, "freilich legt der Verfasser bei der Übertragung des Würmertodes nicht den Verfolgerzusammenhang zugrunde, der Anlaß dafür war vielmehr die Apotheisierung durch das Volk."⁸⁸⁴ Distinguishing these scenes allows Gauger to construe Herod's death as an express result of his reception of the crowd's acclamation.

This position poses a challenge for reading Acts 12 in light of the prophetic storyline. If Herod dies solely for accepting the crowd's acclamation, Luke has not integrated this event into the story of the development of God's kingdom. This view entails that Herod would have continued living had he given due honor to God on this occasion. He presumably could have resumed his persecution of the church in the future. The king's death thus becomes a one-off, an event only tangentially related to God's kingdom.

The problem with framing Herod's hubris as the sole cause of his death is what this view entails for Acts 12:20–23. Wesley Allen remarks:

Luke makes no attempt to integrate the details of this scene with the narrative world of Luke-Acts ... None of the Lukan heroes from the immediate context or from the entirety of Luke-Acts — indeed, no Christians at all — are present in the scene. This is the only story in Luke-Acts of which that can be said.⁸⁸⁵

The connection between Herod's death and the rest of Acts 12 is tenuous.⁸⁸⁶ If we divorce the king's fate from his conduct in Jerusalem, the Caesarea scene becomes unmoored. We cannot discount the possibility that Luke reproduced 12:20–23 simply because these verses concern the

⁸⁸⁴ Gauger, "Der ,Tod des Verfolgers'," 52.

⁸⁸⁵ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 3.

⁸⁸⁶ See Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 3.

same antagonist as 12:1–19. However, as Allen suggests, this would make 12:20–23 singularly anecdotal within Luke’s corpus.

Other scholars, convinced that the report of Herod’s death has more than an antiquarian interest, have tried to ground Acts 12:20–23 in the events of 12:1–19.⁸⁸⁷ The most promising of these efforts draws on the relationship between Acts 12 and the exodus event. This position boils down to two premises. First, the overtones of the exodus event in Peter’s rescue scene should inform our reading of Herod’s death.⁸⁸⁸ These motifs have a carry-over effect. Second, additional exodus overtones appear in Herod’s death scene, substantiating the first premise.⁸⁸⁹ With this in mind, it is appropriate to supplement my table of parallels:

⁸⁸⁷ See Kratz, *Rettungswunder*, 472–73; Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:101; Radl, “Befreiung aus dem Gefängnis,” 94; Franz Mußner, *Apostelgeschichte*, NEchtB 5 (Würzburg: Echter, 1984), 75; Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1:361, 367; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 96; Weiser, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 170; Zmijewski, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 470; Reimer, *Women in Acts*, 240; Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 90–91; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 491; Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany*, 184–87; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 442; Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke’s Narrative*, 184; Kochenash, “Unbelievable,” 353–55.

⁸⁸⁸ Garrett, “Exodus from Bondage,” 675; Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 98–107.

⁸⁸⁹ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 104–5.

Table 10: Additional Parallels between Acts 12 and the Exodus Event⁸⁹⁰

	<u>Acts 12</u>	<u>Exodus Event</u>
Divine “striking”	An angel of the Lord “strikes” (ἐπάταξεν) Herod (Acts 12:23)	God will “strike” (πατάξω) Egypt, culminating in the “striking” of the firstborn (Exod 3:20; 12:12, 23, 29)
Growth, multiplication	God’s word “grows and multiplies” (ἡύξανεν καὶ ἐπληθύνετο; 12:24)	The Israelites have “grown and multiplied” (ἡύξηθησαν καὶ ἐπληθύνθησαν) in Egypt (1:7) ⁸⁹¹

The second premise stands or falls with the first one. In isolation, the two overtones in Acts 12:20–23 do not warrant reading Herod’s death as an “exodus-like” event. We must take the overtones throughout Acts 12 as a group if they are to illuminate the king’s death.⁸⁹²

⁸⁹⁰ The table above compiles data from Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 104 (“divine ‘striking’”); Weaver, *Plots of Epiphany*, 212–13 (“growth, multiplication”). Weaver considers the possibility of an allusion to Exod 1:7 in Acts 12:24 but rejects it given the frequency of the αὐξάνω + πληθύνω combination in the LXX. However, David Pao has shown that Acts 12:24 and its closely allied summaries (Acts 6:7: καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἡύξανεν; 19:20: οὕτως κατὰ κράτος τοῦ κυρίου ὁ λόγος ἡύξανεν καὶ ἴσχυεν) clearly evoke the opening chapter of Exodus, especially 1:7 (οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ ἡύξηθησαν καὶ ἐπληθύνθησαν καὶ χυδαῖοι ἐγένοντο καὶ κατίσχυον σφόδρα σφόδρα) and 1:20 (ἐπλήθυνεν ὁ λαὸς καὶ ἴσχυεν σφόδρα; *Acts and the New Isaianic Exodus*, WUNT 2/130 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 167–69). He also observes that Stephen’s reference to the Israelites’ growth in Egypt secures this association (Acts 7:17: ἡύξησεν ὁ λαὸς καὶ ἐπληθύνθη ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ≈ Exod 1:7: οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ ἡύξηθησαν καὶ ἐπληθύνθησαν; *The New Isaianic Exodus*, 169). Acts 12:24 plainly associates the “word of God” with Israel’s flourishing in Egypt.

⁸⁹¹ In contrast to the book of Exodus, Luke uses the αὐξάνω + πληθύνω formula after Herod’s actions (Acts 12:24; cf. Exod 1:7). Thus, whereas Pharaoh oppresses Israel in the context of “growth” and “multiplication,” the divine response to Herod’s oppression produces growth and multiplication. This discrepancy is not consequential for my interpretation. I argue that Herod’s story contains numerous overtones of the exodus event. These overtones justify reading Herod’s experience in light of the pattern of the exodus event. The precise location of these overtones in the book of Exodus matters less than their allusive function.

⁸⁹² The leading effort to read Herod’s death in light of the exodus event appears in Allen’s *The Death of Herod*. After surveying the intertextual relationship between Acts 12 and Exodus, Allen concludes that these texts exhibit “the same basic narrative structure”: “persecution by a king, divine intervention, pursuit by the persecutor, divine punishment resulting in the death of the persecutor” (*The Death of Herod*, 105). Allen’s chief contribution is his identification of exodus overtones throughout Acts 12 and his determination to read Herod’s entire story in light of this intertextuality (*The Death of Herod*, 98). The weakness of Allen’s argument is his attempt to demonstrate a greater affinity than is possible between Acts 12 and the exodus event. The first, second, and fourth motifs in Allen’s “basic narrative structure” are largely unobjectionable. However, the second motif (“pursuit by the persecutor”) does not apply to Acts 12. Allen’s identification of this motif depends on his association of Herod’s search for Peter (Acts 12:19) and Pharaoh’s pursuit of the Israelites (Exod 14; *The Death of Herod*, 103). Pharaoh’s pursuit of the Israelites was the climax of a cycle of affliction, repentance, reprieve, and hardening. In comparison, Herod’s search for Peter is half-hearted and feckless. The king remains a threat after Peter’s escape. However, his scouring of the prison, interrogation of the guards, and abandonment of the search in favor of decamping to Caesarea hardly represent the climax of his threat. Allen’s model of this intertextual relationship needs refinement.

In my judgment, a LXX-competent audience will likely take the exodus overtones in Acts 12 as a cue to read Herod's story in light of the "pattern of the exodus event." I used this phrase in previous chapters to denote the indelible sequence that structures the exodus event and its allied stories: foreign oppression → miraculous affliction → release. In Exodus, God intervenes in the context of Pharaoh's oppression to transfer the Israelites from a condition of suffering in Egypt to one of creation's restored bounty in the wilderness. In 1 Samuel, the ark produces plague-like afflictions among the Philistines, who exercise hegemony over God's people, securing its return to Israel. In 2 Kings, an angel confronts Sennacherib, who threatens Judah and plans to deport its inhabitants, resulting in the decimation of the Assyrian army and the king's withdrawal. In stories bearing this pattern, God intervenes in the context of foreign oppression to restore the people's prosperity. Since the exodus overtones of Acts 12 cast the events of this chapter as an exodus-like deliverance, it is reasonable to expect this chapter to actualize the more specific pattern of oppression → affliction → release.

The pattern of the exodus event is incomplete in Acts 12:1–19.⁸⁹³ "Oppression" is manifest in this section. Herod has killed James and arrested Peter, making him the most severe threat the church has ever faced. "Release" also appears in these verses. The Lord rescues Peter from prison, resulting in a description of this event that evokes specific statements from the book of Exodus. However, this "release" is incomplete compared to the stories surveyed above. Herod does not experience a change of heart after Peter's rescue, meaning he might yet set his sights on the believers in Caesarea (Philip [8:40; 21:8–9]; Cornelius's household [10:1, 44–48]) or renew

⁸⁹³ My argument in this section takes its lead from Allen's finding that Herod's death functions as a "closure to persecution" and a "closure to exodus" (*The Death of Herod*, 77–107, esp. 77, 92). I differ from Allen in articulating the pattern underlying Acts 12 and the exodus event (see n. 892). I also bolster Allen's findings by drawing on my analysis of Septuagintal patterns and conventions in previous chapters.

his persecution of the Jerusalem church. Most critically, “miraculous affliction” does not appear in 12:1–19. Herod saunters away from Jerusalem after Peter’s escape. Here is a royal figure whose offense resembles Pharaoh’s but whose fate diverges from his Egyptian predecessor. The pattern of the exodus event is not fully actualized at the end of 12:19.

The incompleteness of this pattern warrants a search for its conclusion in Acts 12:20–23. This effort uncovers the missing phases. The angel’s striking of Herod constitutes the elusive “miraculous affliction” phase. This event leads to the completion of the “release” phase. Following Herod’s death, Luke reports that the word of God is “growing and multiplying,” meaning the king’s threat has been extinguished. Luke does not explicitly attribute Herod’s death to his persecution of the church. Nevertheless, the exodus overtones throughout Acts 12 make it natural to read Herod’s death as the completion of the pattern of the exodus event. Herod’s death is meaningful in the context of Acts 12 because this event disarms the church’s persecutor and restores its prosperity, as in the exodus event and its allied stories.

This finding has provocative consequences for the prophetic storyline. Herod’s story exhibits what Marguerat calls “une paradoxale redistribution des rôles”.⁸⁹⁴

Figure 14: Reconfiguration of the Exodus Event in Acts 12⁸⁹⁵

	<u>Exodus Event</u>		<u>Acts 12</u>
Chief antagonist	Pharaoh	→	Herod
Supporting group	The Egyptians	→	“The Jews”
Rescued people	The Israelites	→	The church

⁸⁹⁴ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 436.

⁸⁹⁵ The figure above presents data from Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 427, 435–36; see also Dupont, “Pierre délivré de prison,” 331, 336–37, 342; Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 106.

The character of Herod readily maps onto Pharaoh. Luke inserts “the Jews” where we once found the Egyptians. Finally, the church appears in the position that Israel formerly occupied.⁸⁹⁶ These transformations foreground the believing community as the locus of divine attention. God has intervened on the church’s behalf as God once did in Israel’s seminal rescue.⁸⁹⁷

This emphasis coheres with the summary at the end of Herod’s story. Following the king’s death, Luke reports that “the word of God was growing and multiplying [ἡϋξανεν καὶ ἐπληθύνετο]” (Acts 12:24). As I mentioned above, the “word of God” here likely denotes the church by way of metonymy.⁸⁹⁸ The church’s condition is expressed through ἀυξάνω and πληθύνω, terms which have long represented the growth of God’s people (e.g., Exod 1:7; Lev 26:9). Read in light of the LXX, Acts 12:24 amounts to a claim that the history of God’s people continues in the church.⁸⁹⁹ Herod’s death restores the conditions in which God’s people “grow and multiply.”

A final issue to probe is how the miracle in Acts 12 propels the church’s story. A hallmark of exodus-like miracles is their ability to produce momentum in the prophetic storyline. The miracles of the exodus set in motion a series of events ending in Pharaoh’s defeat and the

⁸⁹⁶ For Peter as the church’s representative in Acts 12, see Radl, “Befreiung aus dem Gefängnis,” 87. I do not claim that Luke excludes unbelieving Jews from the people of God (cf. Jervell, “The Divided People of God”), nor that he portrays the church as Israel’s replacement (cf. Jack T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987] esp. pp. 37–83, 303–17). My claim is more modest. In Acts 12, Luke draws on the exodus event to depict the church as the beneficiary of divine protection. In contrast, he portrays a portion of the Jewish people as siding with Herod, thus adopting the role of the Egyptians alongside Pharaoh. As in Exodus, in which many Egyptians were favorably disposed toward Israel (see Exod 11:3), Luke’s depiction need not entail that all Jews are now antagonists of the church.

⁸⁹⁷ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 106; similarly, Dupont, “Pierre délivré de prison,” 342; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 427.

⁸⁹⁸ See n. 880.

⁸⁹⁹ See Kodell, “The Word of God Grew,” 511.

restoration of creation's bounty in the wilderness. Likewise, the conquest miracles blazed the path toward Israel's capture of Canaan. If Herod's death is an exodus-like miracle, we can expect this event will advance the church's story.

The key to viewing Herod's death as an exodus-like miracle is its impact on the church's treatment. Allen has observed that Acts 12 belongs to a series of episodes where the Jerusalem church faces harassment. First, the religious leaders assail Peter and John with threatening speech after these apostles heal a man (Acts 4:17–18, 21). Next, the leaders want to kill the Twelve for teaching in Jesus's name, and they only desist from this plan when Gamaliel talks them into settling for torture (5:33–40). The issue of capital punishment reemerges when Stephen's fiery speech provokes the Sanhedrin members to stone him (7:54–60). This execution unleashes a wave of persecution under the religious leaders' auspices (8:1b, 3; 9:1–2). Finally, Herod's attack on the church (12:1–4) brings up the rear of this sequence. Allen plausibly argues that Herod's death decisively ends this sequence, “allow[ing] the persecution cycle to return to its starting point” and facilitating the transition from Peter to Paul.⁹⁰⁰ Herod's death is an exodus-like event in its capacity to end the drama punctuating the beginning of Acts. Luke never returns to the subject of persecution in this region following Acts 12, giving the impression that Herod's death secures the Jerusalem church's future.⁹⁰¹

Herod's death rounds out the persecution faced by the church in the first half of Acts. Before his appearance, the church had reached a point of prosperity made possible by Saul's blinding, healing, and call to prophetic service. Herod disrupted this prosperity by killing James and fracturing the Twelve. The king extended his threat by arresting Peter. Nevertheless, God

⁹⁰⁰ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 134–36.

⁹⁰¹ Adapting Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 134–36.

rescued Peter from Herod's clutches in a scene filled with allusions to the exodus event. These overtones are the key to understanding Herod's demise. Herod succumbs to a miraculous death after the Caesareans acclaim him as a god. The king's demise is meaningful in the context of Acts 12 because it completes the pattern of the exodus event (oppression → miraculous affliction → release).⁹⁰² Like parallel LXX stories, Herod's death extinguishes his threat to the church. God has decisively intervened on the church's behalf, much as God did by leading Israel out of Egypt.

4.6.4. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

At the beginning of Acts 12, Herod occupies a position of power while the church finds itself in one of weakness.⁹⁰³ The church is more vulnerable following Herod's flurry of actions at the opening of this chapter than at any other point in Luke's story. By the end of Acts 12, these positions have been reversed: Herod has been humiliated, and the church is flourishing again.⁹⁰⁴ Luke's discourse indicates a reversal of Herod and the church's positions.

We have not encountered such a blatant reversal since Acts 1, where Judas's death complemented Jesus's exaltation. God vindicated Jesus by reconstituting his crucified body and disemboweling Judas, his betrayer. Given the resemblance of these episodes—reversal effected by a punitive miracle—the deaths of Judas and Herod form an *inclusio* around Acts 1–12. The

⁹⁰² The phrase “completing the pattern” is common among socio-rhetorical interpreters. To the best of my knowledge, this phrase stems from the concept of “pattern completion” in Fauconnier and Turner, *The Way We Think*.

⁹⁰³ Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 217.

⁹⁰⁴ Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 217.

church's story begins with a miraculous death that complements Jesus's exaltation. Its first half concludes with a similar event that ends the persecution of Judean believers. Punitive miracles appear in Luke's work at liminal moments to exhibit God's care for the church.

Characterization. Herod's death plays a marginal role in characterizing prophetic figures. James and Peter are eminently prophetic: they were tasked with proclaiming the kingdom and healing during Jesus's ministry and must witness to Christ in the following period (Luke 9:2; Acts 1:8).⁹⁰⁵ However, Herod's death does not relate to James and Peter *qua* prophets as we would expect based on the LXX prophetic storyline. The king's demise occurs after James's death, meaning this event does not protect James, enhance his ministry, afflict him, or receive an announcement from him. Peter's case is slightly different: Herod's death prevents a renewed search for this apostle. Nevertheless, this outcome hardly compares to the divine support for prophetic figures I demonstrated in the LXX. Herod's death neither precludes Peter's imprisonment nor facilitates additional ministry. At most, this event permits Peter to make a final appearance at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:7–11), where he expresses support for Paul and Barnabas's mission.⁹⁰⁶ The untethering of Herod's death from prophetic figures causes this event to appear as God's unmediated intervention on the church's behalf.

The development of prophetic topoi. The miracle in Acts 12 intersects with the topos of blessedness. Luke proceeds directly from Herod's death (Acts 12:23) to a statement of the growth and multiplication of "God's word" (ὁ δὲ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἡύξανεν καὶ ἐπληθύνετο; 12:24), which likely denotes the church. This result is roughly analogous to that of the exodus event. The exodus event transpired when Pharaoh oppressed the Hebrews in the context of their "growing

⁹⁰⁵ See n. 656.

