

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN FORCEFULLY ADVANCES*

R. Steven Notley

Few verses have perplexed New Testament translators and interpreters as has Mt. 11.12 (= Lk. 16.16). Davies and Allison commented recently that our saying is ‘without a doubt, one of the New Testament’s greatest conundrums’.¹ The inherent complexity of the Greek saying is attested by the divergent editorial activity of Matthew and Luke. The fragmented literary context of the Lukan logion has left the aim of the saying more obscure than its synoptic counterpart.² On the other hand, Matthew’s geminated ἕως,³ has resulted in ἕως ἄρτι, to suggest that the

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1. W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988–97), II, p. 254; C. Spicq, ‘βιάζομαι’, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (3 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), I, p. 287; E. Trocmé, *Jesus and his Contemporaries* (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 33; I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 630.

2. ‘Matthew seems more primitive and Palestinian; Luke fits with a later stage in the propagation of the gospel. So we cannot use one text to explain the other; each has its own particular significance’; Spicq, ‘βιάζομαι’, p. 287; W. Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 20.

3. Mt. 11.13: πάντες γὰρ οἱ προφῆται καὶ ὁ νόμος ἕως Ἰωάννου ἐπροφήτευσαν. Matthew introduces the duplicative ἕως in Mt. 5.18, again following the mention of ‘the law or the prophets’ (Mt. 5.17). On the unusual appearance of ἡ in 5.17 see n. 5 below. In Mt. 5.18, however, the Evangelist employs another favorite temporal phrase, ἕως ἄν (cf. Mt. 2.13; 5.26; 10.11, 23; 12.20; 16.28). The use of ἕως ἄν in 5.18 echoes Mt. 24.34, where he agrees with Lk. 21.32 (ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη ἕως ἄν πάντα γένηται) against Mark’s sole use of μέχρι (Mk 13.30; cf. Lk. 16.16).

kingdom has come to an end⁴—an opinion inconsistent with Matthew's own presentation of the kingdom of heaven. While Matthew and Luke both offer John's advent as a turning point, scholarship has struggled to understand precisely what his appearance signifies. Did he mark the culmination of the 'law and the prophets' (Luke), or the beginning of the 'kingdom of heaven' (Matthew)?

Luke's logion likewise bears the marks of editing with its reordering of Matthew's οἱ προφῆται καὶ ὁ νόμος to present a patently Matthean phrase (Mt. 7.12; 22.40).⁵ Moreover, while the manuscript evidence for a shorter Matthean reading which omits καὶ ὁ νόμος is poorly attested, it deserves some consideration simply on the grounds that the law does not prophesy. On the other hand, the phrase 'the prophets prophesied'⁶ is a well-attested Hebraism⁷ and reinforces the eschatological nature of what Meier has termed 'the second Baptist-block' (Mt. 11.2-15).⁸ The notion that the prophets prophesied concerning the End of Days, even though they themselves did not fully understand their prophecy, is heard in the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁹

And God told Habbakuk to write down that which would happen to the final generation, but he did not make known to him when *the time* [יְהִי] would come to an end (1QpHab. 7.1-2).

The sectarian opinion of the eschatological aim of the biblical prophets is echoed in the rabbinic estimation, 'All of the prophets prophesied solely concerning the Days of the Messiah' (כל הנביאים לא נתנבאו אלא) (כל הנביאים לא נתנבאו אלא): *b. Ber.* 34b; *b. Šab.* 63a; *b. Sanh.* 99a).¹⁰ What is important for our study is not merely the recognition of the similarities in lan-

4. Matthew alone of the synoptists uses ἕως with ἄρτι (Mt. 11.12; 23.39; 26.29; Jn 2.10; 16.24; 1 Cor. 4.13; 8.7; 15.6; 1 Jn 2.9). See J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1987), pp. 46-47.

5. The simple ὁ νόμος seems more fitting in Mt. 5.17, but it has been augmented with οἱ προφῆται. Editorial revision may be indicated by the atypical conjunction ἢ in an otherwise Matthean phrase: τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφήτας. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, I, p. 484.

6. 1 Pet. 1.10: **προφῆται** οἱ περὶ τῆς εἰς ὑμᾶς χάριτος **προφητεύσαντες**...

7. 1 Sam. 19.20; Jer. 14.15; 2 Chron. 18.11.

8. J.P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1991-94), II, pp. 130-63.

9. See W.H. Brownlee, *The Midrash Peshar of Habakkuk* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 110-111.

10. Str-B III, pp. 327-29; D. Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), p. 255 n. 39.

guage between our saying and the Jewish sources, but the shared opinion in Judaism of late antiquity of the eschatological aim of the biblical prophets. According to this opinion, the prophets spoke ultimately of the hope of redemption, whether that expectation is couched in the Qumran vocabulary of קץ¹¹ or the rabbinical expression ימות המשיח. This understanding also indicates the eschatological milieu for our saying.

The most comprehensive study of the history of interpretation for Mt. 11.12 is that by Cameron.¹² Beginning with a survey of early patristic interpretation, he has traced the significant approaches to our verse. As he rightly notes, the question at the heart of any discussion is the enigmatic use of the verb βιάζεται and its cognate βιασταί. Should the verb be read passively, 'the kingdom *suffers violence*', or in the middle voice, 'the kingdom *forcefully advances*'? Related to this is the question whether βιασταί designates opponents or members of the kingdom of heaven.

In the following study I hope to demonstrate that the historical sense of our saying has been obscured by three points. First, insufficient attention has been given to the saying's reflection of an ancient complex of eschatological testimonia concerning the Jewish expectation for a prophet in the End of Days. Second, the saying's link to these testimonia has been obscured because of a variance in verbal expression between Greek and Hebrew. Our saying possesses an elliptical allusion to an Old Testament passage which has been overlooked, because it is preserved in a non-Septuagintal Greek rendering of a Hebrew term. Finally, the content of Jesus' testimony concerning John and the βιασταί has not been fully appreciated because New Testament scholarship has underestimated the eschatological aim of John's baptism of repentance.

1. *The Kingdom Suffers Violence*

Evidence has been marshaled from literary Greek usage¹³ and from the papyri¹⁴ to support both the passive and the middle readings of βιάζεται. While a passive reading is possible in form, the challenge is to de-

11. For the use of קץ to signify the era of God's redemption see IQS 3.23 (לפי לפי רזו אל עד קצו); CD 19.10 (בקץ הפקדה); see also CD 4.10; IQS 4.18; 1QpHab. 7.7 (רצונך בקץ); 1Q34^{bis} 32.5 (הקץ האחרון).

12. P.S. Cameron, *Violence and the Kingdom: The Interpretation of Matthew 11:12* (ANTJ; Bern: Peter Lang, 1988); see J.M. Thacker, 'The Kingdom of Heaven Is Breaking Forth' (MA thesis submitted to Oral Roberts University, 1990).

13. Spicq, 'βιάζομαι', I, pp. 287-91.

termine its sense in this particular setting. In recent years, the most compelling case for a passive (*in malam partem*) rendering has been that put forward by Moore in his study on βιάζω, ἀρπάζω and their cognates in the writings of Josephus Flavius. He observed that the use of these two verbs in combination by the Jewish historian invariably suggests physical violence as a means of coercion.¹⁵ He thus concluded concerning the Matthean saying,¹⁶

Since the saying is primarily concerned with the ‘kingdom’, and since the chief opponents of Jesus are the Pharisees and this Gospel contains stronger denunciations of them than the others, it is the Pharisees who are chiefly in mind.

Moore proposes that Jesus particularly speaks of the ‘violent and Zealotic Pharisees’ who ‘provided the resistance movement with its theology and its apocalyptic inspiration’.¹⁷ While he acknowledges a division of opinion¹⁸ among the Pharisees regarding armed struggle, pacifistic Pharisism is all but ignored and the reader is left with the impression that the Pharisees of the Gospels are to be identified with those who had abandoned peaceful means to usher in God’s reign. He suggests that ‘the denunciation of the Pharisees carried with it *ipso facto* a denunciation of the Zealots’.¹⁹

The problems with Moore’s historical and literary assumptions are legion. Apart from the obvious historical problems of identifying the Pharisees in the New Testament with the Zealots, nothing in the literary context anticipates the notion of force *against* the ‘kingdom of heaven’. According to Matthew and Luke—the only Gospels in which the saying appears—Jesus’ movement has yet to encounter any violent opposition.

14. F. Preisigke, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden* (3 vols.; Berlin: G. Preisigke, 1925–31), I, p. 266.

15. E. Moore, ‘BIAZΩ, APITAZΩ and Cognates in Josephus’, *NTS* 21 (1975), pp. 519–43.

16. Moore, ‘Cognates’, pp. 540–41.

17. Moore, ‘Cognates’, p. 541.

18. Acts 5.34–39. Moore suggests (‘Cognates’, p. 541), that Gamaliel’s speech gives us insight into the internal Pharisaic debate. Likewise, he notes that the two opinions are exemplified on the one hand by the *Psalms of Solomon* (militaristic) and on the other (though more tentatively) by the *Assumption of Moses* (pacifist). Nevertheless, as we shall see, these same pseudepigraphical works share an apocalyptic perspective regarding events and characters in the End of Days.