⁹⁰⁶ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (1–12)*, 428.

and multiplying” (ἡὺξήθησαν καὶ ἐπληθύνθησαν; Exod 1:7). As I stated in chapter 2, Terence Fretheim has persuasively interpreted this growth and multiplication in light of the divine mandate to Adam and Eve (εὐλόγησεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς λέγων Αὐξάνεσθε καὶ πληθύνεσθε ...; Gen 1:28). Thus, Pharaoh’s offense consisted of opposing God’s “creational purpose” that was coming to fruition among the Hebrews.⁹⁰⁷ The book of Exodus does not apply αὐξάνω + πληθύνω to the Israelites in the aftermath of the exodus event, yet the reappearance of this formula in the first covenantal catalog (καὶ ἐπιβλέψω ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς, καὶ αὐξανῶ ὑμᾶς καὶ πληθυνῶ ὑμᾶς ...; Lev 26:9) confirms that God has returned Israel to a trajectory toward “growth and multiplication.” A similar situation exists in Acts 12. The church is the group among whom God’s creative purposes are realized at this stage of the prophetic storyline. Herod harassed this group and assumed the mantle of Pharaoh, who “[sought] to subvert God’s life-giving work with death-dealing efforts, to close down God’s work of multiplication and fruitfulness.”⁹⁰⁸ Accordingly, Herod’s death means the return of the church’s “fruitfulness.” God’s creative purposes are tied to the church.

The thematic development of God’s kingdom. Herod’s relationship to God’s kingdom resembles Saul’s before his encounter with Jesus. Luke never describes Saul as a satanic agent, yet Saul’s actions in Acts 8–9 promote Satan’s agenda. Similarly, Luke’s discourse provides a basis for viewing Herod as a satanic agent. Allen associates Herod with Satan based on the analogy of Jesus’s temptation: just as Satan was willing to receive worship belonging to God (Luke 4:6–7), Herod accepts an acclamation of divinity.⁹⁰⁹ Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom adds

⁹⁰⁷ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 112, emphasis removed.

⁹⁰⁸ Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*, 112–13.

⁹⁰⁹ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 110–11.

that Herod's failure to "give the glory [δόξα] to God" (Acts 12:23) reflects its origin in the devil, who lays claim to the "glory" (δόξα) of all kingdoms (Luke 4:6).⁹¹⁰ More generally, Frank Dicken observes that Herod's resistance to the gospel exhibits his alignment with Satan, the source of all such opposition.⁹¹¹ Herod is plausibly identified as a satanic agent given his association with the devil's purposes.

Herod's persecution represents Satan's final attempt to hinder the advance of God's kingdom during the church's Judean phase.⁹¹² Satan's agent, Herod, successfully fractures the Twelve. Nevertheless, this victory is fleeting. God swiftly rescues Peter from Herod's clutches. Soon after, God eliminates Herod, extinguishing his threat. These interventions wrap up the Judean phase of the church's history in a dramatic fashion. Satan's most successful assault on the church provokes the most outstanding divine response so far in Acts. The God of the exodus, the agent of Israel's formative deliverance, sides with the church. No effort against the disciples will likely succeed.

⁹¹⁰ Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative*, 186: "It was quite natural for Agrippa not to give the glory to God, because the glory of *his* kingdom belonged to Satan" (emphasis original). Yamazaki-Ransom also notes that Luke reserves ἐκψύχω for the deaths of Ananias, Sapphira, and Herod (Acts 5:5, 10; 12:23), suggesting this term describes the demise of satanic associates (*The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative*, 186 n. 108).

⁹¹¹ Dicken, *Herod as a Composite Character*, 142–45.

⁹¹² See Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 57.

4.7. The Blinding of Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:1–12)

4.7.1. Introduction

The stage for our final episode is set by Barnabas and Saul’s return to Antioch (Acts 12:25).⁹¹³ Before Herod’s appearance, Luke reported that a group of prophets arrived in this city (11:27). Agabus, one of their number, announced that a famine was about to overtake the world (11:28). This prediction led the Antiochian believers to take up a collection for their Judean counterparts, which Barnabas and Saul carried to Jerusalem (11:29–30). The pair have now made good on their church’s commitment and travel back to Antioch, ready for what the Spirit will do next.

This gift is a milestone in the church’s history. The Antiochians have given resources to support Judean believers, much as the early disciples redistributed resources among themselves to express their common “heart and soul” (Acts 4:32; see 2:44–45; 4:32–37). The gospel has clearly taken root among these Gentile “Christians” (11:26).⁹¹⁴ Indeed, Jerusalem’s example suggests that further divine activity is in store. Sharing resources in the Jerusalem church coincided with powerful apostolic testimony (see 2:44–45: sharing; 3:1ff.: testimony; also 4:32, 35–37: sharing; 4:33: testimony). Antioch is poised to become a new center of such ministry.

⁹¹³ Gk. Βαρναβᾶς δὲ καὶ Σαῦλος ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ πληρώσαντες τὴν διακονίαν. For the problem involved with this verse, which seems to show Barnabas and Saul returning to Jerusalem from Jerusalem, see Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 350–52. However one resolves this issue, Luke must mean that Barnabas and Saul, having traveled from Antioch to Jerusalem (Acts 11:30), now return to Antioch (see 13:1). Dupont’s solution is preferable: εἰς Ἱερουσαλὴμ modifies τὴν διακονίαν rather than ὑπέστρεψαν, meaning the pair returns [to Antioch] after completing their ministry to Jerusalem (“La mission de Paul « a Jérusalem » (Actes 12,25),” in *Études sur les Actes des Apôtres*, LD 45 [Paris: Cerf, 1967], 235–41).

⁹¹⁴ See Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*, 148.

Our final punitive miracle thus appears at a pivotal moment. Peter, the Jerusalem church, and the mission restricted to Jews are receding into the background, while Paul, the Antiochian church, and the mission to Jews and Gentiles are coming to the forefront. Paul's encounter with Bar-Jesus exhibits this liminality. Specifically, this episode adumbrates the relationship between the covenant and God's kingdom in the next stage of the prophetic storyline. As Christian missionaries start circulating in the Mediterranean world, Bar-Jesus, a member of the covenant community, tries to stop a Gentile from coming to faith. This effort amounts to an attempt to hinder the kingdom's expansion. Since Bar-Jesus falls victim to what looks like a covenantal sanction, his story presses the question of how the covenant people relate to God's kingdom as it takes root among the Gentiles.

4.7.2. Bar-Jesus's Blinding

Our last episode begins in Antioch, a city that has become prominent given the many Gentiles who recently came to faith here and Barnabas and Saul's work in the resultant church. Luke fixes our attention on a group of "prophets and teachers" in the congregation, whose roll notably features Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1).⁹¹⁵ As this group is engaged in priestly activities—"serving the Lord"⁹¹⁶ and fasting—the Holy Spirit "speaks": "Set apart for me Barnabas and

⁹¹⁵ Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 220: the placement of Barnabas and Saul's names at both ends of the list indicates their "place ... within the local community."

⁹¹⁶ Gk. *λειτουργούντων δὲ αὐτῶν τῷ κυρίῳ*. Many scholars interpret the group's "service" as worship (see Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 395; Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 221) or prayer (see Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 293; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 497; Holladay, *Acts*, 258), which are reasonable suggestions. However, I adopt a literal translation of *λειτουργέω* + *τῷ κυρίῳ* in light of the verb's Septuagintal usage. The LXX regularly employs *λειτουργέω* in the context of priestly (see Exod 28:35, 43; 1 Kgs 8:11; Neh 10:37) and Levitical service (see Num 1:50; 4:3; 8:22; 2 Chron 8:14). Luke's use of *λειτουργέω* shows the Antiochian prophets and teachers engaged in "priestly" work, albeit without defining the scope of this work (Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*,

Saul, for the work to which I have called them” (13:2). This manner of divine guidance is familiar. The Spirit “told” Philip to accompany the chariot carrying an Ethiopian eunuch (8:29), resulting in the gospel’s dispersal to what ancient readers likely understood as the earth’s southernmost reaches.⁹¹⁷ Likewise, the Spirit “told” Peter to join Cornelius’s men (10:19), leading to the inclusion of the first Gentile household in the church. The Spirit’s speech propels the gospel in new directions. The Antiochians do not hesitate to follow this directive. The leaders of the church commission Barnabas and Saul,⁹¹⁸ and the pair departs (13:3).

The text advances as Barnabas and Saul begin the first missionary journey (Acts 13:4).⁹¹⁹ Luke eagerly reiterates that the Spirit initiated this trip. The use of *μὲν οὖν* binds Acts 13:4 to the previous section,⁹²⁰ where the Spirit orchestrated this voyage. Moreover, Luke repeats that the missionaries have truly “been sent out by the Holy Spirit.”⁹²¹ The Spirit-commissioned pair sails to Cyprus by way of Seleucia, the port of Antioch. Cyprus is an obvious destination for the first leg of this trip. Barnabas comes from this island (4:36), and other missionaries have been active

1:604). Hermann Strathmann identifies this term’s trajectory: “[Acts 13:2] is the first [NT passage] to attest a transfer of the important OT cultic term to the purely spiritual Christian service of God ... It thus opens up the way for broader development” (Rudolf Meyer and Hermann Strathmann, “λειτουργέω,” *TDNT* 4:226–27; similarly, Daniel Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres (13–28)*, CNT 2/5b [Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2015], 23). Acts 13:2 exhibits and perhaps even stimulates the spiritualization of *λειτουργέω* in early Christian discourse.

⁹¹⁷ Clarice J. Martin, “A Chamberlain’s Journey and the Challenge of Liberation for Interpretation,” *Semeia* 47 (1989): 116–20.

⁹¹⁸ Gk. *ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας*. For the use of *ἐπιτίθημι* + *τὰς χεῖρας* to denote consecration, see Num 8:10; 27:18, 23; Deut 34:9; Acts 6:6.

⁹¹⁹ Holladay questions the existence of three missionary journeys, noting the difficulty of delineating the second and third journeys (*Acts*, 257 n. 1). Notwithstanding this challenge, I retain the designation “first missionary journey” because the limits of this trip are carefully circumscribed. The missionaries depart from Antioch after being set apart by the Spirit and commissioned by the church (Acts 13:1–3). They later return to this spot to report on their work (14:26–27). Moreover, the missionaries remain in Antioch after the work is accomplished (14:28), revealing that Luke distinguishes this from later voyages. There are ample reasons to view Acts 13:1–14:28 as a unit.

⁹²⁰ BDAG, s.v. “*μὲν*”: “*μὲν οὖν* denotes continuation.”

⁹²¹ Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:23.

here already (11:19), effectively laying the groundwork for this mission. The new missionaries arrive in Salamis, the port city on the east of the island, and preach in the synagogues (13:5). This act is characteristic of Saul. Saul preached in the synagogues of Damascus after encountering Jesus (9:20) and will do so elsewhere throughout his life (e.g., see 13:14; 17:1–3; 18:4; 19:8). Although we do not read of new believers or the formation of a church in Salamis,⁹²² the missionaries do not face a backlash as Saul experienced in Damascus (see 9:23–24). The trip to Cyprus is off to a promising start.

Barnabas and Saul continue their journey by traversing Cyprus (Acts 13:6). Upon reaching Paphos, they meet a man who arouses great interest, Bar-Jesus. Luke supplies two descriptions that cast this character in a negative light.⁹²³ First, Bar-Jesus is a “magician” (μάγος).⁹²⁴ μάγος does not appear elsewhere in Luke’s corpus, but the related terms μαγεύω and μαγεία appear in association with Simon the sorcerer (8:9–11). Since Simon was portrayed in dim light—his magic misled the Samaritans, forming the background of the gospel’s proclamation in their region—we should hear the same disapproving tone here.

Second, Bar-Jesus is a “Jewish false prophet” (ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον) (Acts 13:6). This description evokes a host of strictures and negative examples from the LXX. According to Deut 13:2–6, a prophet who encourages people to follow gods other than the Lord must be killed. God takes false prophecy with the utmost seriousness. Also relevant is the use of ψευδοπροφήτης

⁹²² Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 402.

⁹²³ I follow Schneider in reading ἄνδρα τινὰ μάγον as one phrase and ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον as a second phrase (*Die Apostelgeschichte*, 120 n. 25).

⁹²⁴ Arthur Darby Nock conducted the definitive study of the term μάγος. He argues that during the period when Luke wrote Acts, this noun could refer, on one hand, to a “Persian fire-priest” or, on the other hand, to a “magician or quack” (“Paul and the Magus,” *BegC* 5:164). The latter meaning clearly obtains in Acts 13.

to denote people who deliver unauthorized prophecies in the Lord's name (see Zech 13:2; Jer 6:13; 33:7–8, 11, 16; 34:9; 35:1; 36:8). As a ψευδοπροφήτης, Bar-Jesus makes a false claim to divine authorization. Since he is “Jewish,” his authorization purportedly stems from Israel's God.⁹²⁵

The portrayal of Bar-Jesus as a magician and false prophet produces a stark contrast. On one hand, we have Barnabas and Saul, men numbered among the Antiochian prophets and bearing a commission from Israel's God through the Spirit. On the other hand, we have Bar-Jesus, who traffics in the dark arts and falsely claims authorization from the same God.⁹²⁶ Luke's characterization of his *dramatis personae* has produced a moment of tension.

Luke develops the scene by reporting that Bar-Jesus is with Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus whom Luke describes as “intelligent” (Acts 13:7). Luke's language at this point is quite bare, leaving us to speculate about Bar-Jesus's relationship with Paulus.⁹²⁷ Regardless, the import of this connection is evident: the magician is in the position to influence the proconsul. Paulus's initial actions attest to his intelligence as he summons the missionaries to hear them

⁹²⁵ For the identification of Bar-Jesus as a “Jewish” false prophet—and thus, someone who claims to represent Israel's God—see John J. Kilgallen, “Acts 13:4–12: The Role of the Magos,” *EstBib* 55 (1997): 223–37; Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 344–49; similarly, Rick Strelan, “Who Was Bar Jesus (Acts 13,6–12)?,” *Bib* 85 (2004): 65–81.

⁹²⁶ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 397–98: “For Luke the powers which a μάγος has at his command are far too real for him to dismiss the matter so lightly [as charlatanism] ... These powers are the false powers with which man should have no truck: powers opposed to God yet subordinate to God.”

⁹²⁷ For attempts to define this relationship, see Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 398 (Bar Jesus was “in the retinue of Sergius Paulus”); Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:613 (“Bar-Jesus was with, that is, was at the court of, the proconsul”); Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 198 (“Barjesus nimmt vielleicht ... die Stelle eines Hoftheologen und -astrologen ein, der Sergius Paulus bei allen wichtigen Schriften berät und ihm die Gunst der himmlischen Mächte vermittelt”). Such positions are speculative. It is preferable to follow Nock: “[Elymas] is a man of religious potentiality who has some sort of vague position in the household of a great Roman” (“Paul and the Magus,” 5:183). Luke describes the fact of Bar-Jesus's influence rather than its basis.

out.⁹²⁸ Specifically, he wants to hear the “word of God.” By repeating this phrase within a short span of verses (see 13:5), Luke forges a connection between the proclamation in Salamis and Paulus’s invitation. The missionaries’ preaching has evidently aroused the proconsul’s interest.⁹²⁹ Paulus is an intelligent Gentile who is curious about the gospel.

The next section heightens the confrontation between Bar-Jesus and the missionaries. Bar-Jesus opposes Barnabas and Saul, an act fueled by his desire to prevent Paulus from believing their message (Acts 13:8).⁹³⁰ Why the magician wants to preclude this outcome is not unexplained, leading scholars to guess he is acting in self-interest.⁹³¹ Such speculation, though plausible, is beside the point. Bar-Jesus is acting in character, opposing the missionaries as people like him are wont to do. A false prophet naturally opposes the gospel, just as an intelligent person gives it a fair hearing. Bar-Jesus’s function is to resist the missionaries and present a foil to Paulus.

There is one surprising detail about Bar-Jesus left to consider. Whereas we read in Acts 13:6 that the opponent is “Bar-Jesus,” we learn in 13:8 that he is also “Elymas, the magician.” This new designation is problematic because Luke seems to claim that “Elymas” translates “Bar-Jesus,” which scholars agree is an impossible translation.⁹³² This finding has led to theories

⁹²⁸ Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Acts*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 192–93.

⁹²⁹ Bruce makes a similar observation: Paulus “wished to satisfy himself that what they [Barnabas and Saul] were propagating in public was not subversive” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 297).

⁹³⁰ The articular use of *πίστις* in Acts 13:8 should be understood along the lines of 6:7: just as many priests became obedient “to the faith,” the magician wants to divert the proconsul from the faith advocated by Barnabas and Saul (in agreement with Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 398–99; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 502).

⁹³¹ See Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 298–99 (the magician was concerned that “if he [Paulus] paid serious attention to them he would be less inclined to pay serious attention to [Bar-Jesus]”); Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:616 (“Acceptance of the Christian mission would no doubt have meant the end of his employment”).

⁹³² See Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:615.

explaining the relationship between the two names. The best solution takes “magician” as a translation of “Elymas.”⁹³³ Luke gives the opponent two names, Bar-Jesus and Elymas, and he provides the translation “magician” to clarify the latter.⁹³⁴ Luke is explaining a foreign term his audience might not grasp, as he did by translating “Barnabas” as “son of encouragement” (4:36).

This brings us to Saul’s entrance (Acts 13:9). In the context of Bar-Jesus’s opposition, Saul steps out from Barnabas’s shadow and becomes Luke’s new protagonist. Fittingly, Luke reveals Saul’s second name, “Paul.”⁹³⁵ Saul must now bear the name by which he is best remembered since he is occupying his renowned missionary role for the first time.⁹³⁶ Paul’s actions show he is thoroughly prophetic: he is filled with the Spirit, exhibits a prophetic gaze,⁹³⁷

⁹³³ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 398 n. 2; see also Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 198; Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 297; Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres* (13–28), 30.

⁹³⁴ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 398 n. 2: “The commentaries usually explain ‘Elymas’ with the Arabic word *elim*, meaning ‘the wise’: this would have been a thoroughly suitable title for Bar-Jesus ... to render *elim* by ὁ μάγος would be free but not wrong.” Alternately, Marguerat suggests that the Aramaic *haloma* (viz., “interprète de rêves”) might explain the magician’s second name (*Les Actes des apôtres* (13–28), 30 n. 18).

⁹³⁵ Barrett notes that ὁ καὶ “does not describe a change of name but introduces an alternate name,” much like ὁ καλούμενος (e.g., see Luke 6:5; Acts 1:23; *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:616). ὁ καὶ is used similarly in the Septuagint (see 1 Macc 8:20: Ἰούδας ὁ καὶ Μακκαβαῖος; also, 2 Macc 5:27; 8:1).

⁹³⁶ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 399 n. 1. For simplicity’s sake, I will henceforth refer to Luke’s new protagonist as “Paul,” even when referring to passages in Acts 7–12. It has been argued that Luke’s transition from “Saul” to “Paul” reflects that this character now operates where Greek is the predominant language (e.g., see Margaret H. Williams, *Jews in a Greco-Roman Environment*, WUNT 1/312 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013], 328). In my judgment, two considerations make this view unlikely. First, Luke consistently calls this figure “Saul” prior to Acts 13:9, even when he is operating in the church of Syrian Antioch, which is comprised of Greek-speaking “Hellenists” (Acts 11:25–26, 30; 13:1–2; see 11:20; also n. 832 above). Second, Luke does not revert to “Saul” after 13:9, even when this character visits Jerusalem (see 15:12, 22, 25; chs. 21–23 passim; cf. 22:7, 13, which are retrospective references). Luke introduces Saul’s second name in Acts 13:9 because this episode contains his first acts as a missionary.

⁹³⁷ Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:25: “Der fixierende Blick ... hat hier wohl kaum strafenden, eher prophetisch-durchschauend-entlarvenden Charakter”; similarly, Rick Strelan, “Strange Stares: ATENIZEIN in Acts,” *NovT* 41 (1999): 254. I agree that Paul’s gaze has a prophetic character given Luke’s use of ἀτενίζω elsewhere (see Acts 3:4; 14:9).

and pronounces Spirit-inspired words (13:10).⁹³⁸ In light of Bar-Jesus's characterization, Paul's introduction initiates a contest to determine whether he or the magician is the true prophet.⁹³⁹

Paul delivers the opening salvo in Acts 13:10.⁹⁴⁰ His speech in this verse consists of an indictment that moves from Bar-Jesus's character to his offense. The accusation draws much of its vocabulary from the LXX,⁹⁴¹ establishing Paul's bona fides as a "Septuagintal prophet."⁹⁴² Paul begins by indicting Bar-Jesus's character: the magician is exceedingly cunning⁹⁴³ and

⁹³⁸ Kilgallen, "The Role of the Magos," 235. Kilgallen argues that this portrayal of Paul resembles Luke's descriptions of Peter and Stephen: "Earlier in Acts, Peter and Stephen can be said to be described as prophets. Certainly, each is filled with the Holy Spirit and from this gift come speeches of prophetic power and wisdom" ("The Role of the Magos," 235). Luke depicts people as prophets by recording their filling with the Spirit and their resulting Spirit-inspired utterances. For a similar view, see David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 319–20.

⁹³⁹ Here I follow Marguerat, who argues that a primary function of Acts 13:4–12 is to reveal the true prophet of God (*Les Actes des apôtres* (13–28), 27).

⁹⁴⁰ The speech in Acts 13:10–11 is the first time Luke has allowed Paul to speak since chapter 9. These verses play an essential role in Paul's characterization by shaping readers' impressions of him. For this aspect of Paul's characterization, see Luke Macnamara, *My Chosen Instrument: The Characterization of Paul in Acts 7:58–15:41*, AnBib 215 (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2016), 256.

⁹⁴¹ Haenchen claims that "with the exception of ῥαδιούργημα [sic; ῥαδιουργία], every word of this verse may be found in the LXX" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 400, followed by Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:122). I have found no instances of νίε διαβόλος in the LXX. Moreover, the passages adduced by Haenchen to display the use of πάσης δικαιοσύνης are not impressive. In both cases, "all righteousness" refers to specific acts that God performs (see Gen 32:11; 1 Sam 12:7). In contrast, Paul describes Bar-Jesus as an "enemy of all righteousness," which concerns righteousness as an ethical quality (Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:617). The language of Acts 13:10 comes mainly, but not entirely from the LXX.

⁹⁴² Credit for the term "Septuagintal prophet" is due to Carl Holladay, who suggested this designation early in my work on this passage.

⁹⁴³ Gk. πλήρης παντὸς δόλου. Barrett suggests the translation "every kind of" for πᾶς in this and the following phrase (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:617). Although this is reasonable, I provide more general paraphrases above to emphasize the indictment's movement from general characteristics to the specific offense of preventing Paulus from hearing the gospel. For the use of δόλος in the LXX, see Sir 1:30 (ἡ καρδία σου πλήρης δόλου); 19:26 (τὰ ἐντὸς αὐτοῦ πλήρης δόλου); Jer 5:27 (οἱ οἴκοι αὐτῶν πλήρεις δόλου).

unscrupulous,⁹⁴⁴ a “son of the devil”⁹⁴⁵ who is hostile to all that is righteous.⁹⁴⁶ These phrases portray Bar-Jesus as a thoroughgoing adversary of God. Next, Paul poses a rhetorical question that clarifies Bar-Jesus’s offense: “Will you not stop perverting the Lord’s straight ways?”⁹⁴⁷ This question charges Bar-Jesus with opposing the missionaries’ work.⁹⁴⁸ In the context of Luke’s corpus, the reference to “the Lord’s straight ways” (τὰς ὁδοὺς [τοῦ] κυρίου τὰς εὐθείας) also recalls John the Baptist, whose ministry Luke described in terms of the opening summons of Second Isaiah (“Prepare the way of the Lord [τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου], make his paths straight [εὐθείας]”; Luke 3:4 ≈ Isa 40:3).⁹⁴⁹ Bar-Jesus has distorted “ways” much like what John “straightened,” revealing that Paul, whom the magician opposes, continues John’s work.⁹⁵⁰

⁹⁴⁴ Gk. πλήρης ... πάσης ῥαδιουργίας. BDAG defines ῥαδιουργία as “an endeavor to gain some personal end through clever or tricky means” (s.v.). This term appears nowhere else in the LXX or NT.

⁹⁴⁵ Gk. υἱὲ διαβόλου. Haenchen’s assessment of this phrase is on target: by describing Bar-Jesus as a son of the devil, Paul designates him as “the devil’s creature” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 400). Bar-Jesus resembles the devil and advances his will.

⁹⁴⁶ Gk. ἐχθρὲ πάσης δικαιοσύνης. See n. 941 for the meaning of “righteousness” in this phrase.

⁹⁴⁷ Gk. οὐ παύσῃ διαστρέφων τὰς ὁδοὺς [τοῦ] κυρίου τὰς εὐθείας; The combination ὁδός + κυρίου appears several times in the LXX (e.g., Gen 18:19; Judg 2:22; 2 Sam 22:22; Ps 17:22; Isa 26:8). This phrase is occasionally modified by εὐθύς (see Sir 39:24: αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ τοῖς ὁσίοις εὐθεῖαι; Hos 14:10: εὐθεῖαι αἱ ὁδοὶ τοῦ κυρίου; cf. Ezek 33:17: ἐροῦσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ λαοῦ σου Οὐκ εὐθεῖα ἡ ὁδὸς τοῦ κυρίου). The theme of “perverted ways” in Proverbs may also inform Luke’s thought (see Prov 10:9: ὁ δὲ διαστρέφων τὰς ὁδοὺς αὐτοῦ γνωσθήσεται; 11:20: βδέλυγμα κυρίῳ διεστραμμένοι ὁδοί). On whether κύριος in Acts 13:10 refers to God or Christ, see Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 2:123 n. 47; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 503. Fitzmyer reasonably leans toward “Lord” as a reference to God in 13:10 given his understanding of the adjacent phrase “hand of the Lord” in 13:11.

⁹⁴⁸ Luke’s discourse makes this equation clear. Just as Luke stated in Acts 13:8 that Bar-Jesus seeks to “turn” (διαστρέφω) the proconsul from the faith, Luke has Paul claim in 13:11 that the magician “perverts” (διαστρέφω) the Lord’s ways. Barrett is right that διαστρέφω has different meanings in 13:8 and 13:11 (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:617). Nevertheless, the repeated use of this term within a few verses associates the acts in question.

⁹⁴⁹ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres* (13–28), 32.

⁹⁵⁰ Elizabeth H. Arnold, “Something Wild: The Wilderness Aesthetic in Luke-Acts” (Emory University, PhD diss., 2021), 158–59, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (2645464940).

This indictment leads to the declaration of Bar-Jesus's sentence (Acts 13:11a). The Lord, whom Bar-Jesus ostensibly represents, will act in judgment against him.⁹⁵¹ Specifically, Paul declares that the magician will "be blind, not seeing the sun."⁹⁵² This result is not final: the blindness will endure "for a time,"⁹⁵³ meaning Bar-Jesus might be healed and converted.⁹⁵⁴ Regardless, the tone of Paul's speech is indignant rather than hopeful.

The divine sentence is implemented at once (Acts 13:11b). Luke describes the punishment as a "mist and darkness" falling on Bar-Jesus.⁹⁵⁵ This judgment has its intended effect: Bar-Jesus is blinded and walks around "looking for a guide" to help him find his way.⁹⁵⁶ The magician's weakness highlights Paul's power. Bar-Jesus presented himself as someone with

⁹⁵¹ For God as the likely referent of "Lord" in Acts 12:11, see Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 503; also 476. Fitzmyer seems to base his interpretation of this phrase on its parallels in Israel's scriptures. *χειρ κυρίου* is used throughout the LXX to express the exercise of divine power (e.g., Exod 9:3; Num 11:23; Ruth 1:13; 1 Sam 5:3; Isa 19:16). Barrett describes this expression as a means of "representing God's activity in the world" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:617). Luke uses *χειρ κυρίου* + *μετά* in Luke 1:66 and Acts 11:21 to describe the Lord's gracious presence (for the interpretation of these passages, see Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 476). The construction *χειρ κυρίου* + *ἐπὶ* of Acts 13:11 resembles the description of divine judgment in certain LXX passages (Judg 2:15; 1 Sam 5:3, 6; 7:13; 12:15; cf. 1 Kgs 18:46; 1 Esd 8:60; Ezra 7:6 for a positive valence). Acts 13:11 communicates that God will array Godself against Bar-Jesus.

⁹⁵² Gk. ἔση τυφλὸς μὴ βλέπων τὸν ἥλιον. Fitzmyer suggests that "not seeing the sun" indicates the extent of Bar-Jesus's blindness (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 503). This view is plausible because the phrase is otherwise redundant. Bar-Jesus's blindness will be complete: the sun, the brightest luminary in the sky, cannot relieve the magician's punishment.

⁹⁵³ Gk. ἄχρι καιροῦ. This phrase also appears in Luke 4:13 in connection with the devil's withdrawal from Jesus. The phrase indicates a period whose duration is unspecified but whose limit is assumed.

⁹⁵⁴ Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 199; Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:617.

⁹⁵⁵ Gk. ἀχλὺς καὶ σκότος. ἀχλὺς is a biblical *hapax legomenon*. BDAG defines the noun as "someth. that comes upon one like a fog and obscures vision, mist" (s.v.). There are two options for understanding this term. First, it is possible to read ἀχλὺς and the following σκότος as independent terms ("mist and darkness"). Second, these nouns may be joined as a hendiadys, resulting in the translation "dark mist" or "misty darkness" (Holladay, *Acts*, 262). My translation follows the first option to stay close to Luke's language. However, the second option is equally possible.

⁹⁵⁶ Gk. περιάγων ἐζήτει χειραγωγούς. Like ἀχλὺς, the term χειραγωγός is a biblical *hapax*. The related verb χειραγωγέω does appear on rare occasions (see Judg 16:26 [Rahlfs's A text]; Tob 11:16 [Rahlfs's S text]; Acts 9:8; 22:11). χειραγωγέω is used in each case in association with someone recently blinded.

special authorization from God, yet he is swiftly humbled upon encountering Paul and Barnabas. This defeat settles the contest between Bar-Jesus and Paul, commending the latter to Paulus as the bearer of the truth.

Luke ends the prophetic contest by describing Paulus's reaction (Acts 13:12). The proconsul comes to a state of "belief," being moved by the "teaching about the Lord."⁹⁵⁷ Marguerat observes that this outcome exhibits the vital union of miracles and verbal testimony in Luke's theology. In his words, "le premier [miracle] atteste et concrétise la fécondité de la seconde [parole]."⁹⁵⁸ Paul has brought God's word to Paphos in speech and power.⁹⁵⁹ This exhibition convinces Paulus that Paul, rather than Bar-Jesus, bears divine authorization. Accordingly, the proconsul becomes the first fruit of the new missionary's work among the Gentiles. Paul is now "bearing [Jesus's] name before the Gentiles" (9:15) to great effect.

We can discover the meaning of Bar-Jesus's defeat by probing its place in Luke-Acts. John Kilgallen has shown that the magician's story participates in a "trajectory" of Jewish opposition comprised of multiple "segments." The first segment appears in Luke's Gospel,

⁹⁵⁷ My interpretation of this verse follows Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:618–19. Barrett explains that the relationship between ἐκπλησσόμενος and the rest of the verse is ambiguous. This participle can be paired with τὸ γεγονός, in which case Paulus is amazed at the miracle and then believes the Lord's teaching. Alternately, it can be joined with ἐπὶ τῇ διδασκίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου, in which case the proconsul believes (absolute sense, denoting conversion), being amazed at the Lord's teaching. Barrett favors the second option given the order of words in Luke's text. I develop this interpretation by identifying ἐκπλησσόμενος as a circumstantial participle that reveals the cause of Paulus's belief. For τοῦ κυρίου as an objective genitive ("teaching about the Lord"), see Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1:619. It may be true that the missionaries' teaching comes *from* the Lord, but Luke's interest in this verse is that Paulus has believed the message *concerning* the Lord.

⁹⁵⁸ Marguerat, *Les Actes des apôtres* (13–28), 33.

⁹⁵⁹ Richard Pervo notes that Luke does not report any preaching from the missionaries in this episode, which he takes as a sign that Paulus's "belief is based on the cursing of the magus" (*Acts: A Commentary*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, Herm [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009], 325; cf. 327 n. 80). I agree that Paulus's belief is stimulated by Bar-Jesus's blinding. Nevertheless, I find it more natural to take the "teaching about the Lord" (Acts 13:12) as a reference to unnarrated preaching, as Marguerat implies. Luke presupposes that Paul teaches Paulus and backs up this teaching with a display of divine power.

where some Jews oppose Jesus's ministry from beginning to end (Luke 4:28–29; 22:47ff.). The second segment appears in Acts 1–12 as the Jewish leaders resist the disciples' work in Palestine (see Acts 4:1–22; 5:17–42; 6:8–8:3).⁹⁶⁰ The third segment appears in Acts 13–28, taking the form of Jewish efforts to hinder Paul's work in the wider Mediterranean world (see 13:8, 44–45, 50; 14:1–2, 5–6, 19; 17:5).⁹⁶¹ Kilgallen's schema requires amplification at one point: whereas opposition in segments one and two manifests as resistance to ministry among Jews, the opposition expands in segment three to include resistance to ministry among Gentiles (see 13:8; 14:2, 19). This framework is essential to appreciating Acts 13. The Cyprus episode initiates this trajectory's last segment.⁹⁶² Bar-Jesus's attempt to thwart Paulus's conversion continues the "opposition" trajectory and adapts it to ministry in the Mediterranean world among Gentiles.

More generally, the Cyprus episode reflects the advancement of the prophetic storyline. Paulus is a Gentile who believes the gospel upon witnessing a miraculous judgment.⁹⁶³ His story broadly exhibits the divine recognition sequence (offense → punishment → divine recognition) I have described in previous chapters.⁹⁶⁴ However, this sequence formerly ended with Gentiles

⁹⁶⁰ Kilgallen focuses on the "violent opposition of Jewish officialdom" in Acts 3–8, but he acknowledges that this theme also appears in "sections of Chapters 9 and 12" ("The Role of the Magos," 233).

⁹⁶¹ Kilgallen, "The Role of the Magos," 230–36. Whereas Kilgallen restricts the third segment to Acts 13–14, I expand it to include the second half of Acts. This expansion is warranted by 17:5, where some Jews oppose Paul's ministry in Thessalonica.

⁹⁶² Kilgallen, "The Role of the Magos," 233–34.

⁹⁶³ For the role of Bar-Jesus's blinding in moving Paulus, a Gentile, to faith, see Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts*, 201.

⁹⁶⁴ The divine recognition sequence usually maintains the identity of the punished and illuminated parties. However, these parties can be distinguished. In 2 Kgs 18–19, divine punishment falls on the Assyrians, leading all other nations to recognize the Lord. Acts 13 presents a similar scenario.

recognizing the Lord from afar.⁹⁶⁵ The Egyptians recognized God because of the signs and wonders among them but never became the Lord's devotees. The Philistines acknowledged the Lord due to the plagues attending the ark's presence but retained their gods. Antiochus IV perceived God's power in light of the events leading to his death but was denied the chance to "become a Jew." In contrast, the divine recognition sequence in Acts 13 culminates in a Gentile's inclusion among God's people. The divine activities that formerly caused outsiders to notice God now make them insiders. Luke's discourse adapts the divine recognition sequence to reflect the expansion of God's kingdom.