19. Moore, ‘Cognates’, p. 541; D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), pp. 200–201.

While Mk 3.6 presents plotting by the Pharisees at the very outset of Jesus' ministry, such early violent opposition is unknown either to Matthew²⁰ or Luke.²¹

Even less evidence exists for Pharisaic (zealotic or otherwise) opposition to John. Matthew's patent style of combining 'the Pharisees and the Sadducees' (Mt. 16.1-12; 22.34) to identify those whom John accused of insincerity (Mt. 3.7) leaves the impression that the Pharisees were unsympathetic to John. Yet the essential content of his call—repentance, baptism and the nearness of the kingdom of heaven—all belong to Pharisaism. His message would have appealed to the Pharisees in the same way that Paul's preaching of the resurrection pitted the Pharisees against the Sadducean priests in the Sanhedrin (Acts 23.6-11).

It is significant that Luke lacks the designation, 'the Pharisees and the Sadducees', in his description of those coming to John (Lk. 3.7-9). Indeed, as all the Synoptic Gospels agree (Mt. 21.23-27 par.), it is the Sadducean Temple establishment which was unsupportive of John's movement. Yet, even after his death they were afraid to express their opinion publicly because of his vast popularity among the Jewish populace.

Schrenk also questioned whether the saying in Matthew could be understood as an opposition logion aimed at unprincipled Zealots.²²

The difficulty here is that Matthew is concerned with the prophets, the Law, the Baptist, Jesus and the βασιλεία. It is thus hard to see the point of a special reference to an irrelevant subject when we naturally expect an important insight on the situation depicted.

20. Mt. 12.14: 'But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how to destroy him'.

21. Luke does not mention any violent opposition until the reaction to the parable of the wicked tenants (Lk. 20.9-18), which was aimed at the Sadducean priesthood. Even at that point, Jesus' opponents according to Luke are the Sadducean Temple establishment, and not the Pharisees. 'The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people; for they perceived that he had told this parable against them' (Lk. 20.19). J.A. Fitzmyer noted, 'in all of this characterization of the groups that oppose Jesus during his last days *the Pharisees are conspicuously absent...*': *The Gospel According to Luke* (AB; 2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1981-85), II, p. 1270. Indeed, no mention is made in any of the Gospels of the Pharisees' participation in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. D. Flusser, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998), p. 73. On Lk. 20.9-18 see B.H. Young, *Jesus and his Jewish Parables* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), pp. 282-305.

22. G. Schrenk, 'βιάζομαι', *TDNT*, I, p. 611.

Moore's proposal is an abrupt intrusion into the Matthean context, and necessitates the disintegration of our saying from the testimony about John. A reading of violence in Luke is equally problematic.²³ While the fragmented state of Luke's literary context does allow for a sudden change of subject, internally one would have expected ἀλλά rather than καί to distinguish between those who 'proclaim the kingdom of God' and those subjecting it to violence.

Scholarship has failed to provide any coherent connection between the advent of John and violence against the kingdom of heaven—of which the Baptist was not even numbered!²⁴ The only element of violence witnessed in Matthew's historical setting is John's imprisonment by Herod Antipas—an historical setting unknown to Luke. Even if we accept Matthew's context for the saying, the issues which led to this tragic set of events have nothing to do with his proclamation of the nearness of the 'kingdom of heaven'. They, instead, were precipitated by John's unyielding criticism of Herod's attempt to legitimize his adulterous affair with his brother's wife by marrying her.²⁵ Thus, while the passive voice may be plausible in form, there seems to be little within the literary or historical context which would suggest such a passive (*in malam partem*) reading.

2. Middle Voice: The Kingdom Forcefully Advances

While the notion of violence to the kingdom of heaven may be ill-fitted to the context, the rendering of βιάζεται in the middle voice often fails to contribute much to the cohesion of Jesus' testimony about John. Nevertheless, there does exist a correspondence between the sense of βιάζεται in the middle voice and a Semitic equivalent.²⁶ What is more

23. For the reading of Lk. 16.16 as passive but *in bonam partem*, 'to be pressed, encouraged', see J.B. Cortés and F.M. Gatti, 'On the Meaning of Luke 16:16', *JBL* 106 (1987), pp. 247-59; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, II, p. 1117.

24. Mt. 11.11b: 'He who is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he (John)' (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, II, p. 252).

25. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.109-110. See the discussion by N. Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp. 267-70.

26. Spicq ('βιάζομαι', I, p. 288 n. 7) states, 'In several of the papyri, and constantly in literary texts, the verb is used for forced entry into a house, a route, or a city... 2 Macc. 14.41; Philo, *Moses* 1.108, 1.215; Epictetus, 4.4.20: "no closed door for me, but for those who want to force it"; Josephus, *War* 2.262: "take Jerusalem by force"; 4.554: "Vespasian entered Hebron by main force"; 5.59: "Titus forced a

significant is that this same Semitic term contributes integrally to Jesus' identification of John the Baptist as the prophet of the End of Days. Suggesting Semitic equivalents for Greek terms is always a precarious task. Daube mentions no fewer than a dozen possible Aramaic and Hebrew equivalents for βιάζεται, with little indication which might actually lie behind the Greek term.²⁷ Cameron rightly criticizes that Semitic solutions to our saying have traditionally suffered from the same weakness as their Greek counterparts.²⁸

The investigation of the Semitic background to the saying was necessary because there seemed to be no adequate control available from its Greek translations. The question now arises: What controls are there over the investigation of the Semitic background?

As he laments, few controls have been applied to either Greek or Semitic solutions. Yet, it is precisely the fresh linguistic and religious data in the Qumran library which can sometimes contribute to the necessary controls for Semitic solutions. The challenge before us is to determine if the linguistic and religious milieu presented by the Dead Sea Scrolls coincides with the literary context of the saying. Our study will proceed along two lines. First, we want to investigate the expectations among the Qumran sectarians and their Jewish contemporaries concerning the prophet of the End of Days. Particular attention will be given to the similarities between these expectations and the content of Jesus' testimony concerning John. Second, within the body of testimonia concerning these expectations we hope to demonstrate that specialized Hebrew vocabulary exists, which relates to the meaning of βιάζεται and βιάσται in Jesus' statement concerning John in Mt. 11.12.

3. *From the Days of John*

Collins's review²⁹ of the figures portrayed in the messianic expectations of the Dead Sea Sect touches on the eschatological milieu of our say-

way through to his own"; 5.112: "forced entrance"; Josephus, *Ant.* 17.253: "he had attempted to take their fortresses by force, etc."; Thucydides 7.83.5; Diodorus Siculus 2.19.7; 17.68.2: "the Macedonians forced their way, were obliged to withdraw"; Polybius 5.4.9: "force passage" .

27. D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone Press, 1956), pp. 285-300.

28. Cameron, *Violence*, p. 98.

29. J.J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

ing. Of particular relevance is the hope in Judaism of late antiquity for an eschatological prophet who would appear with the advent of the Messiah(s). This anticipation by the Qumran community for the coming of a Prophet is most clearly expressed in the *Community Rule*.

They shall depart from none of the counsels of the Law to walk in the stubbornness of their hearts, but shall be ruled by the primitive precepts in which the men of the Community were first instructed until there shall come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel (1QS 9.11).

Scriptural support for the appearance of the Prophet is given in the *Testimonia* (4Q175) with a citation from Deut. 18.18-19:

I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren. I will put my words into his mouth and he shall tell them all I command him. And I will require a reckoning of whoever will not listen to the words which the Prophet shall speak in my Name.

While the Qumran description of the eschatological prophet is shaped primarily by the Deuteronomic tradition, one can not assume that the alternative identification of the prophetic messenger of Malachi was unknown to the community. According to sectarian thought, the Prophet would appear at the End of Days—a period marked by divine judgment (1QS 4.18-21; 1QH 13.16; 14.8)³⁰ when God would refine (זקק) and purify (טהר) creation. Since these verbs occur in combination only in Mal. 3.3, their use to elucidate the eschatology of the Dead Sea Sect suggests that the community was familiar with the prophetic content of Mal. 3.1-3 in which the messenger (מלאכי) appears.³¹ Moreover, the

30. References to the Thanksgiving Hymns follow E. Puech's proposed restoration, 'Quelques aspects de la restauration du rouleau des hymnes', *JJS* 39 (1988), pp. 38-55.