The character of Bar-Jesus's punishment becomes meaningful in light of this expansion. Several scholars have noted that the description of the magician's blinding resembles a covenantal curse in Deut 28:⁹⁶⁶

Table 11: Parallels between Acts 13 and Deut 28

	<u>Acts 13:11</u>	<u>Deut 28:28–29</u>
Agent	The Lord (χεῖρ κυρίου ἐπὶ σέ ...)	The Lord (πατάξαι σε κύριος ...)
Punishment	Blindness (ἔσθ' ὁ τυφλός)	"Derangement and blindness and displacement of mind," ⁹⁶⁷ making one like "a blind man in darkness [ὁ τυφλὸς ἐν τῷ σκότει]
Need for a guide in the day	"He went around seeking a guide"; the sun does not relieve this condition	"You will grope about at noon ... no one will help you"

⁹⁶⁵ The closest Septuagintal analog to Acts 13 appears in Dan 4. Nebuchadnezzar's experience of divine punishment led him to become an ardent promoter of Judean monotheism, roughly equating to his incorporation into God's kingdom. The critical difference between these episodes concerns their results. Nebuchadnezzar's "conversion" was anecdotal, an event pointing to a new direction for the prophetic storyline without follow-up. Paulus's conversion is introductory, the first of many conversions won by Paul among the Gentiles. Paulus's miracle-inspired belief initiates a new and enduring expansion of God's kingdom among the Gentiles.

⁹⁶⁶ Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, "Acts of the Apostles: English Translation and Commentary," *BegC* 4:146; Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 82; Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 170–71.

⁹⁶⁷ My translation of ἐκστάσει διανοίας follows *GELS*, s.v. "ἔκστασις."

No verbal affinities make Deut 28:28–29 an evident intertext of Acts 13:11. However, these passages present a remarkably similar sequence: the Lord punishes an unfaithful member of the covenant community with blindness, resulting in their reliance on someone else to accomplish basic tasks.⁹⁶⁸ The possibility of hearing an allusion to Deut 28 increases given my finding that punitive miracles often instantiate covenantal blessings and curses. In light of my analysis of the LXX prophetic storyline, it is reasonable to interpret Bar-Jesus’s blinding as a type 2 covenantal miracle, denoting cursing. Opposing Paulus’s conversion has caused Bar-Jesus to fall victim to a Deuteronomic sanction.

The coordination of a type 2 covenantal miracle and Bar-Jesus’s offense is suggestive. These miracles have generally been reserved for acts of rank covenantal faithlessness. Elijah withheld rain from Israel at the time of Ahab (1 Kgs 17:1; see Lev 26:19–20; Deut 28:23) given the king’s copious indulgence in pagan practices (see 1 Kgs 16:29–33). Likewise, some Jews under Judas Maccabeus providentially fell in battle (2 Macc 12:32–34; see Lev 26:17; Deut 28:25) because they had taken possession of certain “consecrated objects of the Jamnian idols” (2 Macc 12:39–40; see Deut 7:25–26).⁹⁶⁹ In contrast, Bar-Jesus has not violated a clear covenantal stipulation, yet he has fallen victim to what looks like a covenantal sanction. The definition of covenantal fidelity has undergone a modest reconfiguration. Faithfulness to the covenant now includes accepting the expansion of God’s kingdom among the Gentiles.⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁸ For Luke’s profile of Bar-Jesus, see Kilgallen, “The Role of the Magos,” 226–30; Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 82. Kilgallen argues that Luke portrays Bar-Jesus as distinctly Jewish. Garrett suggests that Bar-Jesus’s punishment is a Deuteronomic curse in consequence of his covenantal disobedience. In other words, Bar-Jesus is a member of the covenant community (cf. *The Demise of the Devil*, 146 n. 48).

⁹⁶⁹ Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 448–49.

⁹⁷⁰ Jervell argues that covenantal faithfulness in Luke-Acts is a matter of “believ[ing] *all things* in the law and the prophets, which includes the acceptance of the circumcised Messiah promised the people and now come” (“The Law in Luke-Acts,” 142; emphasis original). I claim that Bar-Jesus’s blinding presupposes a similar

Bar-Jesus's blinding illustrates the dynamic relationship of kingdom and covenant in Luke-Acts. Israel remains God's covenant people.⁹⁷¹ Hence, Jewish Christians "zealously" observe the law (see Acts 21:20).⁹⁷² Nevertheless, God has "taken" believing Gentiles as a second "people for his name" (Acts 15:14) in addition to Israel.⁹⁷³ These Gentiles belong to God's kingdom without obligation to the Mosaic covenant.⁹⁷⁴ Bar-Jesus tried to thwart a Gentile's entrance into the latter group, making him an opponent to the development of God's kingdom. Accordingly, the magician falls victim to a covenantal sanction, showing that the covenant accords with this expansion of God's people.⁹⁷⁵

4.7.3. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline

Acts 13 is a transitional moment in the prophetic storyline. As Paul and Barnabas minister among Jews and Gentiles in the Mediterranean world, God's kingdom expands. Individuals from

reconfiguration concerning the salvation of Gentiles, which Israel's scriptures also anticipate (see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Jewish People and the Mosaic Law in Luke-Acts," in *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching* [New York: Paulist, 1989], 194–95).

⁹⁷¹ Nils Alstrup Dahl, "'A People for His Name' (Acts XV. 14)," *NTS* 4 (1958): 324; Jervell, "The Law in Luke-Acts," 141; Fitzmyer, "The Jewish People," 189.

⁹⁷² Jervell, "The Law in Luke-Acts," 137–43.

⁹⁷³ Dahl, "A People for His Name," 326; similarly, Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 123.

⁹⁷⁴ Fitzmyer, "The Jewish People," 193–94; David Seccombe, "The New People of God," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 366; David M. Miller, "Reading Law as Prophecy: Torah Ethics in Acts," in *Torah Ethics and Early Christian Identity*, ed. Susan J. Wendel and David M. Miller (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 88–89; cf. Jervell, "The Law in Luke-Acts," 144.

⁹⁷⁵ See Fitzmyer, "The Jewish People," 194–95: "Gentile Christians are associated with Jewish Christians and find with them the same salvation 'through the grace of our Lord Jesus' ... but they find it not because 'the law and the prophets' have been abrogated and are no longer normative, but because the law and the prophets themselves have provided for their share in the very promises made to the fathers of old." Bar-Jesus's blinding indirectly expresses the relationship between covenant and kingdom Fitzmyer envisions.

both groups receive the missionaries' message, resulting in the diversification of God's people. This people will henceforth be plural, consisting of the covenant community of Jews and an "associate people" of Gentiles.⁹⁷⁶

This context brings Bar-Jesus's story into focus. Bar-Jesus is the first Jew in Luke's story to oppose the evangelization of Gentiles.⁹⁷⁷ Accordingly, the outcome of his story suggests how covenant and kingdom are related. Bar-Jesus falls victim to a type 2 covenantal miracle, denoting cursing, which indicates he violated the covenant. Luke's discourse expands covenantal faithfulness to include accepting God's work among the Gentiles. The covenant with Israel and God's renewed kingdom are not coterminous. However, these realities often overlap and are certainly not opposed to each other.

Characterization. Like Peter vis-à-vis Ananias and Sapphira, Paul's encounter with Bar-Jesus establishes his prophetic credentials.⁹⁷⁸ Paul exhibits prophetic insight into Bar-Jesus's heart (Acts 13:10).⁹⁷⁹ He engages in prophetic discourse when he indicts the magician and announces God's judgment (13:10–11a). God validates Paul by backing his words with a display of divine power (13:11b). The new missionary emerges from this contest as a bona fide prophet.

Similarly, Bar-Jesus's blinding elucidates Paul's prophetic task. The most explicit articulation of this task thus far appears in Jesus's words to Ananias: "[Paul] is my chosen vessel for bearing my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15; see

⁹⁷⁶ Jervell, "The Law in Luke-Acts," 143.

⁹⁷⁷ Peter met resistance from some Jewish believers after preaching to Cornelius (Acts 11:2–3). However, these believers relented once Peter described the Gentiles' reception of the Spirit (11:15–18). With Bar-Jesus, we encounter a Jew who opposes evangelizing Gentiles as a matter of course.

⁹⁷⁸ For this parallel, see Tosco, *Pietro e Paolo*, 196–97; similarly, Nock, "Paul and the Magus," 5:188.

⁹⁷⁹ Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 199.

also 22:14–15; 26:16–18). Paul has already proclaimed the gospel to “the children of Israel” with little result other than opposition (see 9:20–25, 29–30). He now encounters an unbelieving Gentile for the first time with the visit to Cyprus. The Spirit enables Paul to rise to the challenge, enhancing his ministry with a miraculous judgment. The initial empowerment of Paul’s prophetic task comes not while evangelizing Jews but a Gentile. This arrangement suggests that Paul’s career will primarily focus on ministry to the latter group.

A final issue to probe is what Bar-Jesus’s blinding reveals about Paul’s development. Many scholars observe that the magician’s punishment resembles what Paul experienced en route to Damascus: he is blind and unable to “see” (μὴ βλέπων, Acts 13:11a // οὐδένα ἑβλεπεν, 9:8 [ECM]), making him reliant on “guides” (ἐξήτει χειραγωγούς, 13:11b // χειραγωγοῦντες δὲ αὐτόν, 9:8).⁹⁸⁰ The significance of this parallel is disputed. Some writers claim that the encounter with Bar-Jesus represents Paul facing his demons or, as Johnson puts it, the moment when Paul “fight[s] the final battle with the ‘Jewish false prophet’ within him.”⁹⁸¹ A more plausible explanation is rooted in Paul’s character development. The encounter between Bar-Jesus and Paul ends precisely as the initial meeting between Paul and the risen Lord, revealing that Paul

⁹⁸⁰ See Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 84–85; Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 2:163; Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 224, 227; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Brian McNeil (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 54–55; Szu-Chuan Lin, *Wundertaten und Mission: Dramatische Episoden in Apg 13–14*, EH 23/623 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), 132–33; Heininger, “Im Dunstkreis der Magie,” 277; Karl Matthias Schmidt, “Der weite Weg vom Saulus zum Paulus: Anmerkungen zur narrativen Funktion der ersten Missionsreise,” *RB* 119 (2012): 85–86; Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 185–86; Macnamara, *My Chosen Instrument*, 257–58.

⁹⁸¹ Lin, *Wundertaten und Mission*, 133; Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity*, 54–55; Schmidt, “Der weite Weg,” 81–83; Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 227. Johnson ultimately rejects this view.

has moved from being the victim of Jesus's power to its conduit.⁹⁸² This episode shows that Paul fully occupies the role Jesus sketched out for him in 9:15 ("He is my chosen vessel ...").⁹⁸³

The development of prophetic topoi. The miracle in Acts 13 develops the topos of blindness. Like Paul's ailment in Acts 9, it is reasonable to interpret Bar-Jesus's physical blindness as a sign of his spiritual blindness.⁹⁸⁴ Bar-Jesus is oblivious to what God is doing in this stage of the prophetic storyline. The development of this topos differs from what I observed in Acts 9 given its relationship to the second half of Acts. Hartsock notes that Bar-Jesus's blinding is an appropriate beginning to Paul's mission in light of parallel references to blindness in Jesus's inaugural sermon (Luke 4:18), the Damascus road story (Acts 9:8), and Paul's meeting with the Roman Jews (28:27).⁹⁸⁵ "Blindness" appears at significant junctures in Luke's work. Further, Kilgallen suggests that the use of this topos in Acts 13 has a special affinity to its appearance in Acts 28. Bar-Jesus's story presents a "concrete example" of the "religious blindness" that Paul condemns in Rome.⁹⁸⁶ These insights hint at how Bar-Jesus's blinding fits into the second half of Acts. Parallel cases of spiritual blindness appear at the beginning and end of Paul's ministry, forming an *inclusio* around Acts 13–28.⁹⁸⁷ This *inclusio* indicates that spiritual blindness among some of Paul's Jewish auditors is a persistent feature of his ministry.

⁹⁸² Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 2:163; Macnamara, *My Chosen Instrument*, 257–58.

⁹⁸³ Macnamara, *My Chosen Instrument*, 258.

⁹⁸⁴ Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts*, 197. According to Hartsock, Bar-Jesus initially exhibits his "spiritual blindness" by opposing Paulus's conversion. The magician's physical blindness simply reveals his spiritual condition, in keeping with the conventional understanding of blindness (*viz.*, "the physically blind man is also spiritually blind, unable to render good advice or adequate spiritual guidance").

⁹⁸⁵ Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts*, 199.

⁹⁸⁶ Kilgallen, "The Role of the Magos," 229–30.

⁹⁸⁷ Adapting Hartsock, *Sight and Blindness in Luke-Acts*, 203–4, who makes a similar observation concerning Luke 4 and Acts 28.

The thematic development of God's kingdom. The common denominator in the episodes I have examined in Acts is competition between the divine and diabolical realms. Punitive miracles occur when God's kingdom collides with Satan's dominion. This finding readily applies to Acts 13. Bar-Jesus is a "son of the devil" (Acts 13:10), a satanic agent who accomplishes his master's will. The magician is blinded "for a time" (ἄχρι καιροῦ; 13:11), associating him with Satan, who withdrew from Jesus "for a time" (ἄχρι καιροῦ) after his defeat in the wilderness (Luke 4:13).⁹⁸⁸ Finally, Bar-Jesus tries to prevent God's word from taking root (Acts 13:8), which is the very activity ascribed to Satan in the parable of the sower (Luke 8:12).⁹⁸⁹ Luke's discourse clearly presents Bar-Jesus's affiliation with Satan.

As Paul and Barnabas are poised to begin their mission, Satan's emissary desperately tries to stop them.⁹⁹⁰ A miraculous judgment stymies this effort, clearing the way for the missionaries to operate in the wider Mediterranean world. God's victory appears decisive. Aside from a passing remark (see Acts 26:18), Luke's narrative contains no further references to Satan. This absence indicates the adversary's powerlessness to stop the gospel as it advances among the Gentiles.⁹⁹¹ Likewise, Luke's discourse henceforth lacks punitive miracles, meaning Satan no longer mounts serious counteroffensives that God must check. Paul and his associates will

⁹⁸⁸ See Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 41–43, 85.

⁹⁸⁹ Monnig, "Satan in Lukan Narrative and Theology," 255.

⁹⁹⁰ For the opposition faced at the "great and significant beginnings" in Luke-Acts (Luke 4:1–11 // Acts 8:5–24 // 13:4–12), see Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity*, 54. Klauck seems to suggest that the latter two episodes, like the first one, are instances of satanic opposition; Simon Magus and Bar-Jesus are "poor wretches who have been led astray."

⁹⁹¹ Adapting Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 84–85. Garrett argues that Paul's encounter with Bar-Jesus is a programmatic introduction to the Pauline mission. This episode shows that Paul possesses greater authority than Satan, which explains the missionary's ability to release Gentiles from Satan's authority in the ensuing narrative.

encounter much opposition before the gospel reaches Rome. Nevertheless, Satan's threat decreases from this point forward, suggesting an acceleration of his "demise."⁹⁹²

4.8. Conclusions

This chapter has probed the intersection of punitive miracles and the narrative of Luke-Acts. The premise guiding my investigation is that Luke's two volumes continue the early Christian prophetic storyline, understood as the story about the formation of God's earthly kingdom that begins in Israel's scriptures and extends into the Christian era. I will now present the results of this study. First, I will examine the coherence of Luke's punitive miracles with the prophetic storyline. Second, I will analyze how these events adapt Septuagintal patterns and conventions. Third, I will synthesize these findings to determine how early Christians would likely understand Luke's punitive miracles in the context of their sacred history.

4.8.1. The Coherence of Lukan Punitive Miracles and ECPR's Prophetic Storyline

Before addressing the matter at hand, a word is in order about the relationship of Luke-Acts to the Septuagint's prophetic storyline, which predicates the following discussion. Luke's two volumes exhibit a definite, albeit ill-defined, relationship to this storyline. The events of Luke-Acts presuppose an extensive history of God's dealings with Israel oriented toward the formation of God's earthly kingdom. However, Luke's narrative stands at a distance from this history. The evangelist begins at his point of interest, the time of Herod the Great (Luke 1:5), instead of

⁹⁹² See Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 108–9.

picking up from a particular book's ending. This remove presses the question of how we should conceptualize the relationship of Luke's narrative to the storyline traced in previous chapters.

The results of my last chapter suggest the way forward. While seeking to orient books like 1–2 Chronicles and 1–4 Maccabees to the Septuagint's prophetic storyline, I observed that Genesis–2 Kings comprises the Septuagint's narrative center of gravity. This "Primary History" presents an essentially continuous narrative from creation to exile that is amenable to a reading informed by the early Christian prophetic storyline. Other LXX narratives do not rival the Primary History in its scope and detail. Readers who engage these texts with the prophetic storyline in mind must do so against the background of Genesis–2 Kings. From this vantage, the books in question exhibit three postures toward the Primary History and its vision of God's kingdom: continuation, reconfiguration, and relativization. The first two categories can be used to triangulate the relationship between Luke-Acts and the LXX prophetic storyline.⁹⁹³

On one hand, Luke-Acts continues the prophetic storyline, picking it up roughly as it emerges from the Primary History.⁹⁹⁴ Luke assumes knowledge of the Second Temple period but rarely refers to this era. His silence is consonant with Vernon Robbins's observation that early Christians understood God's kingdom as "restarting" in the events of the Christian movement. Luke resumes a narrative that effectively ended with Israel losing political sovereignty.⁹⁹⁵ The evangelist presupposes that God has worked among the people in the interim. The people have returned from exile, the temple has been rebuilt, and God's Spirit remains active. Moreover,

⁹⁹³ "Relativization" does not adequately describe the relationship of Luke-Acts to the prophetic storyline.

⁹⁹⁴ See Vernon K. Robbins, "The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 312–13.

⁹⁹⁵ See Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 226–27.

many of Luke's early readers undoubtedly knew texts like 1–2 Maccabees, whose events they likely viewed as the temporary renewal of God's kingdom during the Hellenistic era. Regardless, Luke-Acts primarily looks to Genesis–2 Kings as the foundational sequence of sacred history. God's kingdom is being renewed after an extended absence.

On the other hand, Luke-Acts reconfigures the prophetic storyline. The evangelist does not simply resume the story of God's earthly kingdom. He portrays his subject matter as this storyline's climax, resulting in substantial discontinuity. For example, I argued that Luke 1 expresses continuity with a twist. Luke initially portrays Zechariah as the latest in a series of figures with whom God has communicated to accomplish the divine plan. The priest seems to occupy a moment when the prophetic storyline will resume as normal. However, Zechariah is swiftly punished when he responds to a divine promise in good Abrahamic fashion. This outcome expresses the increased prominence of belief in God's renewed kingdom. I will review additional ways Luke's discourse communicates discontinuity in due course.

The way Luke uses punitive miracles elucidates his general posture. Just as the punitive miracles in the Septuagint's "divergent voices" index each book's stance toward the storyline emerging from Genesis–2 Kings, Luke's narration of these events exhibits his distinct manner of carrying the prophetic storyline into a new context. I will synthesize the findings of the "consequences for the prophetic storyline" sections in this chapter to develop my claim.

Luke's miraculous judgments contribute to characterization, the development of prophetic topoi, and the thematic development of God's kingdom in a manner highly continuous with the LXX prophetic storyline, especially as it appears in Genesis–2 Kings. Concerning characterization, several of Luke's punitive miracles are tied to prophetic tasks. Ananias and Sapphira's deaths intersect with Peter's task of "strengthening his brothers." Bar-Jesus's blinding

empowers Paul's task of "bearing Jesus's name" before the Gentiles. Judas's death vindicates Jesus as he "reigns over the house of David forever." These miracles portray Luke's protagonists as divine agents engaged in tasks central to advancing God's kingdom. The same association obtains in the Primary History, where such events depict prophetic figures as the objects of God's concern (Abraham, David) or powerful divine agents (Moses, Elijah, Elisha). This association recedes in the Septuagint's divergent voices. The Chronicler attenuates the relationship between prophets and miraculous judgments. Likewise, the books of Maccabees largely omit prophets and kings. The characterizing role of punitive miracles in Luke-Acts establishes continuity with the Primary History. Luke picks up where 2 Kings left off.

In the realm of prophetic topoi, Luke's punitive miracles develop many of the concerns I detailed in previous chapters. I discovered that divine action through a select individual, blessedness, and injustice are the most prominent topoi associated with punitive miracles in the Primary History. The latter two topoi remain central in the books of Maccabees and Daniel, promoting the association of these texts with Genesis–2 Kings. Much the same finding applies to Luke-Acts. Luke's punitive miracles develop many of the topoi prominent in the LXX prophetic storyline (divine action; blessedness; hardness of people's hearts; rejection of the prophet), connecting his narrative to the sacred history preceding it. Punitive miracles produce continuity with the prophetic storyline when they develop familiar topoi in new contexts.

Concerning God's kingdom, Luke's miraculous judgments advance God's earthly dominion in the same manner as the miracles analyzed in chapters 2–3. In chapter 2, I argued that the punitive miracles in the Primary History develop God's kingdom in two ways. First, these miracles are integral to the fulfillment of God's promises, which have as their goal the formation of God's earthly kingdom populated by people who reflect God's character. Second,

these miracles preserve God's kingdom. Given these roles, punitive miracles conspicuously intersect with the prophetic storyline in Genesis–2 Kings.

In chapter 3, I established that the same roles persist in the Septuagint's divergent voices. The books of Chronicles slightly diverge from the roles described above. The Chronicler's punitive miracles perform the latter role (preserving God's kingdom) but not the former one (forming God's kingdom). Because the Chronistic History multiplies retributive events, miraculous and non-miraculous alike, even these "preservative" punitive miracles reconfigure God's kingdom into a highly regulated dominion. In contrast, the books of Maccabees do not reconceive the role of punitive miracles in Israel's history. The Maccabean miracles are "formative" and "preservative," with these two roles occasionally overlapping. The relevant miracles preserving God's kingdom work much like those in the Primary History. The miraculous judgments that help form God's kingdom display some development. The miracles in 1 Maccabees play a role in the emergent Jewish state's development under the Hasmoneans, much as those in Genesis–2 Kings realize God's earthly kingdom among the Israelites. The miracles in 2–3 Maccabees break new ground, drawing some Gentiles into the penumbra of God's kingdom. *Mutatis mutandis*, the Septuagint's divergent voices preserve how punitive miracles intersect with the prophetic storyline.

Luke uses punitive miracles in the ways described above. Most of Luke's punitive miracles are tied to God's promises and the renewal of God's kingdom. Judas's death publicly advertises Jesus's vindication, facilitating apostolic preaching on the day of Pentecost and beyond. Saul's blinding transforms the church's most vicious foe into its champion, ending the post-Stephen persecution and laying the groundwork for the Gentile mission. Herod's death produces a dramatic climax to the first half of Acts, concluding the cycles of apostolic witness

and official antagonism that mark the Judean phase of the church's history. Finally, Bar-Jesus's blinding overcomes the effort to thwart Paul's first evangelistic encounter with a Gentile, clearing the way for his operation in the wider Mediterranean world. The Lukan punitive miracles actively promote God's renewed kingdom.

Ananias and Sapphira's deaths are the only Lukan punitive miracles closely implicated in the preservation of God's kingdom. All the relevant miracles in Acts are "preservative" at a high degree of abstraction.⁹⁹⁶ Yet this couple's expiration is primarily a matter of guarding the church's integrity at a moment when its story might veer off course. The miracles in Acts 5 generate a modicum of momentum in Luke's narrative: observers are moved to "fear," and the gathered believers are called the "church" for the first time. However, the effects of these deaths are primarily restricted to the immediate episode. God's intervention in Acts 5:1–11 is an ad hoc measure to prevent the church's deterioration. In sum, Luke's punitive miracles intersect with the prophetic storyline by forming and preserving God's kingdom.

Continuity with the prophetic storyline is only part of the story. Luke's punitive miracles simultaneously depart from what has come before. The way these miracles contribute to characterization is a case in point. Zechariah's muting moves him from a priestly role grounded in the covenant to a prophetic role oriented toward God's renewed kingdom. Likewise, Saul's blinding moves him from resisting God's new work to a prophetic role pertaining to this work. My investigation of the LXX prophetic storyline never uncovered a punitive miracle that produces a prophet. Luke's discourse adapts the LXX divine recognition sequence (offense →

⁹⁹⁶ The remaining miracle, Zechariah's muting, is an outlier. The priest's miraculous punishment can hardly be called "preservative" given the triviality of his offense. Zechariah's questioning of Gabriel in no way threatens God's plans for John. Likewise, his experience does not promote the development of God's kingdom. Zechariah's healing has a "sign-like" quality for those around him, alerting onlookers to God's activity in John's birth. However, the restoration of Zechariah's speech has no lasting consequences. Zechariah's story is anecdotal rather than integral to Luke's continuation of the prophetic storyline.

punishment → divine recognition) to the conditions of God's renewed kingdom. Using punitive miracles to produce prophets moves the prophetic storyline into new territory.

The same finding obtains concerning prophetic topoi. The way Luke's punitive miracles develop these topoi is often novel. The miracles that develop "blessedness" accentuate the association of this topos with belief (Zechariah's muting, through his juxtaposition with Mary), prosperity in the "diaspora," a former site of covenantal cursing (Saul's blinding; see Acts 8:1; 9:31), and God's creative purposes now located in the church (Herod's death; see Acts 12:24 // Gen 1:28). Ananias and Sapphira's deaths communicate that "hardness of people's hearts" is not an enduring feature of God's people in this stage of the prophetic storyline. Saul's blinding leads him to embrace a prophetic role marked by rejection, a departure from the conventional use of punitive miracles to vindicate prophets amid "rejection." Luke's punitive miracles develop familiar prophetic topoi in unexpected ways, indicating some degree of a break with the past.

Finally, Luke's punitive miracles develop God's kingdom in a novel manner. Luke's punitive miracles are regularly implicated in the conflict between God and Satan. The "slanderer" (ὁ διάβολος) appears in some Septuagintal writings (see 1 Chron 21:1; Job 1:6ff.; Zech 3:1–2), but LXX punitive miracles never play a role in God's opposition to this figure. In contrast, every miraculous judgment in Acts is reasonably interpreted as a sign of collision between the divine and diabolical realms.⁹⁹⁷ Luke's "formative" miracles promote God's kingdom by defeating satanic agents (Judas; Saul; Herod; Bar-Jesus) who oppose God's plans. The "preservative" miracles in Acts 5 guard the kingdom's integrity by neutralizing Ananias and Sapphira, who are characterized in similar terms. Luke's punitive miracles intersect with the

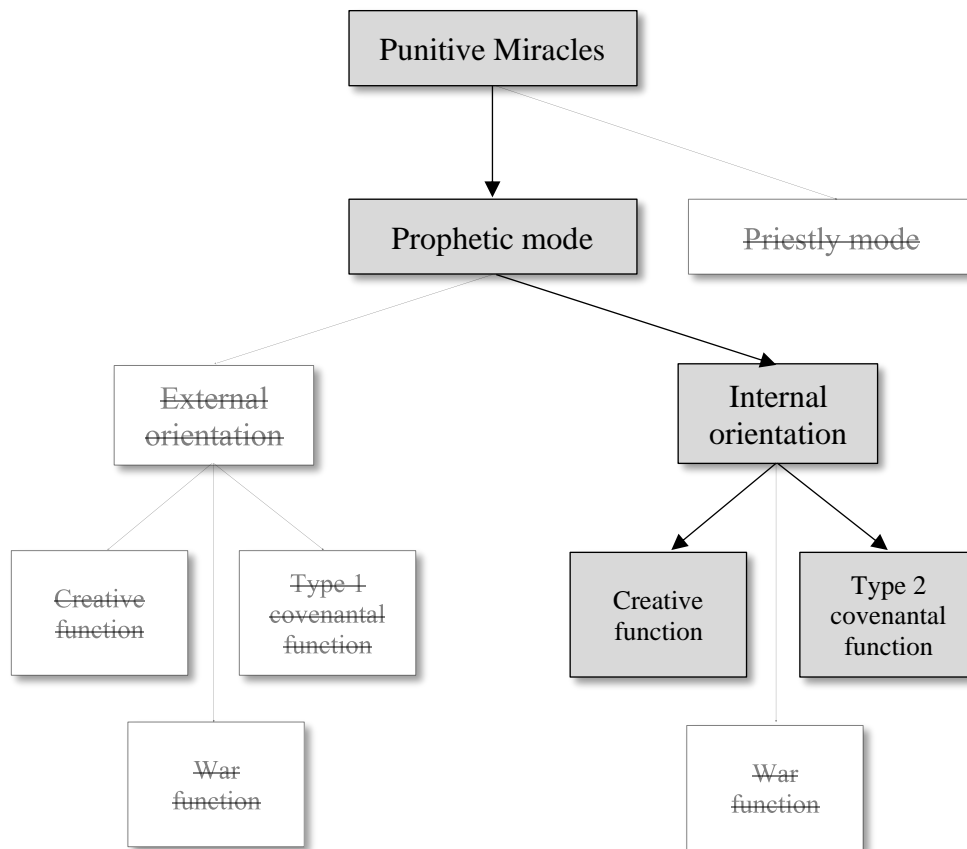
⁹⁹⁷ See n. 996 for my analysis of Zechariah's muting in terms of its effect on God's kingdom.

prophetic storyline in the manner of LXX punitive miracles. However, this intersection often denotes conflict between God and Satan, a departure from the LXX prophetic storyline.

Considering these data, my finding concerning Luke 1 applies to the Lukan punitive miracles as a body: these miracles communicate continuity with a twist. Luke's use of these events signifies that the prophetic storyline has resumed. However, these miracles differ in subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle ways from what I discovered while investigating the LXX prophetic storyline. The miraculous judgments in Luke-Acts indicate a break from what has come before. It is necessary to consider how Luke's miracles adapt LXX patterns and conventions to determine the substance of this difference.

4.8.2. Lukan Punitive Miracles in Light of LXX Patterns and Conventions

As in previous chapters, I will begin my analysis of patterns and conventions by displaying the modes, orientations, and functions operative in Luke-Acts:

Figure 15: Modes, Orientations, and Functions in Luke-Acts

This taxonomy differs from previous ones (see Figure 1; Figure 10) in two respects. First, the priestly mode has been eliminated. Luke’s punitive miracles operate on prophetic logic (viz., moral offenses merit punishment) rather than priestly logic (viz. cultic offenses leave one exposed to God’s presence). Second, I have eliminated the prophetic-external branch of miracles. All the miraculous judgments in Luke’s corpus are internal, meaning they afflict God’s people. The punitive miracles in Luke-Acts exhibit a high degree of selectivity considering the options available to the evangelist.

My identification of Luke’s punitive miracles as purely “internal” requires justification. There is a sense in which Luke’s use of these events blurs the external/internal distinction I have drawn in previous chapters. All the punitive miracles in Luke-Acts afflict Jews, meaning they are

internal to God's people as I have defined them throughout this study. However, some of these events simultaneously protect the church, creating an apparent "external" dimension. Luke's punitive miracles seem paradoxically internal and external.

One might cut this Gordian knot by claiming that Luke portrays unbelieving Jews as separate from God's people à la Acts 3:23 ("Every person who does not listen to that prophet [Jesus] will be utterly destroyed from the people [ἐξολεθρευθήσεται ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ]").⁹⁹⁸ This decision would make most of the punitive miracles in Acts "external." Yet this interpretive move is problematic. Robert Tannehill observes that Luke never specifies when the threat of Acts 3:23 is fulfilled. Since Paul continues reaching out to unbelieving Jews until the end of Acts (see 28:17ff.), it seems that Peter's threat is unrealized in Luke's narrative.⁹⁹⁹ Mark Kinzer builds on this position by arguing for a reading of Peter's threat that accords with rabbinic views of Luke's intertext (ἐξολεθρευθήσεται ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ ≈ Lev 23:29 LXX). As some rabbinic interpreters understood וְנִכְרְתָה מֵעַמִּיָּהּ (Lev 23:29 MT) to threaten the "extirpation of descendants" or "extirpation from the world to come" without undermining one's present place among God's people, Peter's warning may be understood similarly.¹⁰⁰⁰ There is no compelling reason to

⁹⁹⁸ See Jervell, "The Divided People of God," 53–55; also 61–64, 68–69.

⁹⁹⁹ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 2:56–57. Christoph Schaefer reaches a similar conclusion. He reads Peter's threat as an exhortation to repentance rather than a description of what Peter's auditors presently face for rejecting the apostle's message. However, Schaefer suggests this threat will be made good when the present age concludes (*Die Zukunft Israels bei Lukas: Biblisch-frühjüdische Zukunftsvorstellungen im lukanischen Doppelwerk im Vergleich zu Röm 9–11*, BZNW 190 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012], 215).

¹⁰⁰⁰ Mark S. Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen: The Resurrected Messiah, the Jewish People, and the Land of Promise* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 148–56. To support the first interpretation ("extirpation of descendants"), Kinzer observes that the Sadducees see their "spiritual 'posterity'" disappear among the Jews after Jerusalem's destruction. This outcome accords with this party's role as the church's chief antagonist. To support the second interpretation ("extirpation from the world to come"), Kinzer points to Paul's response upon being rejected by some Jews in Pisidian Antioch. Rather than declaring their expulsion from God's people, Paul tells his opponents they have missed out on "eternal life" (Acts 13:46). For a similar view, see Isaac W. Oliver, *Luke's Jewish Eschatology: The National Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 136–38.

employ a different definition of “God’s people” in this chapter than I used in chapters 2–3. The Jews remain God’s covenant people in Luke-Acts. The apparent external dimension of miracles like Saul’s blinding and Herod’s death articulates a distinction between believing and unbelieving Jews, but not so sharply as to make the latter group “external.”

Herod’s death is the only event that might be challenged as truly internal to God’s people. Christoph Stenschke observes that Luke’s “portrait” of this king is ambiguous. On one hand, Stenschke demonstrates that Herod appears to be a Gentile. Herod does what is “pleasing to the Jews” like other Gentile rulers (Acts 12:3; see 24:27 [Felix]; 25:9 [Festus]). Similarly, Luke potentially distances the king from “the Jewish people” with Peter’s statement upon escaping prison (“[The Lord] delivered me from the hand of Herod and all the expectation of the Jewish people”; 12:11). On the other hand, Stenschke shows that Herod may also be viewed as Jewish. Peter’s statement in 12:11 can be read as distinguishing Herod from the Jews as their king rather than excluding him from their number. Likewise, Luke faults Herod for accepting the Caesareans’ acclamation rather than “giving glory to God” (12:23). This counterfactual may reflect that Herod has heightened accountability in keeping with a Jewish identity. Given these data, Stenschke declines to analyze Herod as a “Gentile[] prior to faith.”¹⁰⁰¹

Herod’s identification is not highly consequential to my argument. The king’s death could be the sole exception to an otherwise internally oriented set of punitive miracles, and the overall picture would remain unchanged. Nevertheless, there is reason to think that readers conditioned by LXX punitive miracles would view Herod’s death as an event internal to God’s people. As I observed in my exegesis of Acts 12, Peter’s statement upon escaping prison

¹⁰⁰¹ Christoph W. Stenschke, “Luke’s Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith,” WUNT 2/108 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 73, 73 n. 94.