31. The sectarians employ language from Mal. 3.2-3 where the Day of the Lord's visitation is compared to 'a refiner's fire' (כִּי־הוּא כֹאֵשׁ מִצֶּרֶף) in their description of the End of Days. 'The End of Days is the season of refinement which has come: אַחֲרֵי־יְהִיָּה עֵת מִצֶּרֶף הַבָּאָה' (A. Steudel, 'אַחֲרֵי־יְהִיָּה הַיָּמִים' in the Texts from Qumran', *RevQ* 61 [1993-95], p. 228). On the question of whether the time is already arrived, see Steudel's comment, 'עֵת מִצֶּרֶף הַבָּאָה' designates a period of history which has already begun. Probably the best example illustrating this is found in the pesharim: 4QpPsa II, 17-19 quotes Ps. 37.14-15 and interprets it as follows: Its interpretation concerns the wicked Ephraim and Manasse who have (oftenly) sought to lay hands on (אֲשֶׁר יִבְקְשׂוּ לְשַׁלֹּחַ יָד בְּ) the priest and the men of his council at the time of refining which has come (בְּעֵת מִצֶּרֶף הַבָּאָה) upon them. But God has

Aramaic fragment published by Starky in 1964 with the reading,³² הגה אנכי שלח אליה... clearly represents Mal. 3.23, ...אליהו קדם לפני. Nevertheless, the emphasis of the Qumran Community on right teaching seems to have influenced its portrayal of the prophet as a teacher cum prophet-like-Moses.³³

The identification of the eschatological prophet with the Deuteronomistic tradition was not restricted to the Qumran library. Already in the second century BCE, 1 Macc. 4.42-46 records the expectation of a prophet who would determine legal matters.³⁴ The Jerusalem priests appointed by Judah the Hasmonean faced a dilemma about what to do with the stones of the altar in the Temple which had been defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes. Eventually, they removed the altar but decided to keep the stones in another place until 'there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them'. The involvement of the prophet in deciding a halakhic question suggests a prophet-like-Moses was envisioned. This suspicion is bolstered by the language used in the mention of the expected prophet during the selection of Simon to be leader and high priest. 'And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, *until a faithful prophet*³⁵ should

(always) redeemed them (יפידם) from out of their hand' (Steudel, 'אהרית הימים', pp. 228-29).

32. J. Starky, 'Un texte messianique araméen de la grotte 4 de Qumran', *Ecole des langues orientales anciennes de l'Institut Catholique de Paris: Mémorial du cinquantenaire 1914-1964* (Travaux de l'Institut Catholique de Paris; Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1964), pp. 51-66; J.A. Fitzmyer, 'The Aramaic "Elect of God" Text from Qumran Cave 4', in *idem, Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 127-60.

33. In 11Q13 the eschatological prophet (משיח הרוח) is presented with the responsibility to instruct the community concerning the ages of eternity: לנהשכילמה בכורל קצי העולם (11Q13 2.20). This is also the task of the Instructor (משכיל) of the community (cf. 1QS 3.13-15).

34. R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (AB; 2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1966-70), I, p. 49.

35. See 4Q375 1.1.6-7 where the rise of false prophets is contrasted with that of a 'true and faithful prophet': צדיק הוא נביא [נאמן]. J. Strugnell suggests that Deuteronomy chs. 13 and 18 lie behind the sectarian description: 'Moses-Pseudepigrapha at Qumran: 4Q375, 4Q376 and Similar Works', in L.H. Schiffman (ed.), *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (JSPSup, 8; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 226-29; *T. Benj.* 9.2 (μονογενούς προφήτου); *T. Levi* 8.15 (προφήτου ύψηλοϋ). Jesus is called later by the Ebionites 'the true prophet'. See Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.18.5; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.3.7-13; Flusser, *Judaism*

arise' (1 Macc. 14.41: ἕως τοῦ ἀναστῆναι προφήτην πιστόν). The description recalls the description of Moses as 'faithful' (Num. 12.7) and the ideal prophet: 'No prophet *has risen*...like Moses' (Deut. 34.10: כְּמֹשֶׁה...לֹא קָם נְבִיא; Deut. 18.18: נְבִיא אֲקִים...כְּמֹדֵךְ). A similar style of composite description for Moses³⁶ that is drawn from disparate biblical passages occurs in a Qumran fragment (1Q34^{bis} 3 2.8)³⁷ where the law-giver is called 'a faithful shepherd' (רֹעֵה נֹאמָן) = Exod. 3.2; Num. 12.7) and a 'humble man' (עֲנִי שְׂפִיל) = Num. 12.3).

The Jewish expectation for a Deuteronomic 'prophet-like-Moses' is witnessed also in the New Testament. At Nain, the people respond to the healing of the widow's son: 'A *great prophet*³⁸ *has arisen* among

p. 234 n. 7; S. Pines, *Studies in the History of Religion* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), pp. 222, 281. Some scholars see a reference in 1 Macc. 14.41 to Simon's successor, John Hyrcanus, who is the only Hasmonean ruler who possessed prophetic gifts. While the 'three crowns' (prophet, priest and king) are denied to Simon, according to Josephus, John Hyrcanus possessed all three. 'Now he was accounted by God worthy of three of the greatest privileges, the *rule* of the nation, the office of the *high-priest*, and the gift of *prophecy*' (*Ant.* 13.299-300; *War* 1.68). The opinion that Hyrcanus possessed prophetic gifts may also be hinted in the Aramaic *Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan* on Deut. 33.11 where the Hasmonean leader is mentioned in association with Elijah: 'Bless O Lord the sacrifices of the House of Levi, those who give the tenth from the tithe, and receive with pleasure the oblation from the hand of Elijah the priest which he offered on Mount Carmel. Break the loins of Ahab, his enemy, and the neck of the false prophets who rose against him. As for the enemies of John the High Priest, may they have no foot to stand on'. P. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), pp. 202-203; R. Meyer, 'Elia und Ahab', in O. Betz, M. Hengel and P. Schmidt (eds.), *Abraham unser Vater, Festschrift für Otto Michel zum 60. Geburtstag* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963), pp. 356-68.

36. The reconstruction in line 2.8 מֹשֶׁה to read 'Moses' was proposed to me by David Flusser in private conversation.

37. D. Barthélemy and J.T. Milik (eds.), *Qumrân Cave I* (DJD, 1; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 154.

38. The same title occurs in the *Oracles of Hystapses*, 17.1-2: 'When the close of time draws nigh, a great prophet [*magnus propheta*] shall be sent from God to turn men to the knowledge of God, and he shall receive power of doing wonderful things. Whenever men shall not hear him, he will shut up the heaven, and cause it to withhold its rains; he will turn water into blood...' The description of the great prophet is a composition of biblical events. The allusions to Elijah (1 Kgs 8.35: 'shut up the heaven, and cause it to withhold its rains') and Moses (Exod. 7.17: 'he will turn water into blood') are clear. The author may have also intended to allude to the prophet-like-Moses in his statement, 'Whenever men shall not hear him...' See Deut. 18.15b: 'You shall hear him' (cf. Mk 9.7 par.). Flusser has demonstrated

us!’ (Lk. 7.16).³⁹ Elsewhere, scholarship has recognized that the three answers to Jesus’ question, ‘Who do the crowds say that I am?’, are in fact three variations on the same answer—‘John the Baptist; but others say Elijah; and others, that one of the old *prophets has arisen*’ (Lk. 9.19).⁴⁰ Apparently, there were those outside of Jesus’ inner circle of followers who thought he was the Prophet of the End of Days. Jesus does speak of his work and death in prophetic terms: ‘I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem’ (Lk. 13.33; cf. 4.24). Nonetheless, the Gospels never record that Jesus identified himself as the eschatological prophet. He consistently indicates that that role belongs to the Baptist.

Speculation by some that Jesus was Elijah is derived from the belief in postexilic Judaism that the prophet of the End of Days would be none other than Elijah.⁴¹ The postscript in Mal. 3.22-24 (ET 4.4-6)⁴² where this notion is first mentioned is considered by scholars to be an addendum to reiterate the importance of the law given to Moses at Sinai, ‘Remember the law of my servant Moses [זכרו חֹרֶת מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי]’ (3.22a). The mention of Elijah was intended to identify the anonymous messenger of Mal. 3.1, ‘Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the

that the *Oracles of Hystapses* ‘were in reality a Jewish book in Greek language, based upon some Zoroastrian material or book’ ‘Hystapses and John of Patmos’, *Judaism*, pp. 390-453).

39. As we witnessed in 1 Macc. 14.41, the verbs (ἀνίστημι/ἐγείρω = קום) which occur in association with the expected prophet of Deut. 18.15-18 and the description of Moses in Deut. 34.10 have influenced the description of the ‘coming’ of the eschatological prophet. In the New Testament the pattern is continued (cf. Lk. 7.16; 9.18, 19; 16.31; Acts 3.22; 7.37; Jn 7.52).