(ἐξείλατό με ἐκ χειρὸς Ἡρώδου καὶ πάσης τῆς προσδοκίας τοῦ λαοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων; 12:11)

resembles Moses's description of the exodus event to Jethro (ἐξείλατο αὐτοὺς κύριος ἐκ χειρὸς Φαραω καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων; Exod 18:8). This parallel, along with several others, produces distinct overtones of the exodus event in Herod's story. Luke's discourse maps Herod onto Pharaoh and "the Jews" onto the Egyptians. Granted this relationship, Herod is naturally viewed as the king of the Jews and one of their number, parallel to Pharaoh, the king of the Egyptians and one of their number. The exodus overtones in Acts 12 support viewing Herod's death as an internally oriented event.

That Luke's punitive miracles are restricted to God's people makes the function of these events all the more illuminating. The miraculous judgments in Luke-Acts have "creative" and "covenantal" functions. As I defined the term in chapter 2, the "creative" function applies to miracles that thwart threats to God's plans for creation and those that promote God's kingdom. Judas's death, Saul's blinding, Herod's death, and Bar-Jesus's blinding fit the latter description. These events advance God's renewed kingdom by promoting the apostles' public proclamation (Judas's death), protecting the church (Saul's blinding; Herod's death), and facilitating the gospel's spread among Gentiles (Bar-Jesus's blinding). Since these miracles all afflict Jews, Luke's discourse communicates that God's kingdom is advancing despite the obstructive efforts of some members of the covenant community. This portrayal does not mean that the covenant has been invalidated. Instead, God's renewed kingdom and the covenant community are overlapping yet distinct phenomena.

Zechariah's muting exemplifies this relationship. Luke initially portrays Zechariah as a model member of the covenant community (Luke 1:6). The evangelist never retreats from this positive characterization. However, the priest is swiftly punished for his unbelief when he

questions a divine promise. This outcome shows that the basis of divine blessings and curses has been expanded from covenantal observance to the belief proper to God's renewed kingdom. Luke's story concerns a reconfiguration of God's kingdom that exceeds but does not exclude the covenant with Israel. I consider Zechariah's muting anecdotal rather than integral to the prophetic storyline because the priest's offense is benign, and his healing lacks long-term consequences. Regardless, the priest's experience of punishment can be called "creative" in a circumscribed sense because it expresses the reconfiguration of God's kingdom.

The classification of some Lukan punitive miracles as "covenantal" is less evident than this determination was vis-à-vis LXX punitive miracles. This difficulty stems from the question of whether "covenantal cursing" is a suitable term for understanding Luke's corpus. As noted above, Zechariah's muting concerns the reconfiguration of God's kingdom rather than the priest's covenantal observance. Similarly, Ananias and Sapphira's deaths can only be viewed as covenantal retribution at a high level of abstraction.¹⁰⁰² The covenantal function does not apply to some of Luke's miracles, raising the prospect that this category no longer obtains in general.

In considering this question, it is essential to recognize that the identification of punitive miracles as "covenantal" derives from multiple factors. First, punitive miracles are covenantal if they retribute clear violations of covenantal stipulations (e.g., see 2 Macc 12:39–40 // Deut 7:25–26).¹⁰⁰³ Second, these events can be described as covenantal if they retribute general acts of

¹⁰⁰² See Johnson, *The Literary Function of Possessions*, 186, 192, 205. Johnson views Ananias and Sapphira's deaths in light of Peter's threat in Acts 3:23. According to Johnson, the apostles exercise the authority of Jesus, the "Prophet like Moses." Thus, Ananias and Sapphira face "the ultimate extermination from the people, death," when they disregard the apostles. Given the source of the "Prophet like Moses" tradition in Deuteronomy, it might be possible to develop Johnson's reading and characterize Ananias and Sapphira as covenantal transgressors. I prefer to leave the function of the miracles in Acts 5 undefined because I can find no basis for readily identifying these events as "creative" or "covenantal." These miracles may represent a new function developed in later Christian literature: miracles that afflict faithless church members (see Acts Pet. 2, which concerns Paul and Rufina).

¹⁰⁰³ See Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 448–49.

faithlessness in a context where covenantal faithfulness is a paramount concern (e.g., 2 Sam 24:15; 2 Kgs 2:24). Third, punitive miracles can be classified as covenantal if they resemble the blessings or curses described in the covenantal catalogs (e.g., 1 Kgs 17:1 = Lev 26:19–20; Deut 28:23).¹⁰⁰⁴ None of Luke’s punitive miracles easily meets the first two criteria. However, there are grounds for identifying a couple of miracles in Acts as “covenantal” on the third criterion.

As I argued in my exegesis of Acts 13, Bar-Jesus’s blinding can be described as a type 2 covenantal miracle, denoting cursing. This identification derives from the resemblance of Luke’s narration to a covenantal curse (Acts 13:11 ≈ Deut 28:28–29; see Table 11). Although no verbal affinities make the Deuteronomic curse an evident intertext, the passages in question present a remarkably similar sequence of events. Readers conditioned by LXX punitive miracles are likely to view Bar-Jesus as the victim of a covenantal sanction.

The second relevant miracle is Saul’s blinding. Wilson observes that Paul’s initial retelling of what happened to him en route to Damascus specifies the time of Jesus’s debilitating appearance as “noon” (μεσημβρία; Acts 22:6), using a term that appears in Deut 28:29 (ἔσση ψηλαφῶν μεσημβρίας) but is rare in the NT (see Acts 8:26). She concludes that this term portrays Saul’s punishment as an application of the same sanction that befalls Bar-Jesus. Luke portrays Saul as blind at “noon” à la Deut 28:28–29.¹⁰⁰⁵ I prescinded from describing Saul’s blinding as a covenantal curse in my exegesis of Acts 9 because the argument for this understanding draws on

¹⁰⁰⁴ See Lissa M. Wray Beal, “Dancing with Death; Dancing with Life: Ahab between Jezebel and Elijah,” in *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Kings*, ed. Keith Bodner and Benjamin J. M. Johnson, LHBOTS 607 (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 107.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Wilson, *Unmanly Men*, 170–71, 184. Wilson adds that Paul uses μεσημβρία when recounting his story in a Jewish context and switches to ἡμέρας μέσης in a Greco-Roman context (Acts 22:6 // 26:13). She assesses that Paul’s use of the Septuagintal term in the former context “may have evoked these scriptural resonances” (i.e., Deut 28:28–29 alongside Isa 59:10; *Unmanly Men*, 184 n. 127). This switch suggests intentionality on Luke’s part.

Acts 22. Nevertheless, Wilson has laid a strong foundation for retrospectively viewing Saul's blinding as a covenantal sanction. Upon reaching Acts 22, readers who recall the Deuteronomic sanctions will likely view Saul's blinding as a covenantal curse.¹⁰⁰⁶

The identification of Saul and Bar-Jesus's punishments as type 2 covenantal miracles further defines the relationship between the Mosaic covenant and God's renewed kingdom. The Jews remain God's covenant people in Luke-Acts. The application of covenantal sanctions to unbelieving Jews would be nonsensical on any other understanding.¹⁰⁰⁷ However, God's kingdom is now developing in a new way. Saul's blinding articulates a distinction between believing and unbelieving Jews, showing that the former group is the locus of divine attention. Bar-Jesus's blinding is implicated in God's act of "taking a people for his name from the Gentiles" in addition to Israel (Acts 15:14). Covenantal sanctions are applied when unbelieving Jews seek to inhibit the development of God's kingdom. This arrangement suggests a modest reconfiguration of "covenantal obedience." Covenantal faithfulness includes, but is not limited to, accepting the new work God is doing among Jews and Gentiles alike.¹⁰⁰⁸ The Mosaic covenant accords with the renewal of God's kingdom.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Such an interpretation is also possible simply given the resemblance of Saul and Bar-Jesus's punishments (see "4.7.3. Consequences for the Prophetic Storyline").

¹⁰⁰⁷ See Schaefer, *Die Zukunft Israels*, esp. 150–51, 177–85, 365–79. Schaefer analyzes relevant texts concerning Israel's future in Luke-Acts (esp. Luke 13:31–35; 21:20–24), arguing that Luke exhibits a Deuteronomic outlook according to which God's punishment of Israel leads to national restoration. Jason Moraff succinctly distills the import of Schaefer's work: "Judgment actually reveals the covenantal relationship and is not a repudiation of it ... Divine judgment against Israel purifies them and calls them to repentance" ("Recent Trends in the Study of Jews and Judaism in Luke-Acts," *CurBr* 19 [2020]: 78). The application of covenantal curses to Saul and Bar-Jesus should be understood similarly. These events do not expel unbelieving Jewish antagonists from God's people (cf. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 146 n. 48). Instead, these miracles chasten Saul and Bar-Jesus as wayward members of the covenant community.

¹⁰⁰⁸ See n. 970 for the basis of this claim.

The relevant patterns in Luke-Acts exhibit these same tendencies. As a starting point for understanding how Luke's discourse adapts LXX patterns, it is necessary to recall the prominence of the "covenantal pattern" (disobedience → punishment → repentance → restoration) in previous chapters. LXX punitive miracles regularly appear in the "punishment" or "restoration" phases of this sequence, allowing these events to instantiate the covenantal curses or blessings, respectively (see Lev 26; Deut 28). A novelty of Luke's discourse is that punitive miracles are not integrated into this sequence. As I argued above, there are grounds for interpreting at least two Lukan miracles as covenantal curses, meaning the covenant remains in effect. Nevertheless, that Luke's miraculous judgments are dissociated from this familiar sequence is likely to be conspicuous to readers conditioned by LXX punitive miracles. The prophetic storyline is advancing without respect to Israel's covenantal posture.

Luke's discourse reflects a couple of patterns I observed in previous chapters. First, the "pattern of the exodus event" (oppression/injustice → miraculous affliction → release) appears in Acts 12, culminating in Herod's ignominious death. I argued in chapter 2 that this pattern is independent of the covenantal pattern but is frequently integrated into the latter sequence.¹⁰⁰⁹ After Sinai, God's exodus-like deliverances regularly manifest during seasons of renewed obedience. Luke's discourse dissociates the exodus event pattern from the covenantal pattern. To be sure, Luke portrays the Judean believers as exemplary Jews, meaning God's actions in Acts 12 concern a group that resembles the repentant Israelites God delivered on earlier occasions. However, there is reason to believe that the exodus-like deliverance in Acts 12 is predicated on Jesus's story in the Third Gospel rather than the believers' covenantal posture.

¹⁰⁰⁹ See "2.7.2. The Emergence of LXX Patterns and Conventions."

Marguerat has made a compelling case for reading Acts 12 in light of Jesus's story. According to Marguerat, Luke engages in *syncretism* in Acts 12, establishing a parallel between Jesus and Peter that includes a Herodian antagonist (Luke 23:6–12 // Acts 12:1ff.), an arrest (Luke 22:54 // Acts 12:3), “raising up” (Luke 24:6 // Acts 12:7), and incredulity on the part of the believing community (Luke 24:11, 37 // Acts 12:15). Luke simultaneously distinguishes Peter from Jesus, scrupulously avoiding any details that would cause Peter's story to resemble Jesus's passion. This distinction keeps Jesus's story—particularly his death—in a place of prominence as the event that makes Peter's rescue possible. Jesus's “exodus” in Jerusalem (see Luke 9:31) has laid the groundwork for Peter's exodus-like deliverance.¹⁰¹⁰ The nature of this Jesus-Peter parallel impinges on the interpretation of Acts 12. Herod's death, which I have argued is the culmination of the exodus event pattern in this chapter, is a divine act on the church's behalf predicated on Jesus's prior “exodus.”¹⁰¹¹ Luke uses a familiar LXX pattern, yet he grounds this pattern in Jesus's life rather than the people's covenantal posture.

Luke's discourse also reflects the LXX divine recognition sequence (offense → miraculous punishment → divine recognition). I claimed in previous chapters that this sequence derives from the exodus event, where miraculous judgments move Israel's oppressors to recognize this people's God. This sequence develops following Sinai as such revelatory miracles manifest during seasons of covenantal obedience. God judges Israel's oppressors when the people are rightly oriented toward the covenant, causing these antagonists to recognize God as

¹⁰¹⁰ Marguerat, “L'évasion de Pierre,” 231–35, esp. 235: “C'est par la médiation de l'histoire de Jésus que la nuit de Pierre fait sens et devient nuit de libération. La résurrection du Christ assure et perpétue en régime chrétien l'intervention du Dieu de l'Exode. C'est donc au travers de la libération de Jésus que le Dieu de l'Exode devient, pour l'Église, le Dieu efficace qui fait sort.”

¹⁰¹¹ For a similar interpretation of Herod's death vis-a-vis Jesus, see Garrett, “Exodus from Bondage,” 670–77.

Israel's covenant deity. In the Septuagint's divergent voices, the divine recognition sequence leads some Gentiles to make unusually positive statements about Israel's God. For this reason, I claim they are drawn to the "penumbra" of God's kingdom. Yet apart from Nebuchadnezzar's beastly transformation (Dan 4), which leads to the king's promotion of Judean monotheism, these miracles do not bring outsiders within the scope of God's kingdom. In the LXX divine recognition sequence, God miraculously punishes Israel's enemies during seasons of covenantal obedience, leading these opponents to an awareness of God as Israel's covenant deity.

My exegesis of specific Lukan episodes has established that this sequence persists in Luke's corpus. The punitive miracles in Luke 1, Acts 9, and Acts 13 lead to a newfound appreciation of God. However, the "antagonists" in these episodes all belong to God's covenant people. The newfound appreciation that results from divine judgment concerns God in the context of a renewed kingdom rather than God as Israel's covenant deity. A sequence that formerly resulted in covenantal outsiders appreciating Israel's God now leads insiders and outsiders alike to a belief in God appropriate to the renewed divine kingdom.

The way Luke adapts LXX patterns and conventions builds on the results of the last section. Considering how Luke's punitive miracles cohere with the early Christian prophetic storyline, I claimed that these events communicate continuity with a twist. These miracles establish that the events of the early Christian movement continue yet differ from the prophetic storyline. My analysis in this section shows that this difference concerns the relationship between God's covenant people and God's renewed kingdom. The Lukan punitive miracles show that the covenant community and God's kingdom are overlapping yet distinct phenomena. The Mosaic covenant accords with the renewal of God's kingdom, yet the covenant does not fully encapsulate the deity's new work among Jews and Gentiles. This finding has significant

consequences for how early Christians were likely to perceive Luke's punitive miracles, which I will address in my final section.

4.8.3. Luke's Punitive Miracles in the Context of ECPR's Prophetic Storyline

At the outset of this study, I proposed to determine how early Christian readers would likely perceive Luke's punitive miracles, both internally and in relation to their scriptural precursors. It is now possible to address this matter. I do not hold that any given reader of Luke-Acts has held the view sketched below in its entirety. Instead, by interpreting LXX and Lukan punitive miracles in light of the early Christian prophetic storyline, I can articulate a view of these events that would be plausible to early Christian readers. Specific readers would identify with this view to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their familiarity with prophetic discourse.

Early Christian readers would likely view Luke's punitive miracles in the context of an extensive scriptural story about God's earthly kingdom. The Primary History (Genesis–2 Kings) begins this story. God initially orders the created realm to make an environment suitable for divine purposes and conducive to human flourishing. When humans threaten this design, God orchestrates universal judgments to redirect creation toward its initial goal. These punitive miracles are effective yet temporary expedients. God next changes course by calling Abraham and initiating the prophetic storyline. Henceforth, God's actions aim to form an earthly kingdom populated by people who reflect the deity's character. Punitive miracles are recruited to this storyline's service. These miracles help fulfill God's promises, which are oriented toward forming God's kingdom. Such events protect Abraham's household as the seed of God's people, rescue the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, and blaze the path toward the conquest of Canaan. Likewise, punitive miracles preserve God's kingdom by thwarting external threats and

retributing the people's covenantal faithlessness. Unfortunately, the people's covenantal observance wanes as the prophetic storyline advances. Miraculous judgments do little to prevent this decline. The people end up in exile, representing the most severe covenantal curse. Punitive miracles are integral to the prophetic storyline in Genesis–2 Kings. However, these events do not prevent an outcome amounting to the termination of God's earthly kingdom.

Given the Primary History's open ending, early Christian readers would likely view other scriptural writings in light of Genesis–2 Kings. Assuming these readers' familiarity with the Septuagint, they would naturally read texts like Daniel and 1–4 Maccabees as continuations of the Primary History. The punitive miracles in these books promote the temporary renewal of God's kingdom in new contexts, whether while the Jews are in captivity or subject to the Hellenistic dynasts. Critically, these miracles often anticipate the reconfiguration of God's kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar's beastly transformation makes this king an advocate of Judean monotheism. In the context of Daniel's apocalyptic visions, Nebuchadnezzar's concluding declaration anticipates the reconfiguration of God's kingdom into an everlasting dominion ruled over by a "son of man" (Dan 7:14; see also 7:18, 22, 27).¹⁰¹² The "epiphanic" punitive miracles

¹⁰¹² The divine kingdom in Daniel, especially chs. 2–6, differs from the Primary History in that God rules over all the kingdoms of the earth (see OG Dan 2:47; 4:17, 27, 31, 37, 37c; Θ Dan 2:47; 4:3, 17, 25, 32, 34–35; 5:21; 6:26; John J. Collins, "The Court-Tales in Daniel and the Development of Apocalyptic," *JBL* 94 [1975]: 223; Bruce Chilton, "The Kingdom of God in Recent Discussion," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, NTTS 19 [Leiden: Brill, 1994], 274–79; John J. Collins, "The Kingdom of God in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in *Seers, Sybils, and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, JSJSup 54 [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 100–102; John J. Collins, "Nebuchadnezzar and the Kingdom of God: Deferred Eschatology in the Jewish Diaspora," in *Seers, Sybils, and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, JSJSup 54 [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 131–32, 135–37; Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 332–33, 340). However, in the context of the LXX prophetic storyline, this depiction of God's kingdom has a specific earthly antecedent, God's rule over Israel. The book of Daniel effectively reconfigures God's kingdom from a localized realm to a universal dominion (see Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 332–33, 337–38, 340). Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to dissociate these portrayals of God's rule too sharply. The scope of God's kingdom broadens in the context of Israel's loss of political sovereignty (see Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology*, Rev. ed. [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 7–31; Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 332–33). Yet God continues to relate to earthly rulers much like God formerly related to the kings of Israel and Judah: God's heavenly rule is focalized through these earthly Gentile rulers (see

in 2–3 Maccabees transform the Jews’ antagonists into allies who “proclaim the mighty power of God” (2 Macc 3:34; see also 9:17). This outcome envisions God’s kingdom as a realm that draws select Gentiles into its “penumbra.” Finally, the initial miracle in the book of Jonah, the storm at sea, leads the crew of Jonah’s ship to sacrifice to the Lord (Jonah 1:16). The miraculous punishment of an errant Israelite prophet causes Gentiles to notice Israel’s God. Early Christian readers would likely view such episodes as anticipating the reconfiguration of God’s kingdom.