40. See Lk. 9.7-9; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, I, pp. 759, 774.

41. Scholarly debate continues how early the tradition develops regarding whether Elijah will precede the Messiah: M. M. Faierstein, ‘Why do the Scribes say that Elijah Must Come First’, *JBL* 100 (1981), pp. 75-86; D.C. Allison, ‘Elijah Must Come First’, *JBL* 103 (1984), pp. 256-58; J.A. Fitzmyer, ‘More About Elijah Coming First’, *JBL* 104 (1985), pp. 295-96; *idem*, ‘Aramaic “Elect of God” Text’, p. 137; J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1992), p. 110; C. Milikowsky, ‘Elijah and the Messiah’, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 2 (1982-83), pp. 491-96 (Hebrew).

42. On the question of the literary relationship of Mal. 3.24-26 with the remainder of the prophecy, see A.E. Hill, *Malachi* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1998), pp. 363-66.

way before me'. Elijah's return is repeated in the second century BCE Wisdom of Ben Sira 48.10:

You [Elijah] who are ready at the appointed time, it is written, to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury, to turn the heart of the father to the son and *to restore* [καταστήσαι] the tribes of Jacob.

Ben Sira is the earliest postbiblical interpretation of Elijah's task upon his return.⁴³ The meaning of the Hebrew verb in Mal. 3.23 (וְשִׁבַּת) is extended in Ben Sira to suggest that Elijah would not only restore family relationships, but that he would regather the tribes of Jacob (i.e. 'to return fathers to their sons').

Nevertheless, Jesus did not base his opinion regarding John on the regathering role of Elijah presented by Ben Sira. He, instead, identified John's significance with the opinion of the scribes (οἱ γραμματεῖς) that Elijah is to come and to restore things as they were in the past, 'Elijah does come, and *he is to restore* [ἀποκαταστήσει: LXX Mal. 4.6; Acts 1.6; 3.21] all things' (Mt. 17.10-11).⁴⁴

Discussion among Israel's sages concerning Elijah's future task is preserved in a first century logion found in *m. 'Ed.* 8.7:⁴⁵

R. Joshua said: I have received as a tradition from R. Johanan b. Zakkai, who heard from his teacher, and his teacher from his teacher, as a Halakah given to Moses from Sinai, that Elijah will not come to declare unclean or clean, to remove afar or to bring nigh, but to remove afar those families that were brought nigh by violence and to bring nigh those families that were removed afar by violence [i.e. to bring an end to injustice].

The association of Elijah with legal tasks more closely associated with Moses may stem from the fact that both figures received revelation at Mount Horeb (Exod. 3.1; 1 Kgs 19.8). More likely, however, it results from the juxtaposition in which they appear at the end of Mal. 3.22-23:⁴⁶

43. While Ben Sira does not quote explicitly from Mal. 3.24, Wright argues the apocryphal work is dependent upon the biblical passage. B.G. Wright, *No Small Difference: Sirach's Relationship to its Hebrew Parent Text* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 209-211.

44. The aim of Jesus' statement is confused in Mk 9.11-13. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, II, pp. 714-15.

45. See J. Neusner, *Development of a Legend: Studies on the Traditions concerning Yohanan ben Zakkai* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), pp. 53, 201.

46. See the collaboration of Moses and Elijah in Rabbinic tradition: *t. Sof.* 4.7; *t. 'Ed.* 3.4; *b. Sof.* 13a; *y. Sanh.* 10.1, 28a; *Exod. R.* 44.1; *Num. R.* 18.12; *Lam. R.* 1.2,

Remember the law of my servant *Moses*,
 the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all
 Israel.
 Behold, I will send you *Elijah* the prophet
 before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.

What is significant for our study is the opinion of some that Elijah's future task would be to decide legal matters ('to declare unclean or clean')—precisely the role of the expected prophet of I Macc. 4.46. At the same time, others held that his role was to regather ('to bring near'). The fluid state of opinion in Jewish thought of the first century concerning both the eschatological prophet's identity and his task is precisely the religious milieu for the literary creativity witnessed in the New Testament.

Typically, the synoptic tradition draws on the anticipation for Elijah *redivivus* to signify John, 'If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come' (Mt. 11.14). Yet, Jesus' statement, 'There has arisen no one born of women greater⁴⁷ than John', echoes the Deuteronomic testimony about Moses, *ולא־אֶקָם נְבִיאַ עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כַּמֹּשֶׁה*.⁴⁸ Likewise, Mark's statement that Jesus was moved with compassion for the Galilean crowds, because they were 'like sheep without a shepherd' (Mk

§ 23. For a detailed comparison of their careers see *Pesiq. R.* 4.13. The coupling of Moses and Elijah can even be witnessed in the Emperor Julian's refutation of the Galileans. 'Moses after fasting forty days received the law, and Elijah, after fasting for the same period, was granted to see God face to face. But what did Jesus receive, after a fast of the same length?' (*The Works of the Emperor Julian, Against the Galileans*, fragment 2 [trans. W.C. Wright; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980], pp. 428-29). M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980), II, p. 549.

47. Flusser has suggested that *μείζων* in Mt. 11.11a has geminated from its appearance in the second half of the verse: *ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν μείζων αὐτοῦ ἐστίν*. Originally, then, the saying would have read, 'There has arisen no one born among women [like] John...', *Jesus*, p. 261 n. 8.

48. Deut. 34.10 is the only passage in the Hebrew Scriptures which begins, 'There has not arisen...' Such an opening phrase to describe John would suggest to the hearers/readers a connection to Moses. Note the Hebraic influence on *ἐν* (among) and the replacement of 'in Israel' with 'among those born of woman'. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, II, p. 251. The verbal allusion to Moses from Deut. 34.10 is reinforced by the phrase, 'born among women', itself a phrase connected to Moses. *Ab. R.N.* 2 Ver. A. See L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (7 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1910), III, p. 113.

6.34),⁴⁹ seems linked by the Evangelist to the recent news of John's execution (Mk 6.17-29), and may imply that the crowds included John's former followers. The Markan phrase is drawn from Num. 27.17, where the subject is the absence of leadership after Moses' death. The historical setting presented by Mark leaves little doubt that he attempted to hint through literary means at the opinion held by some that John was the prophet-like-Moses.

What we witness throughout the Synoptic Gospels are the reflections of the two contemporary streams of Jewish opinion which endeavored to identify the eschatological prophet. The dominical saying in Mt. 11.7-14 is a repetitive creative fusion of these two traditions, which climaxes in the sophisticated blending of Exod. 23.20 and Mal. 3.1 in Mt. 11.10:⁵⁰

This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee'.

Scholarship has noted that elements from both of these Old Testament verses are present,⁵¹ but few have recognized that the combination itself

49. Matthew preserves the phrase at an earlier point in Mt. 9.36. Yet, the significance of its connection to John and his prophetic ministry is consequently lost, because John has not yet been executed according to Matthew's chronology. A similar example of Matthew's reordering of sayings material with resulting obscurity is the timing of Jesus' statement in Lk. 13.35b: 'And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"! Originally, the saying is intended to refer to Jesus' pending pilgrimage to Jerusalem at Passover. The citation of Ps. 118.26 refers to the commonplace greeting given to Jewish pilgrims to Jerusalem, particularly at Passover. In Matthew, however, placement of the saying *after* Jesus is already in Jerusalem redirects the saying with an eschatological focus. See S. Safrai, *Die Wallfahrt im Zeitalter des Zweiten Tempels* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), p. 158.

50. These same verses are combined in *Deut. R.* 11.9. J. Mann has suggested that Exod. 23.20 and Mal. 3.1 were read together in the triennial cycle of the synagogue readings already during the days of the Second Temple (*The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue* [2 vols.; Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1940], II, p. 479).

51. See W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, *Matthew* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), p. 136; R.H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 207-208; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, II, pp. 140-41; J.A.T. Robinson, 'Elijah, John and Jesus: An Essay in Detection', *NTS* 4 (1957-58), pp. 253-81.

is a sophisticated example of *gezerah shavah*.⁵² Accordingly, two verses may be joined by virtue of the appearance of the same word(s) in both verses. While in later rabbinic tradition even similar word forms or ideas could justify linking verses, the methodology attributed to Jesus reflects the more primitive style whereby the linkage demanded the appearance of *identical* word forms.

In our present citation the two verses are linked by the fact that only in these two verses in the Hebrew Scriptures do we find the combined appearance of מלאכי⁵³ and שלח (with also דרך and לפני). This type of associative hermeneutic is Jewish, and not the style of Christian exegetes. Moreover, it indicates a profoundly intimate familiarity with the Hebrew Scriptures, and a knowledge of the sophisticated hermeneutical methods employed in Judaism of the period. What is equally significant for our study is the fact that Exod. 23.20 was read by some interpreters to signify Moses,⁵⁴ and as we have seen the messenger of Mal. 3.1 was interpreted to be Elijah. Jesus' uncanny combination of two otherwise unrelated verses in reference to the Baptist presents an ingenious fusion of the two Jewish opinions concerning the identity of the eschatological prophet similar to that witnessed in the *Oracles of Hystapses*.⁵⁵ There can be little doubt that we possess a primitive stratum of Christian tradition which originates with the historical Jesus.