Given these scriptural precedents, early Christian readers would likely perceive Luke’s punitive miracles as a sign that God’s kingdom has decisively “restarted” in the early Christian movement. The events that formerly promoted and preserved God’s earthly kingdom among the Israelites now facilitate its renewal in the era of Christian origins. The storyline that effectively ended with Israel’s exile has resumed and reached its culmination.

OG Dan 2:21, 37; 4:31, 34, 36, 37, 37a–b; 5:17, 23, 26, 30; Θ Dan 2:21, 37; 4:17, 25, 31–32, 36; 5:17–28, 30; 6:1; Collins, “Nebuchadnezzar and the Kingdom,” 131–32, 136–37; Craig A. Evans, “Daniel in the New Testament: Visions of God’s Kingdom,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, VTSup 83 [Leiden: Brill, 2001], 2:499, 501). Moreover, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream demonstrates that God’s rule through successive Gentile rulers will give way to a worldwide, everlasting divine kingdom centered at Mount Zion (OG + Θ Dan 2:35, 44–45; Chilton, “Kingdom of God in Recent Discussion,” 275–76; Evans, “Daniel in the New Testament,” 499–500; see also Collins, “Kingdom of God in the Apocrypha,” 100). Daniel’s parallel apocalyptic vision adds that this divine rule will be focalized through a “son of man” figure associated with the Jews (OG Dan 7:13–14, 27; Θ Dan 7:13–14 [cf. v. 27]; Chilton, “Kingdom of God in Recent Discussion,” 278–79; Collins, “Kingdom of God in the Apocrypha,” 101–2; Evans, “Daniel in the New Testament,” 501). Early Christian readers would likely understand that God’s initial earthly kingdom reached an ending point with Israel’s loss of political sovereignty. Henceforth, the scope of God’s kingdom is broadened to include divine sovereignty exercised through the Gentile rulers who dominate Israel. In the future, God’s rule will once more be focalized through a son of man who rules over a Jewish kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar’s beastly transformation becomes meaningful in this context. The Babylonian king is the first in a succession of rulers who exercise rule at God’s behest, culminating in this rule being transferred to the son of man (Evans, “Daniel in the New Testament,” 500–501). The king’s experience of miraculous punishment leads him to recognize that he rules at the pleasure of God, the heavenly sovereign (see OG Dan 4:17, 27, 31, 34, 36–37c; Θ Dan 4:3, 17, 25, 31–32, 34–36; Chilton, “Kingdom of God in Recent Discussion,” 276–77; Collins, “Nebuchadnezzar and the Kingdom,” 136; Longenecker, *Rhetoric at the Boundaries*, 77). OG Daniel heightens this realization by having Nebuchadnezzar parrot Daniel’s confession about God’s prerogative of installing and deposing rulers (4:37 // 2:21), which the seer made upon learning the “mystery” of the king’s dream concerning the succession of earthly kingdoms, culminating in God’s everlasting kingdom (2:19; see 2:35, 44–45). In light of Dan 2 and anticipation of Dan 7, Nebuchadnezzar’s confession amounts to him acknowledging—albeit perhaps unwittingly—that God’s kingdom, ruled over by a son of man, will eventually replace his own (see Chilton, “Kingdom of God in Recent Discussion,” 276–79; Collins, “Nebuchadnezzar and the Kingdom,” 135–36; Evans, “Daniel in the New Testament,” 501; Longenecker, *Rhetoric at the Boundaries*, 76–79).

Viewing the Lukan punitive miracles from this vantage has significant ramifications for understanding “God’s people.” Luke’s punitive miracles, interpreted in the context of the early Christian prophetic storyline, promote what scholars have recently described as a “superordinate identity” uniting Jewish and Gentile believers.¹⁰¹³ Aaron Kuecker explains that this term, drawn from Social Identity Theory, applies to the formation of a “new identity that transcends existing group categories and incorporates diverse groups under a common identity.” He argues that this label—specifically, the subcategory of “superordinate identity with retention of subgroup salience”—applies to Acts, where Jewish and Gentile believers share an identity predicated on a “common experience of the Spirit” (see Acts 10:47) without losing their ethnic distinctions.¹⁰¹⁴ Coleman Baker reaches a similar conclusion, establishing that Jews and Gentiles are united by the “belief that Jesus ... is the resurrected Messiah” as “expressed in the two boundary crossing rituals of baptism in Jesus’ name and being filled with the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰¹⁵ Luke portrays Jewish and Gentile disciples as sharing an identity predicated on their belief in Jesus and possessing

¹⁰¹³ Coleman A. Baker, *Identity, Memory, and Narrative in Early Christianity: Peter, Paul, and Recategorization in the Book of Acts* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), esp. 199–202; Aaron Kuecker, *The Spirit and the “Other”: Social Identity, Ethnicity and Intergroup Reconciliation in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), esp. 216–31; see also Julia A. Snyder, *Language and Identity in Ancient Narratives: The Relationship between Speech Patterns and Social Context in the Acts of the Apostles, Acts of John, and Acts of Philip*, WUNT 2/370 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 43–46; Nickolas A. Fox, *The Hermeneutics of Social Identity in Luke-Acts* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021), 27–30.

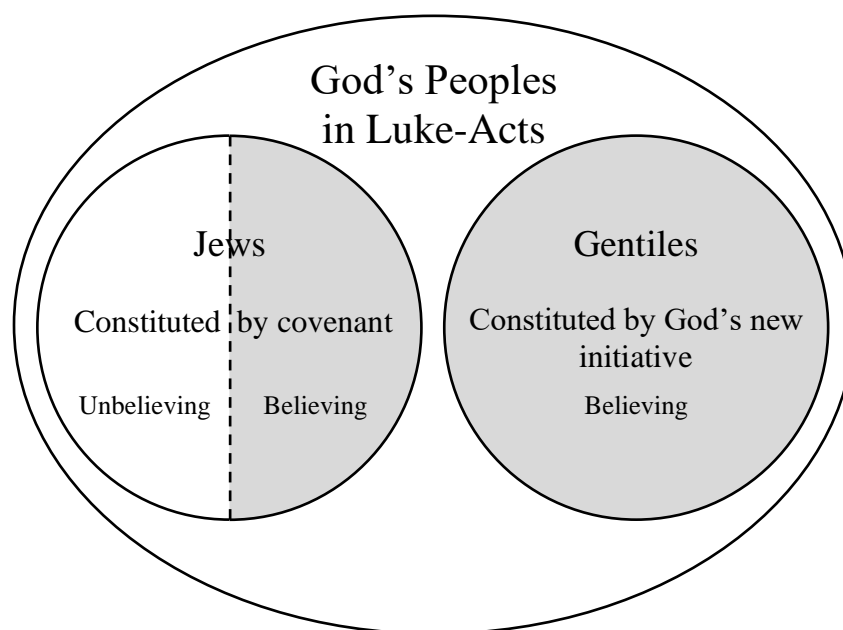
¹⁰¹⁴ Kuecker, *The Spirit and the “Other,”* 26–27, 32–33, 50, 196–97.

¹⁰¹⁵ Baker, *Identity, Memory, and Narrative*, 201. In my judgment, Baker wrongly extrapolates this shared identity to mean that believing Gentiles are incorporated into a common “people of God” alongside believing Jews (see *Identity, Memory, and Narrative*, 153: “God has expanded God’s ‘people’ to include non-Judeans”). As Oliver argues, Luke’s discourse points to two “peoples of God”: God’s covenant people, comprised of believing and unbelieving Jews, and a new “people from the Gentiles” (Acts 15:14). According to this understanding, the church is comprised of believers from God’s Jewish and Gentile peoples (*Luke’s Jewish Eschatology*, 48–49).

God's Spirit. This identity is superordinate to ethnic identity, meaning Jewish believers still belong to the covenant people, and Gentile believers remain Gentiles.¹⁰¹⁶

Given these insights from Social Identity Theory, Luke's discourse supports something like the following representation:

Figure 16: God's Peoples in Luke-Acts¹⁰¹⁷



The Jews remain God's covenant people, regardless of their belief in Jesus. As I argued above, the application of covenantal sanctions to Saul and Bar-Jesus would be nonsensical if this were not the case. However, some Jews have come to faith in Jesus and received God's Spirit, making

¹⁰¹⁶ Baker, *Identity, Memory, and Narrative*, 201; also, Oliver, *Luke's Jewish Eschatology*, 48–49, which offers a more judicious analysis of ongoing Jewish and Gentile identities in the church.

¹⁰¹⁷ This figure synthesizes my understanding of “God’s peoples” in Luke-Acts, which I have developed in dependence on works like Jervell, “The Divided People of God” (Israel is divided into believing and unbelieving segments), Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen* (unbelieving Jews remain God’s covenant people), Oliver, *Luke’s Jewish Eschatology* (two peoples of God), and Baker, *Identity, Memory, and Narrative* (Jewish and Gentile believers share a “superordinate identity”). That believing Gentiles are constituted as a second people of God by a new divine initiative follows Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion*, 111–41. For a similar depiction of Jewish and Gentile identities, see Snyder, *Language and Identity*, 43–46. I developed my figure independently of Snyder, yet her work clarified for me that the areas united by gray shading in my depiction amount to a representation of “superordinate identity.”

them what David Moessner describes as an “eschatological remnant” within Israel.¹⁰¹⁸ God has also taken a second “people” from the Gentiles to complement Israel (see Acts 15:14). This new people is marked by faith in Jesus and the gift of the Spirit, traits which establish a shared identity between Jewish and Gentile believers (denoted by the gray shading in the figure above). Because the scope of “God’s people” has expanded beyond a community constituted by covenant, God’s kingdom should be conceived as a phenomenon broader than, yet congruent with, the covenant people. The renewal of God’s kingdom in Luke-Acts consists of the formation of an “eschatological remnant” within Israel and the creation of a second people of God among the Gentiles. This depiction potentially establishes a supersessionist trajectory, wherein the outer circle shown above (“God’s peoples in Luke-Acts”) contracts to exclude unbelieving Jews.¹⁰¹⁹ Nevertheless, this possibility is not realized in Luke-Acts.

My interpretation of Luke’s punitive miracles supports and elaborates this understanding of Jewish and Gentile identities. First, several of Luke’s miracles promote the “superordinate identity” described above in an indirect manner. They do so by accentuating an aspect of the believing Jewish community’s profile shared with their Gentile counterparts. Many of the Lukan punitive miracles emphasize belief as the response proper to God’s renewed kingdom, whether directly (as in Luke 1) or indirectly (by demonstrating divine solicitude for believing Jews, as in Acts 5, 9, and 12). This portrayal foregrounds belief—and by extension, possession of the

¹⁰¹⁸ David Paul Moessner, “Paul in Acts: Preacher of Eschatological Repentance to Israel,” in *Luke the Historian of Israel’s Legacy, Theologian of Israel’s “Christ”: A New Reading of the “Gospel Acts” of Luke*, BZNW 182 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 301.

¹⁰¹⁹ See Joseph B. Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke-Acts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 109, concerning Jacob Jervell’s “subtle” supersessionism. Luke’s discourse can easily be carried to the supersessionist conclusion that Tyson diagnoses in Jervell (“The promises of God have been fulfilled, not among the people Luke calls Jews, but among Christian believers”), especially given the possibility of Peter’s threat being fulfilled in the future (see n. 999).

Spirit—as the defining quality of the Jewish disciples. God’s activities in these episodes form and preserve a Jewish community whose identity is defined by the traits that also mark believing Gentiles. Most of Luke’s miracles promote this superordinate identity indirectly since their immediate concern is God’s covenant people. Yet as I argued vis-à-vis Luke 1, the possibility of receiving divine blessings by faith, which is implicit in Zechariah’s story, anticipates the Gentiles’ incorporation into God’s kingdom on the same basis.

The episode involving Sergius Paulus promotes this superordinate identity more expressly. My exegesis of Acts 13 showed that Paulus’s conversion culminates a “divine recognition sequence” (offense → miraculous punishment → divine recognition). This sequence broadly parallels similar progressions involving Zechariah (Luke 1) and Saul (Acts 9). In each case, a miraculous judgment moves an unbeliever to faith. For the present discussion, the salient datum is Paulus’s inclusion in this cohort. Luke uses divine recognition sequences to move Jews and Gentiles alike to the belief proper to God’s kingdom. Using a standard mode of divine action to bring Jewish and Gentile figures to faith promotes the cohesion of their respective groups.¹⁰²⁰

Notwithstanding the above, Luke’s punitive miracles show that the common identity in question maintains “subgroup salience,” especially on the Jewish side. Granted my interpretation of Herod’s death as an internally oriented event, all of Luke’s punitive miracles afflict errant members of God’s covenant people, and this often for the sake of believing members. God’s miraculous judgments do not concern the “new people” among the Gentiles, except in a limited sense vis-à-vis Sergius Paulus. The strict association of punitive miracles with the covenant people makes these events an intra-Jewish affair.

¹⁰²⁰ Adapting Kuecker, *The Spirit and the “Other,”* 199–215, esp. 211. Kuecker explores how the Spirit’s common activity among Jews and Gentiles, including the performance of “signs and wonders” among both groups (see Acts 15:12 // 2:42–47), promotes the formation of a “superordinate identity.”

From this vantage, many of Luke's punitive miracles are resounding divine declarations that the "subgroup salience" of believing Jews is secure. As "creative" events—that is, miracles that advance the prophetic storyline—these events show God forming an "eschatological remnant" within Israel. On the one occasion when such a miracle can also be described as "covenantal" (Acts 9), God's actions show that opposing this renewal within Israel constitutes covenantal faithlessness. Luke's punitive miracles stake out a place for believing Jews within Israel. Similar episodes involving believing Gentiles are unnecessary because their ethnic identity is not a live question, especially following the Jerusalem Council.

The "subgroup salience" of believing Jews becomes especially evident when Luke's punitive miracles are read in the context of the early Christian prophetic storyline. I claim that Luke's punitive miracles draw a distinction between Israel's believing and unbelieving segments, establishing divine support for the former group over against the latter. These events foreground the believing community as the locus of God's concern. Viewed against Israel's scriptures, where miraculous judgments are generally the prerogative of Israel at large, Luke's punitive miracles "narrow" the divine focus from the nation to believing Jews.

This divine selectivity should be understood in light of a parallel moment of focalization near the beginning of the prophetic storyline. I observed in chapter 2 that the punitive miracles in the Prehistory (Gen 1–11) are universal judgments, affecting all of humanity for creation's benefit. In contrast, the miracles of the following period (Gen 12–50) are localized, affecting those in Abraham's vicinity and benefitting the patriarch and his family. I argued that the shift in the scope and purpose of divine judgments from one period to the next reveals Abraham's role vis-à-vis God's creative purposes. The divine energies are focused on Abraham, with a view to creation's benefit.

Luke-Acts portrays a similar and further narrowing of the divine focus. Whereas miraculous judgments were formerly the prerogative of Israel at large, these miracles now concern believing Jews. Early Christian readers would likely perceive that God's creative purposes have been localized in this community. In analogy to the earlier shift (from the Prehistory to Abraham), this narrowing of God's focus does not indicate that unbelieving Jews have been excluded from Israel. Just as the association of punitive miracles with Abraham was tied to God's concern for creation, the association of such events with the church is grounded in divine concern for Israel. To be sure, unbelieving Jews who oppose God's plans experience judgment. Yet this divine action does not entail that God has abandoned the covenant people, any more than the punishment of those who threatened Abraham meant a divine turning against creation and its inhabitants.¹⁰²¹

In short, Luke's punitive miracles are essential to forging a common identity among Jewish and Gentile believers. These events define believing Jews according to the traits they share with believing Gentiles. Simultaneously, Luke's punitive miracles depict this Jewish community as an "eschatological remnant" within Israel whose formation accords with the Mosaic covenant. This accent secures this group's "subgroup salience." Early Christian readers, conditioned by LXX punitive miracles, would likely perceive Luke's punitive miracles as integral to the delicate reconfiguration of "God's people" in this extension of the prophetic storyline. Punitive miracles are especially suited to narrowing the prophetic storyline's focus to the church without dispossessing Israel as God's covenant people.

¹⁰²¹ The divine focus on believing Jews in the first half of Acts arguably carries over to believing Gentiles given their association in the church. Yet Luke strongly associates God's miraculous interventions in judgment with believing Jews, which places special emphasis on this group.