Jesus' fusion of the Moses and Elijah traditions is repeated in the preaching of the early church, but with a significant change. In the Synoptic Gospels the two opinions are combined in order to signify the importance of John the Baptist. Yet, Peter's sermon in Solomon's Porticoes quotes directly from Deut. 18.15-18 to illustrate the significance of

52. On Hillel's hermeneutical principal of *gezerah shavah* see *ARN* 37 Ver. A; H.L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 21.

53. This is the reading of Exod. 23.20 according to the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate. A similar witness of Jesus' use of a non-Massoretic textual tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures is seen in Lk. 19.46 and par. where he combines Isa. 56.7 and Jer. 7.11. The verbal link between these verses is the joint appearance of בִּירֵי. While the term does appear in the Massoretic text of Isa. 56.7, in Jer. 7.11 the term is only attested in the variant textual tradition attested by the Septuagint (ὁ οἶκός μου). See J. Frankovic, 'Remember Shilo!', *Jerusalem Perspective* 46/47 (1994), pp. 25-28.

54. See *Exod. R.* 32.2-3; Tacitus, *Histories* 5.3.1; see M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, II, p. 25.

55. See n. 38.

Jesus (Acts 3.22; cf. 7.37). Bauernfeind suggested an allusion to Elijah in the preceding verse, ‘whom heaven must receive until the *restoration* [ἀποκαταστάσεως] of all which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from old’ (Acts 3.21).⁵⁶ Elijah is the only figure recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures to be taken up into heaven.⁵⁷ The theme of restoration which is so closely identified with the advent of Elijah is also repeated. In the context, it is clear that Jesus’ ascension and parousia is defined by Peter in terms of the Jewish traditions concerning Elijah.⁵⁸

In the kerygmatic proclamation of the post-Easter Church, it is Jesus who fills the role of the hoped for eschatological prophet—not John! In fact, nowhere in the opinion of the early church is John given the elevated status that we find recorded in the synoptic tradition. He is merely the one who offered a baptism of repentance,⁵⁹ and he is never presented as the prophetic forerunner. The Fourth Gospel even places an explicit denial of prophetic significance upon the lips of John himself, ‘And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not”. “Are you the prophet?” And he answered, “No”’ (Jn 1.21).⁶⁰

It may be that continuation of John’s movement after his death (Acts 19.1-7) raised concerns in the early church to emphasize the relative

56. O. Bauernfeind, ‘Tradition und Apokatastasispruch Apostelgeschichte 3.20f’, in Betz, Hengel and Schmidt (eds.), *Abraham unser Vater*, pp. 13-23; *idem*, *Kommentar und Studien aus Apostelgeschichte* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1980), pp. 473-86; F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 144; C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ICC; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994-2000), I, p. 206.

57. 2 Kgs 2.9-12; Sir. 48.9; 1 Macc. 2.58: ‘Elijah because of great zeal for the law was taken up into heaven’. Regarding other figures who were traditionally assumed, see M. Stone’s discussion on 4 Ezra 6.26: ‘And they shall see the men who were taken up, who from their birth have not tasted death...’ (*Fourth Ezra* [Hermeneia, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990], p. 172). On the relationship between the belief in the assumption of Moses (e.g. *Ant.* 4.326) and the title of the first century CE apocryphal ‘*Assumption of Moses*’, see J. Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses* (SVTP, 10; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), pp. 281-85.

58. According to the second-century chronograph, *Seder Olam* ch. 17, Elijah is hidden (נִסְתָּר) until the coming of the Messiah. At that time he will be appear, only to be hidden again until the days of Gog and Magog. See C.J. Milikowsky, ‘*Seder Olam: A Rabbinic Chronography*’ (PhD dissertation for Yale University, 1981), pp. 323-24.

59. Acts 1.5; 10.37; 11.16; 13.24; 18.25; 19.4.

60. See Brown, *John*, I, pp. 47-49.

unimportance of John as compared to Jesus.⁶¹ Thus, in the preaching of Paul in Antioch of Pisidia, John's antedating⁶² of Jesus is accompanied with an emphatic denial of John's messianic claim, 'And as John was finishing his course, he said, "What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but after me one is coming, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to untie"' (Acts 13.25). Outside of the Gospels and Acts, John finds no mention in any other New Testament writing. Standing in such stark contradiction to the preaching of the early church, there can be little doubt that the elevated presentation of John in the synoptic tradition reflects the historical opinion of those who lived in the days of John's ministry—including that of Jesus.

Dodd argued that the use of Deut. 18.15-18 in Acts 3.22 and 7.37 indicates that there may have existed a pre-canonical substructure of testimonia⁶³ regarding the eschatological prophet.⁶⁴ The discovery of the *Testimonia* (4Q175) at Qumran confirmed his suspicions.⁶⁵ The Qumran evidence further indicates that these testimonia were not only pre-canonical but pre-Christian. Dodd's theoretical substructure to the New Testament writings accords with observations by Flusser⁶⁶ and Smith⁶⁷ regarding the existence of ancient Jewish homilies which belong to the world of the New Testament. These compositions were formed

61. Mt. 3.14: 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' (cf. Jn 3.30). See Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, p. 47.

62. Note the Fourth Gospel's emphasis that Jesus preceded the Baptist, 'John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me"' (Jn 1.15).

63. According to Origen, Dositheus made claims to the Samaritans that he had fulfilled this prophecy (*Contra Celsum* 1.57). See also *Ps.-Clem. Recogn.* 1.36-40.

64. See C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1964), pp. 53-55; H. Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 29-30; F.J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity: Part I The Acts of the Apostles. IV. Translation and Commentary* (London: MacMillan, 1933), p. 38; Bruce, *Acts*, p. 145.

65. J.A. Fitzmyer, '4Q Testimonia and the New Testament', in *idem*, *Semitic Background of the New Testament*, pp. 59-89.

66. D. Flusser, "'Today if You Will Listen to His Voice": Creative Exegesis in Hebrews 3-4', in B. Uffenheimer and H. Graf Reventlow (eds.), *Creative Biblical Exegesis: Christian and Jewish Hermeneutics through the Centuries* (JSOTSup, 126; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), pp. 55-62.

67. M. Smith, 'Ascent to the Heavens and Deification in 4QMa', in Schiffman (ed.), *Archaeology and History*, pp. 181-88.

around selected biblical passages which were structured to express particular ideas. In the hands of subsequent authors or religious communities, these homilies were often fractured and reshaped. Nevertheless, a careful analysis of the recurrent units from these homilies can assist us in better understanding the larger complex and the concepts they intended to express.

The recent publication of the *editio princeps*⁶⁸ of 11Q13 (11QMelch) revisits the question of the existence and shape of primitive pre-Christian testimonia regarding the Eschatological Prophet and the penetration of their formulation into the substrata of the New Testament. Of particular relevance for our study are the apocalyptic structure, specified tasks and scriptural citations employed by the sectarian author of 11Q13 to describe the prophet of the End of Days and the recurrence of these distinctive details in other Jewish literature.

The advent of the Eschatological Prophet in 11Q13 is placed at the dawning of the redemptive era. The structure of events is shaped by the sectarian division of history into periods.⁶⁹ Thus, the column opens with a combined citation of Lev. 25.10 and Deut. 15.2. The significance of the Jubilee year for the author is twofold. According to Lev. 25.10, it is in that year that the people of God 'shall proclaim liberty [דרור] in the land'. The time of redemption is also related to the fact that this year will be a time of 'the Lord's release' (שמיטה ליהודה = LXX: ἄφεσις κυρίου). While the biblical verse speaks of a release from debts, the sectarian spiritual interpretation of שמיטה is defined by the fact that redemption will be inaugurated on 'the Day of Atonement [Lev. 25.9: יום הכפורים] at the end of the tenth Jubilee' (11Q13 2.7). Thus, the tenth Jubilee will begin with an atonement for past iniquities (עוונותיהמה), and culminate in redemption with divine vengeance brought upon Belial and his lot.

Mention of the proclamation of liberty (וקראתם דרור) in Lev. 25.10 allows the author to introduce Isa. 61.1 where liberty is also proclaimed (לקרא לשבויים דרור). This period of redemption is called לשנת רצון (Isa. 61.2; cf. Lk. 4.19). Melchizedek will rise (ומלכי צדק יקום) to render

68. F.G. Martínez, E.J.C. Tigchelaar, A.S. Van Der Woude (eds.), *Qumran Cave 11. II. 11Q2-18, 11Q 20-31* (DJD, 13; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 221-41.

69. On the division of history see J. Licht, 'Time and Eschatology in Qumran', *JJS* 15 (1965), pp. 177-82; D. Dimant, 'The "Peshier on the Periods" (4Q 180) and 4Q 181', *IOS* 9 (1979), pp. 77-102.

divine vengeance (נָקָם מִשִּׁפְּטֵי אֱלֹהִים = Isa. 61.3) in a fashion similar to the priestly redeemer of the *Assumption of Moses*:⁷⁰

Then will be filled the hands⁷¹ of the messenger,⁷²
 who is in the highest place appointed.⁷³
 Yea, he will at once avenge them of their enemies.
 For the Heavenly One will arise from his kingly throne.⁷⁴
 Yea, he will go forth from his holy habitation
 with indignation and wrath on behalf of his sons (*T. Mos.* 10.2-3).

70. See Tromp, *Assumption of Moses*, pp. 228-34.

71. Exod. 28.41; 29.9, 35; Lev. 16.31. In the *Aramaic Prayer of Levi* the patriarch likewise stretches out his hands as he prays to receive the Holy Spirit, which is further defined in terms of Isa. 11.2. Traditionally this verse was associated with the Davidic Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ: Jer. 23.5; Zech. 6.12). See M.E. Stone and J.C. Greenfield, 'The Prayer of Levi', *JBL* 112 (1993), pp. 247-66; *idem*, in G. Brooke, J. Collins *et al.* (eds.), *Qumran Cave 4.XVII. Parabiblical Texts, Part 3* (DJD, 22; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 29.

72. Here the messenger (*nuntius* = מַלְאָךְ) is a priestly human figure and *not* an angel, which strengthens our suggestion that Melchizedek in 11Q13 was also intended to designate a human redemptive figure. His designated task to execute divine judgment may itself suggest his humanity. As we hear in the *Testament of Abraham* (13.5, 8), 'It is not I [God] who judge you, but by man shall every man be judged... For all men have their origin from the first man [Adam]; and so by his son [Heb.: *ben 'adam* = Son of Man/Adam, i.e. Abel] they are first judged'. Yet, the eschatological Messenger (*nuntius*) in the *Assumption of Moses* is not a prophetic forerunner but the Redeemer himself. We have already noted that the early church similarly reshaped the significance of Deut. 18.15-18 to support the messianic claim of Jesus. Both of these examples attest to the fluidity of interpretation of important texts in the hands of different religious communities.

73. Melchizedek is depicted by the sectarian writer enthroned in the heavens: ...לְמַרְוֹם שׁוֹבֵה... [עַל־יְדֵי] (11Q13 2.6-7). He cites Ps. 7.8-9 (ET 7.7-8) and by so doing echoes Ps. 110 where we hear mention both of Melchizedek (Ps. 110.4) and the theme of being seated in divine judgment, 'The Lord says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool"' (Ps 110.1). Ascent to the heavenly heights (לְמַרְוֹם) is elsewhere depicted of human redemptive figures, sometimes using phraseology similar to Ps. 7.8-9 from Ps. 68.19: עֲלִיתָ לְמַרְוֹם. This latter verse is cited in *ARN* concerning Moses and his ascent to receive the Torah. In the same passage Moses is referred to as 'the one born of woman' (see above n. 48). Paul also applies the verse in Eph. 4.8 to the ascension of Christ. See Collins, 'A Throne in the Heavens', *Scepter*, pp. 136-53.

74. Although the Heavenly One seated in the *Assumption of Moses* is God, in *Ezekiel the Tragedian* it is Moses himself who is enthroned. 'On Sinai's peak I [Moses] saw what seemed a throne so great in size it touched the clouds of heaven. Upon it sat a man of noble mien, be-crowned, and with a scepter in one hand while

Throughout the column the author utilizes words and phrases from Isa. 61.1-3 that are then combined with other verbally connected Old Testament verses. Ps. 82.1 is cited to take advantage of the term אֱלֹהִים, which already in biblical Hebrew can mean merely 'judge'.⁷⁵ The sectarian citation is not intended to suggest that Melchizedek is a heavenly being,⁷⁶ but simply to take advantage of the double appearance of אֱלֹהִים. According to the collective sectarian thought of Qumran, Mel-

with the other he did beckon me. I made approach and stood before the throne. He handed o'er the scepter and he bade me mount the throne, and gave to me the crown; then he himself withdrew from off the throne' (ll. 68-76) ('Ezekiel the Tradgedian' *OTP*, II, pp. 811-12); P.W. Van der Horst, 'Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist', *JJS*, (1983-84), pp. 34-35, pp. 21-29. See the crowning of Enoch in *3 En.* 12.1-5. Josephus also reports the legend that the infant Moses 'seizes Pharaoh's crown and smashes it to the ground' (*Ant.* 2.233-234). *Exod. R.* 1.26 knows a similar tradition. However, Moses takes the crown of Pharaoh and crowns himself, 'as he was destined to do when he became great' (C.R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors. II. Poets* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989], pp. 362-65 n. 77).

75. *Exod.* 21.6; 22.8, 9, 28; 1 *Sam.* 2.25; *Judg.* 5.8.

76. The clearest statement of belief that the historical figure, Melchizedek, himself would return in the future is that presented in *2 En.* His priestly father, Nir, is told that the child is to be taken to paradise to escape the coming flood in the generation of Noah, 'For the time is now very near when I shall let loose all the waters over the earth, and all that is on the earth shall perish; and I will give him a place of honour in another generation, and Melchizedek shall be chief priest in that generation' (*2 En.* 23.34). Collins, following de Jonge and Van der Woude, is the leading proponent of the notion that the figure Melchizedek in 11Q13 is the angel Michael. See M. de Jonge and A.S. Van der Woude, '11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament', *NTS* 12 (1965-66), pp. 305-306; P.J. Kolbelski, *Melchizedek and Melchiresa* (CBQMS, 10; Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1981), pp. 71-74; Collins, *Scepter*, pp. 142-43. His argument assumes a similar identification of the 'Son of Man' in Dan. 7.13 to be Michael (*Daniel* [Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993], pp. 304-10). However, there is no evidence that Melchizedek in 11Q13 is intended to signify anyone other than the historical figure introduced in Gen. 14.18-20. We have already noted the parallels between the presentation of Melchizedek here and the priestly (human) redeemers of the *Aramaic Prayer of Levi* and the *Assumption of Moses*. Regarding the existence of exalted human figures in the thinking of the Qumran community, see E. Eshel, '4Q471B: A Self Glorification Hymn', *RevQ* 17 (1997), pp. 175-202; M. Smith, 'Two Ascended to Heaven and the Author of 4Q491', in S.J.D. Cohen (ed.), *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh: New Testament, Early Christianity and Magic* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), pp. 68-78. On Melchizedek's role as the eschatological judge, see Flusser, 'Melchizedek and the Son of Man', in *idem*, *Judaism*, pp. 186-92.

chizedek will not be the only instrument of divine judgment. Instead, he sits among the *עדת אל*.⁷⁷ who are likewise defined in Ps. 82.1 as *אלהים*. The idea of the Congregation's participation with Melchizedek in rendering judgment is repeated in lines 13-14.

And Melchizedek will carry out the vengeance of God's judgments [and on that day he will f]r[ee them from the hand of] Belial and from the hands of all the s[pirits of his lot]. And all the Oaks [of Righteousness: *אילי הצדק*: Isa. 61.3]⁷⁸ are his help [בעזרו].

It is at this point in the sectarian presentation that the eschatological prophet—the Anointed One of the Spirit (*משיח הרוח*: 1Q13 2.15-20)—is introduced. His prophetic tasks are presented through a phrase by phrase citation of Isa. 52.7. He appears standing upon the mountains which we are told represent the biblical prophets (*הנביאים [המה] ההרים*). His position is one of superiority. Similar to the eschatological message of *Pss. Sol.* 11.1-2,⁷⁹ the messenger announces salvation to Zion. He proclaims, 'Your God is King'. The biblical phrase is creatively interpreted to read, 'Your ELOHIM [= judge] is MELECH [= Melchizedek]'. Column two ends with a return to Lev. 25.9, 'And you shall blow the trumpet [of the Jubilee] in all the land...' Thus, the coming of the prophetic Anointed One of the Spirit precedes the inauguration of the Jubilee and the advent of Melchizedek.

De Jonge and Van der Woude have already recognized the important literary and conceptual connections between 11Q13, the *Psalms of Solomon* and a *pisqa* belonging to the earliest stratum⁸⁰ of the homiletical midrash *Pesiqta Rabbati*. They noted the verbal parallels between the role of the *משיח הרוח* in 11Q13 and Elijah in *Pesiqta Rabbati* 35.⁸¹ *Pe-*

77. The title *עדת אל* is one of the slogans on the banners designating the Congregation and that is carried into battle (1QM 4.9). See Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 276-77.

78. Brooke, Collins *et al.* (eds.), *Qumran Cave 4.XVII. Parabiblical Texts*, p. 232.

79. H.E. Ryle and M.R. James, *Psalms of the Pharisees* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1891), p. 101.