This understanding can help illuminate Luke's discourse after Acts 13. Luke records no events that fit my definition of a "punitive miracle" following the visit to Cyprus. This shift may simply reflect what traditions were available to Luke. Regardless, the proliferation of miraculous judgments in the first half of Acts and the absence of such episodes from this book's second half are conspicuous.¹⁰²²

Allen's work in *The Death of Herod* partially illuminates this shift. According to Allen, Herod's death in Acts 12 "bring[s] to an end the cycle of persecution directed against the Jerusalem Christians." The persecution of Jesus's followers persists after this episode, but it never regains its former intensity. Thus, Herod's demise, the "climax of retributive death scenes in Acts," effects a sea change in the church's fortunes.¹⁰²³ Allen's interpretation has a bearing on the present question, although he does not develop his view in these terms. Allen establishes that punitive miracles proliferate during the church's Judean phase and disappear as Luke's focus shifts to the Gentile mission. On this understanding, the Cyprus episode (Acts 13) can be understood as a liminal event, showing that God will not permit the opposition that marked Acts 1–12 to hinder Paul's work among the Gentiles.

My findings about Luke's punitive miracles can take this perspective a step further. The isolation of punitive miracles to roughly the church's Judean phase coheres with my analysis of these events. Luke's punitive miracles proliferate while God is forming an "eschatological remnant" within Israel. These events have long marked God's interactions with the covenant people, making them most salient while Jesus's disciples remain in predominantly Jewish contexts. Punitive miracles become less relevant as the missionaries travel abroad. As Paul and

¹⁰²² For this point, see Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 134–35.

¹⁰²³ Allen, *The Death of Herod*, 134–35.

his associates move into predominantly Gentile contexts, there is less need for divine judgments that establish these figures' "subgroup salience" among the covenant people.

Moreover, the ethnic identity of believing Gentiles is rarely at stake in Luke's story. Believing Gentiles do not experience persecution from their unbelieving counterparts akin to what the Judean disciples face. Some Gentile opponents perceive Paul's teaching as an attack on prevailing norms (see Acts 16:21). However, they direct their frustration against the missionary rather than his Gentile proselytes (see 16:19; also 13:50; 14:19). Punitive miracles are integral to the formation of a believing remnant within Israel in the first half of Acts. That these events fade away in this book's second half suggests they have served their purpose.

To summarize, early Christian readers would likely perceive Luke's punitive miracles as making a compelling contribution to their sacred history. In light of the early Christian prophetic storyline, where miraculous judgments are integral to forming and preserving God's earthly kingdom among the Israelites, these readers would likely view the similar episodes in Luke's corpus to mean that God's kingdom has been renewed after a prolonged absence. This vantage produces a modest reconfiguration of "God's people." Whereas God's kingdom was formerly associated with a people constituted by covenant, the Lukan punitive miracles indicate a change. These events establish the Jewish disciples as the locus of divine concern. God's creative purposes now reside in the church, with a view toward benefitting Israel and the created order. Simultaneously, the same events anticipate God's creation of a second "people" from the Gentiles to complement Israel. These miracles foreground faith as the response proper to God's renewed kingdom, which prepares for the inclusion of believing Gentiles alongside believing Jews on an equal footing. Luke's punitive miracles delicately reconfigure "God's people" in the

renewed divine kingdom. These events narrow the prophetic storyline's focus to the church while retaining a place for Israel as God's covenant people.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This study has investigated the punitive miracles in Israel's scriptures and Luke-Acts with the help of socio-rhetorical interpretation (SRI). By interpreting the relevant miracles in light of what SRI understands as early Christian prophetic discourse and its associated prophetic storyline, I have established a view of these events that would be plausible to early Christian readers. Specific readers would identify with this view to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their familiarity with prophetic discourse. I will now conclude by reviewing the stages of my argument, its contributions, and prospects for further research.

Chapter 1 ("Introduction") lays the foundation for this study. This chapter defends a definition of the "punitive miracle," taxonomizes scholarship on Luke's use of these events, and introduces a methodology capable of contributing to this field. I identify seven distinct yet overlapping scholarly approaches to Luke's punitive miracles. Several approaches contribute to understanding how early Christians would likely perceive Luke's punitive miracles, but none of these is adequate, on its own, for my purposes. This lacuna warrants another method that accommodates the approaches most suited to answering my research question and provides a basis for articulating what unites punitive miracles across biblical literature. I identify this method in socio-rhetorical interpretation, an approach pioneered by Vernon Robbins. After reviewing the history and contours of SRI, I propose to investigate the punitive miracles in Israel's scriptures and Luke-Acts from the vantage of what SRI describes as the early Christian prophetic storyline. In brief, this storyline is the series of events whereby God forms an earthly

kingdom populated by people who reflect the divine character. This focus causes me to pay special attention to how punitive miracles contribute to the characterization of prophets and kings, the development of prophetic topoi, and the thematic development of God's kingdom. I conclude chapter 1 by forecasting two results of my study: it will establish how punitive miracles cohere with the early Christian prophetic storyline, and it will isolate a set of patterns and conventions in Israel's scriptures that can facilitate the interpretation of Luke's punitive miracles.

Chapter 2 ("Punitive Miracles in the LXX Primary History") initiates my investigation of Israel's scriptures. I first argue that the Septuagint (LXX) forms an appropriate background for understanding Luke's punitive miracles. Luke used Israel's scriptures in their Greek form, and he arguably expected sufficient familiarity with this corpus for his readers to draw connections between the LXX and Luke-Acts. I then trace the intersection of punitive miracles and what early Christian readers would likely perceive as the prophetic storyline running through LXX Genesis–2 Kings (the "Primary History"). This examination produces two sets of results. Concerning the coherence of punitive miracles and the prophetic storyline, I argue that punitive miracles intersect with this storyline in two distinct but overlapping ways: these miracles are integral to fulfilling God's promises, which have as their goal the formation of God's earthly kingdom, and these miracles preserve God's kingdom. Concerning the emergence of LXX patterns and conventions, I show that the Primary History displays a definite, albeit uneven trajectory toward the proliferation of the "prophetic" punitive miracle (a mode predicated on the logic that moral offenses merit punishment) with specific functions (i.e., "creative," "war," and "covenantal"). These functions are elements of the Primary History that writers will naturally engage if they intend to continue the biblical storyline.

Chapter 3 (“Punitive Miracles in the LXX Divergent Voices”) extends my study into the Septuagintal versions of 1–2 Chronicles, 1–4 Maccabees, Job, Jonah, and Daniel. I describe these texts as “divergent voices” because, to varying degrees, they present different views of the role of punitive miracles in Israel’s history. Given the open ending of 2 Kings, I argue that early Christians would likely read these books in light of the Primary History. Reading from this vantage leads me to frame these texts’ coherence with the prophetic storyline in terms of three “postures”: reconfiguration, continuation, and relativization. First and Second Chronicles use punitive miracles to elevate a “priestly storyline” and to emphasize the regularity of divine retribution, leading to a reconfigured depiction of God’s kingdom vis-à-vis the Primary History. The books of Maccabees and Daniel employ punitive miracles in ways reminiscent of Genesis–2 Kings, producing a depiction of the prophetic storyline and God’s kingdom broadly continuous with the Primary History. The book of Jonah uses punitive miracles to facilitate divine activities independent of the prophetic storyline, effectively relativizing this storyline. I supplement these categories with a fourth one, confrontation, given the miracles in the book of Job. The Joban miracles are not truly punitive; they are “probative.” These events probe the traditional view of retribution, which is foundational to my definition of the “punitive miracle.” The Joban miracles highlight the contingency of LXX punitive miracles. The LXX divergent voices display diverse manners of carrying the Primary History and its vision of God’s kingdom into new contexts. Finally, I review how the LXX divergent voices adapt the patterns and conventions of the Primary History, showing that these witnesses maintain and develop what I observed in Genesis–2 Kings. As a whole, these texts privilege what I describe as the “type 1 covenantal miracle,” a function reflecting the capacity of punitive miracles to instantiate the covenantal blessings (see Lev 26; Deut 28).

Chapter 4 (“Punitive Miracles in Luke-Acts”) applies the findings of chapters 2–3 to Luke’s corpus. I investigate the six Lukan punitive miracle episodes in turn (Zechariah’s muting [Luke 1]; Judas’s death [Acts 1]; Ananias and Sapphira’s deaths [Acts 5]; Saul’s blinding [Acts 9]; Herod’s death [Acts 12]; Bar-Jesus’s blinding [Acts 13]), paying special attention to their meaning in the context of the early Christian prophetic storyline. I then examine these episodes using the evaluative criteria from previous chapters. Concerning the coherence of Luke’s punitive miracles and the prophetic storyline, I argue that these events advance God’s earthly kingdom in the same manner as the miracles analyzed in chapters 2–3. The Lukan punitive miracles intersect with the prophetic storyline by forming and preserving God’s renewed kingdom. However, this intersection often denotes conflict between God and Satan, a departure from LXX punitive miracles. Luke’s punitive miracles communicate continuity with a twist. Concerning Luke’s adaptation of LXX patterns and conventions, I show that Luke exhibits a great deal of selectivity in his use of punitive miracles considering the options available. Every Lukan punitive miracle is “internal” to God’s covenant people. I build on this finding by probing how Luke’s punitive miracles function. Some Lukan miracles are “creative” because they portray God’s kingdom as advancing despite the obstructive efforts of the covenant community. At least one miracle is also “covenantal,” meaning it instantiates a covenantal curse. This outcome reflects a modest reconfiguration of “covenantal obedience,” showing that the Mosaic covenant accords with the renewal of God’s kingdom. I ultimately identify the novelty of Luke’s discourse in terms of what it presupposes about the covenant people and God’s renewed kingdom. The Lukan punitive miracles show that the covenant community and God’s kingdom are overlapping yet distinct phenomena.

The last section of chapter 4 (“Luke’s Punitive Miracles in the Context of ECPR’s Prophetic Storyline”) returns to my research question. I propose that early Christian readers would likely view Luke’s punitive miracles in the context of an extensive scriptural story about God’s earthly kingdom. The Lukan punitive miracles signify that God’s kingdom has decisively “restarted” in the early Christian movement. This vantage produces a modest reconfiguration of “God’s people.” Whereas God’s kingdom was formerly associated with a people constituted by covenant, the Lukan punitive miracles indicate a change. These events establish the Jewish believers as the locus of divine concern. God’s creative purposes now reside in the church, with a view toward benefiting Israel and the created order. Simultaneously, the same events anticipate God’s creation of a second “people” from the Gentiles to complement Israel. These miracles foreground faith as the response proper to God’s renewed kingdom, which prepares for the inclusion of believing Gentiles alongside believing Jews on an equal footing. Luke’s punitive miracles delicately reconfigure “God’s people” in the renewed divine kingdom. These events narrow the prophetic storyline’s focus to the church while retaining a place for Israel as God’s covenant people.

Beyond answering my research question, my study contributes to scholarship in several ways. First, my work shows how a socio-rhetorical understanding of early Christian storylines can promote a more responsible practice of biblical theology.¹⁰²⁴ Practitioners of biblical theology often open themselves to the critique of producing an ahistorical, purely synchronic analysis of biblical texts. A partial remedy to this valid critique is available in how I have adapted SRI. The socio-rhetorical understanding of rhetorolects makes it possible to move from

¹⁰²⁴ Credit is due to Claude Cox for bringing this contribution to my attention in his response to a draft of chapter 2.

early Christian discursive practices to a plausible understanding of how early Christians would likely perceive scriptural texts. This perspective yields a chastened form of biblical theology: it neither purports to investigate biblical themes in some idealized sense nor detaches from the contexts of specific readers. My adaptation of SRI permits a more responsible practice of biblical theology rooted in how audiences in specific social and cultural contexts would likely perceive the development of biblical ideas.

Second, my work has provided a more precise picture of which episodes in Israel's scriptures are properly adduced as a background to Luke's punitive miracles. I have argued that punitive miracles display two distinct "modes," which I identify as "prophetic" and "priestly." The prophetic mode operates on the logic that moral offenses merit punishment. The priestly mode assumes that cultic offenses expose one to God's numinous presence. Without a considerable disclaimer, priestly punitive miracles are not equivalent to the Lukan punitive miracles, which consistently operate on prophetic logic. Priestly miracles are relevant to Luke-Acts to the degree that these events are integrated into the LXX prophetic storyline (e.g., see 1 Sam 5–6). Yet it is improper to adduce stories like the deaths of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10) or the death of Uzzah (2 Sam 6) as virtual equivalents to Luke's punitive miracles, as scholars are wont to do. Priestly miracles are not irrelevant to early Christian literature. These miracles are a significant analog to the "eucharistic" miracles found in apocryphal narratives (e.g., see Acts Thom. 49–51). Nevertheless, an understanding of early Christian modes of discourse—or some similar perspective by way of a different method—is necessary for identifying the scriptural precursors to Luke's punitive miracles.

Third, my investigation helps arbitrate between two competing tendencies in recent Lukan scholarship. As I explain in chapter 4, one stream of scholars has applied insights from

Social Identity Theory to the question of Jewish and Gentile identities in Acts, leading to the conclusion that Luke portrays these groups as sharing a “superordinate identity” while maintaining “subgroup salience” (i.e., ethnic distinctions).¹⁰²⁵ Another stream of scholars has made a compelling case that Luke maintains significant distinctions between Jews and Gentiles.¹⁰²⁶ On this understanding, Jews remain God’s covenant people regardless of belief in Jesus, and Gentiles are brought alongside Jews as a “second” people of God.¹⁰²⁷ There is no necessary conflict between these streams since the first group of scholars acknowledges that ethnic distinctions persist in Luke’s corpus. Nevertheless, I perceive these groups as trajectories moving in different directions. The first group tends to emphasize the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers, while the second group foregrounds the Jews’ continuing role in God’s plans.

Given my analysis of Luke’s punitive miracles, I believe these scholarly trajectories must be held in tension. Emphasizing a “superordinate identity” among believers to the effective exclusion of persistent ethnic identities, or arguing in the opposite direction, distorts Luke’s discourse. As I have argued, Luke’s miraculous judgments promote a “superordinate identity” common to Jewish and Gentile believers by accentuating the very traits that the former group holds in common with the latter group. Nevertheless, Luke’s punitive miracles emphasize the “subgroup salience” of believing Jews within God’s covenant people. These events secure the place of believing Jews within Israel, distinguishing God’s covenant people from God’s

¹⁰²⁵ See n. 1013.

¹⁰²⁶ See Susan J. Wendel, *Scriptural Interpretation and Community Self-Definition in Luke-Acts and the Writings of Justin Martyr* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Moessner, “Paul in Acts”; Kinzer, *Jerusalem Crucified, Jerusalem Risen*; Oliver, *Luke’s Jewish Eschatology*; Jason F. Moraff, “‘Children of the Prophets and the Covenant’: A Post-Supersessionist Reading of Luke-Acts,” *Rel* 14.1 (2023): art. 120, pp. 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010120>.

¹⁰²⁷ This position is most clearly articulated in Oliver, *Luke’s Jewish Eschatology*, 48–49.

“second” people to a greater extent than modern Christian readers might appreciate.¹⁰²⁸ The Lukan punitive miracles show that the “superordinate identity” common to believing Jews and Gentiles is real. Nevertheless, the proliferation of these events among believing Jews argues against viewing the “Jewish” side of this group’s identity as disposable.¹⁰²⁹

Finally, my study points to areas where additional work is necessary. As I mentioned in the introduction, a *desideratum* for future research would be an independent investigation of “beneficent” miracles in the LXX and Luke-Acts.¹⁰³⁰ Considerations of length have made such an investigation impractical in this dissertation. Nevertheless, it would be advantageous to study the intersection of punitive miracles with what Robbins has identified as the “miracle storyline.” The results of such a study could be brought into fruitful conversation with my dissertation. A second area where my study highlights the need for further work is the early Christian apocryphal Acts. Stories of miraculous judgment are common in texts like the Acts of Andrew, Acts of John, Acts of Paul, Acts of Peter, and Acts of Thomas. Conducting a socio-rhetorical investigation of these books’ punitive miracles would create a context for understanding how early Christian authors beyond Luke used these events to tell a compelling story.

Luke portrays God as “unleashing holy hell” in the era of Christian origins. God miraculously mutes, blinds, and kills those who run afoul of the divine will. Stories like these

¹⁰²⁸ For this point, see the exchange between Darrell Bock and Isaac Oliver on *Enoch Seminar Online* (“Darrell Bock Reviews Luke’s Jewish Eschatology (with a Response by Oliver),” *Reviews of the Enoch Seminar*, 7 August 2021, <http://enochseminar.org/review/23031>). Bock questions whether Luke depicts “two twin peoples of God,” as Oliver claims. In response, Oliver tentatively attributes such “hesitation” to his “emphasis on the *collective* identities of the *laoi* ... rather than on the individual standing of the *individual* members of the *ekklesia*” (emphasis original). Bock’s objection seemingly reflects his reluctance to accept multiple “peoples of God” within the church, as opposed to a single “people.”

¹⁰²⁹ For an author who seems to move in this direction, see Baker, *Identity, Memory, and Narrative*, 201. Baker describes Jewish believers as “free to maintain their traditional Jewish customs,” but they are not apparently obliged to do so.

¹⁰³⁰ See n. 126.

often attract attention among modern readers because they raise difficult questions about divine justice. I do not intend to dismiss such questions as invalid. I have simply endeavored to show that early Christian readers would likely perceive these stories of miraculous judgment as integral to Luke's work. Read in the context of the early Christian prophetic storyline, these accounts make a compelling case that God's kingdom has been renewed in the era of Christian origins, resulting in the delicate reconfiguration of God's people. God unleashes holy hell to advance the prophetic storyline and promote God's creative purposes. These purposes have long been frustrated, yet they are now coming to fruition in the church.

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