80. A. Goldberg dates this *pisqa* to the third or fourth century CE. *Ich komme und wohne in deiner Mitte: Eine rabbinische Homilie zu Sacharja 2:14 (PesR 35)* (Frankfurt, Selbstverlag der Gesellschaft zur Förderung jüdischer Studien in Frankfurt A.M.e.V., 1977), p. 20. See the discussion of the dating and compilation of *Pesiqta Rabbati* in Strack and Stemberger, *Talmud and Midrash*, pp. 325-29.

81. De Jonge and Van Der Woude, '11Q Melchizedek', p. 307.

siqta Rabbati's identification of the prophetic precursor with Elijah also accords with events depicted after the proclamation of the eschatological messenger in the Jubilee year of *Pss. Sol.* 11.2. There redemption begins with the regathering of the people—an event we have already noted is closely associated with the eschatological work of Elijah.

Sound in Zion the signal trumpet⁸² of the sanctuary;
 announce in Jerusalem the voice of one bringing good news,⁸³
 for God has been merciful to Israel watching over them.
 Stand on a high place, Jerusalem, and look at your children,
 from the east and the west assembled together by the Lord.
 From the north they come in the joy of their God;
 from far distant islands God has assembled them.
 He flattened high mountains into level ground for them;⁸⁴
 the hills fled at their coming (*Pss. Sol.* 11.1-4).

The theme of regathering/restoration is an essential element in the Jewish hope for redemption⁸⁵ and the traditional figure for this task is Elijah. Yet, because of the strict dualistic attitude of the Dead Sea Sect towards those outside of the Congregation, scarce mention is made of the theme of restoration. Indeed, it may be the restorative role of Elijah which also contributed to the Qumran preference to define its hope for an eschatological prophet with Deut. 18.15-18, rather than Mal. 3.1, 23-24. If so, the sectarian perspective of the Qumran community may have motivated its intentional omission of Lev. 25.10b in 11Q13: 'Each of you shall *return* to his family'.

82. *σάλπιγγι σημασίας*: LXX Lev. 25.10 (*σημασίας* = לַבַּיִת).

83. Cf. Isa. 52.7.

84. Cf. Isa. 40.4. See *Sib. Or.* 3.777-79; *Ass. Mos.* 10.4. Mk 1.2-3 combines Mal. 3.1 and Isa. 40.3, suggesting that the Evangelist may have been aware of the ancient testimonial complex.

85. The ancient cycle of judgment-dispersion-regathering-redemption is heard already in Gen. 15.13-14, 16. It appears often in postbiblical literature (cf. *Pss. Sol.* 11.1-9; *T. Mos.* 2-4) and is most clearly expressed in the apocryphal work of Tobit: 'Our brethren will be scattered over the earth from the good land, and Jerusalem will be desolate. The house of God in it will be burned down and will be in ruins for a time. But God will again have mercy on them, and bring them back into their land... After this they will return from the places of their captivity, and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendor. And the house of God will be rebuilt there with a glorious building for all generations for ever, just as the prophets said of it' (*Tob.* 14.4b-5). Cf. C.A. Moore, *Tobit* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1996), p. 291.

All three eschatological presentations define the advent of the מַבְשֵׁר with Isa. 52.7.⁸⁶ The *Psalms of Solomon* and 11Q13 reflect attitudes of early Jewish apocalypticism and its preoccupation with calendaric concerns.⁸⁷ Underlying these attitudes was a rigid predeterminism. Divine sovereignty had foreordained that events in redemptive history coincide with the biblical festivals and calendaric cycles.⁸⁸ *Pesiqta Rabbati*, on the other hand, represents a subsequent period when these fervid sentiments had subsided. Rather than structuring future redemption within a rigid periodic framework, the stages of redemption are based upon the *tripartite* proclamation of the Messenger (מַבְשֵׁר) of Isa. 52.7. Redemption thus unfolds over the course of *three* days.

Three days before the Messiah comes, Elijah will come and stand upon the mountains of Israel, and weep and lament upon them, but then will say: Behold, O Land of Israel, how short a time before you cease to be a waste land, dry and desolate! Elijah's voice will be heard from the world's end to the world's end. And then he will say to the children of Israel: Peace has come to the world, as it is said, 'Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings good tidings, that announces peace' [Isa. 52.7]. When the wicked hear this, they will rejoice, every one of them, saying one to another, 'Peace has come to us'. On the second day Elijah will come and stand upon the mountains of Israel, and say: Good has come to the world, as is said, 'The messenger of good tidings' [Isa. 52.7]. On the third day he will come and say, Salvation has come to the world, as is said, 'That announces salvation' [Isa. 52.7]—that is, salvation is come to Zion and to her children, but not to the wicked. In that hour the Holy One, blessed be he, will show his glory and his kingdom to all the inhabitants of the world. He will redeem Israel, and he will appear at the head of them, as is said, 'The breach-maker will go up before them; they will break through and pass the gate, going out by it. The king will pass on before them, the Lord at their head' [Mic. 2.13].

86. The appearance of לַבְשֵׁר in Isa. 61.1 allowed the sectarian author to introduce the מַבְשֵׁר into his sectarian peshet. De Jonge and Van der Woude, '11Q Melchizedek', p. 306.

87. On the complex relationship between the calendar of Qumran and Jewish apocalyptic see B.Z. Wacholder, *The Dawn of Qumran* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1983), pp. 53-60; S. Talmon, *The World of Qumran from Within* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989), pp. 147-85.

88. See the comments concerning the theological underpinnings to the calendaric system in the book of *Jubilees* by G.W.E. Nickelsburg, 'The Bible Rewritten and Expanded', in Michael Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRINT, 2.1; Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 100; Dimant, 'Peshet on the Period', p. 93.

The distinctive contribution of *Pesiqta Rabbati* to the testimonial complex is the citation from Mic. 2.13. The medieval Jewish scholar, David Kimche,⁸⁹ is certainly correct when he states that the midrash intends to portray three figures in this redemptive drama: Elijah, the King–Messiah and the Lord—which correspond to the three figures of Mic. 2.13 (the Breach-maker, King, Lord).

What is important for our study is recognition of the recurrent units of distinctive vocabulary and scriptural citation which appear in 11Q13, *Psalms of Solomon*, *Assumption of Moses* and *Pesiqta Rabbati*. They suggest that these unrelated presentations share a common world of understanding concerning the future role of the eschatological prophet, which was based upon ancient Jewish testimonia regarding him.

Scriptural–Thematic Units:	11Q13	Assumption of Moses	Psalms of Solomon	Pesiqta Rabbati	Matthew 11.2-14
1. Mal. 3.1, 22-24	_90	•	•	•	•
2. Deut. 18.15-18	_91	–	–	–	•
3. Isa. 52.7	•	•	•	•	•
4. Isa. 40.3-4	_92	•	•	•	•
5. Mic. 2.13	–	–	–	•	•
6. Jubilee Redemption	•	–	•	–	_93
7. Priestly Redeemer	•	•	–	–	_94
8. Vengeful Judgment	•	•	•	•	_95

Jesus draws upon contemporary expectations for the prophet of the End of Days to signify John. He fused the hopes for a prophet-like-Moses (Deut. 18.18) and Elijah *redivivus* to indicate his importance. Like the sectarian presentation of the prophetic superiority of the Anointed One

89. 'Our Rabbis of blessed memory and the Midrash, teach 'the breaker' is Elijah and 'their king' is the branch, the son of David'. Cited by E. Pococke, *A Commentary on the Prophecy of Micah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1676), p. 24. Kimche's interpretation is also cited by S.R. Driver, 'Notes on Difficult Texts', *The Expositor*, 3rd series 5 (1887), p. 266.

90. See above n. 31.

91. See 4Q175.

92. The Qumran community cites this verse in its own self-definition: 1QS 8.15.

93. See the discussion below concerning John's βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν (Mk 1.4; Lk. 3.3).

94. Cf. Heb. 6.20: Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek; cf. Rom. 8.34.

95. Cf. Lk. 12.49-56.

of the Spirit, Jesus emphasized the superiority of John. 'He is more than a prophet', and 'No one born among women is greater than John'. The recurrent units of the complex in non-sectarian literature suggest that the testimonia witnessed at Qumran were not exclusive to the Dead Sea Sect. Instead, they belong to the intricate warp and woof of Jewish opinion during the Second Commonwealth.⁹⁶

I do not...think that this theme in Jesus' teaching and practice is to be explained by the influence...of any other texts of the Dead Sea circles. Rather, those documents and the Gospels are different mushrooms of the same ring, connected not directly, but by the ramified root system of popular piety from which they independently arose.

4. *The Kingdom Breaks Forth*

Our review of the eschatological expectations among the Qumran sectarians has brought our attention to pre-Christian testimonia regarding the Eschatological Prophet. This homiletical substructure reflects the background to Jesus' testimony about the Baptist. It may also provide the conceptual rubric and vocabulary stock for Matthew's difficult ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν βιάζεται. As we have noted, the extensive editorial activity of both Matthew and Luke reflects the inherent obscurity of the Greek phrase.⁹⁷ Scholarship has suggested a myriad of possible Semitic equivalents to explain the enigmatic βιάζεται in Mt. 11.12.⁹⁸ However, the challenge remains to move beyond what is merely linguistically possible.

At the turn of the century, Resch proposed a linguistic solution which was a distant cousin to a notion suggested at least two centuries earlier.⁹⁹ He theorized that the term βιάζεται in Mt. 11.12 represented the Hebrew verb גָּרַע. It is not necessary here to address all the difficulties posed by Resch's theoretical Hebrew *Urevangelium*. Our interest, in-

96. Smith, 'Ascent to the Heavens', p. 188.

97. M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 211 n. 2.

98. Black, *An Aramaic Approach*, p. 211; Daube, *New Testament*, pp. 285-300; B.E. Thiering, 'Are the 'Violent Men' False Teachers?', *NovT* 16 (1979), pp. 293-97.

99. A. Resch, *Aussercanonische Paralleltexzte zu den Evangelien: Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1897), p. 439; *idem*, *Die Logia Jesu* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1898), p. 123.

stead, is simply his observation—repeated by others in more recent studies¹⁰⁰—that βιάζεται stands as a linguistic equivalent for פָּרַץ¹⁰¹ In fact, βιάζω does render פָּרַץ three times in the Septuagint (2 Sam. 13.25, 27; 2 Kgs 5.23).

Moore's observations on the usage of βιάζω in Josephus may also indicate why the Septuagintal translators seldom chose to translate פָּרַץ with βιάζω, and more often to render the Hebrew term with διακόπτω.¹⁰² He noted, 'βιάζω then in Josephus, appears to require a direct object, or, even when it is used intransitively, to imply one'.¹⁰³ In other words, if in the Hebrew Scriptures פָּרַץ appears without a direct object, the peculiarities of the Greek language would naturally discourage the translators from rendering it with βιάζω. Indeed, on the three occasions cited where פָּרַץ is translated with βιάζω, the Hebrew behind the Septuagint is a transitive verb with a direct object.¹⁰⁴

The linguistic demarcation in Greek and Hebrew verbal expression necessarily would have limited the number of occasions in the Septuagint in which פָּרַץ could have been represented by βιάζω. However, if the New Testament writers have not followed these nuances in Greek and Hebrew grammar in their elliptical allusions to the Old Testament verses—and which were maintained in the Septuagint translation—then a type of linguistic myopia can result for the modern reader who may miss the intended verbal allusions.

The New Testament authors certainly felt no obligation to doggedly reproduce the vocabulary or idiomatic Greek expression of the Septuagint. A growing number of scholars have recognized the presence of

100. Daube, *New Testament*, p. 286; Black, *Aramaic Approach*, p. 211 n. 2; B.H. Young, *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), pp. 51-55. See the translation of Mt. 11.12 by Fridolin Stier, *Das Neue Testament* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1989), 'Seit den Tagen Johannes des Täufers bis heute drängt mit Gewalt das Königtum der Himmel heran, und Gewalttäter errauben es'.

101. The linguistic equivalency was also noticed by Black, but he interpreted the Hebrew verb to signify violent divine judgment. Black, *Aramaic Approach*, p. 211 n. 2.

102. Gen. 28.29; 2 Kgs 5.20; 6.8; [4 Kgs] 14.13; 1 Chron. 13.11; 14.11; 15.13; Mic. 2.13.

103. Moore, 'Cognates', p. 520.

104. Each time the object is designated with the preposition כִּי (e.g. 2 Sam. 13.27: וַיִּפְרֹץ בּוֹ: καὶ ἐβιάσατο αὐτὸν) and the sense of the verb is 'to press, encourage'. To these instances should be added the compound Greek verb παραβιάζω in 1 Sam. 28.23 which renders פָּרַץ likewise with the sense 'to press'.

‘non-Septuagintal’ Hebraisms in the Gospels,¹⁰⁵ and it has long been recognized that at places literalistic Semitisms in the Gospels have resulted in a rough Greek.¹⁰⁶ It is our contention that this is precisely what has contributed to the obscurity of Mt. 11.12/Lk. 16.16.¹⁰⁷ The Evangelist(s)—or their sources—by employing βιάζεται in our saying intended to allude to an Old Testament passage in which the intransitive גרפ occurred, but which the Septuagint—in proper Greek style—had previously chosen to translate with another Greek term (διακόπτω).

John Calvin (1559)¹⁰⁸ and the English Orientalist, Edward Pococke (1676)¹⁰⁹ seem to be the first Christian scholars, citing the work of medieval Jewish scholar, David Kimche,¹¹⁰ to suggest that the language of Mt. 11.12 is related to Mic. 2.13.

He who opens the breach (גרפה) will go up before them; they will break through (פרצו) and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king will pass on before them, the Lord at their head.

As we have seen in *Pesiqta Rabbati*, Mic. 2.13 belongs to an ancient complex of eschatological testimonia, and its pivotal term גרפ was interpreted by some Jewish commentators to signify the advent of the prophet of the End of Days. The biblical verse is frequently cited else-

105. W.G. Most, ‘Did St. Luke Imitate the Septuagint’, in C.A. Evans and S.E. Porter (eds.), *The Synoptic Gospels: A Sheffield Reader* (BibSem, 31; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 215-26.

106. E.C. Maloney, *Semitic Interference in Markan Syntax* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981).

107. The rough Greek in the source(s) to Matthew’s and Luke’s saying may have caused Luke to edit and refine his saying to conform with better Greek style: πᾶς εἰς αὐτήν βιάζεται (‘and everyone is breaking forth into it’).

108. ‘A breaker shall go before them, that is, there shall be those who, with a hand, strong and armed will make a way open for them; inasmuch as Christ says that the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence (Mt.11.12), they then mean that the people will have courageous leaders, whom nothing will stop from breaking through...’ (J. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets* [trans. John Owen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950], p. 211).

109. ‘But if any think, that by *Haporets*, the breaker, and *Malcam*, their king, should be meant two distinct persons, let him hear, what the Ancient Jews say, for exposition of this place. *Haporets*, the Breaker, that is Elias, and *Malcam*, their king, that is the Branch, the son of David; and then observe what our Saviour himself hath taught us, that John the Baptist was Elias which was to come’ (Pococke, *Micah*, p. 24).

110. E.I.J. Rosenthal, ‘Medieval Jewish Exegesis’, *JSS* 19 (1964), pp. 265-79.

where in rabbinic literature in reference to the messianic age. In an exposition on Gen. 18.3-4, Rabbi Hiyya relates that in reward for Abraham's hospitality, his children would receive a reward in the wilderness: the land of Israel and the Messiah. Scriptural support for these promises is drawn from the citation of Mic. 2.13.¹¹¹ Later Jewish interpreters also read significance in the appearance of Perez (פֶּרֶץ) at the head of the abbreviated genealogy of David in Ruth 4.18-22. Likewise, the episode of the birth of Perez preceding his twin brother in Gen. 38.29 was understood by *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*¹¹² and the midrashim to prefigure the precedence of his progeny, through whom would come King David and the hoped for Messiah. In all of these instances the hope for a redeemer is strengthened by the citation of Mic. 2.13.

In the citation from *Pesiqta Rabbati* we have seen that the advent of the Messiah coincides with the appearance of God's kingdom. Flusser's recent study¹¹³ on the stages of redemption according to John and Jesus has brought fresh attention to Jesus' use of the phrase, 'the kingdom of heaven'. He has demonstrated that a fundamental difference of opinion existed between the eschatological expectations of these two spiritual giants. The former embraced the older bipartite view of history which is also witnessed in the writings of the Qumran library. Accordingly, history will be interrupted in the End of Days by the advent of the Messiah(s), who will render divine judgment in roles similar to that depicted of the Danielic Son of Man. Thus, John asked, 'Are you the One who is coming [i.e. to render judgment]?' We can now understand John's disillusionment with Jesus. He had anticipated imminent judgment, 'The winnowing fork is *already* in his hand' (Mt. 3.12).

Jesus qualified his response to the Baptist with provisions from his own tripartite view of history that was more closely aligned to the opinion of Israel's sages. In their opinion between the period of present history and the End of Days there is to exist an intermediate period

111. *Gen. R.* on Gen. 48.10. See *Lev. R.* 32.8; *Qoh. R.* 4.1, 1; *Targ. Onq.* on Exod. 12.42.

112. See E.G. Clark, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1984), p. 48.

וְהוּא כִּד אֲתִיב וּוּלְדָא יֵת יְדִיָּה וְהָא נַפְק אַחֲוֵי וְאִמְרַת מַה תְּקַוֵּי סָנִי
תְּקִיפְתָּא וְעַלְךָ אֵיִת לְמִיתְקַוֵּי דְאִנְתָּ עֲתִיד לְמַחְסֵן מַלְכוּתָא וְקִרְתָּ שְׁמִיָּה פְרִיץ.

113. Flusser, 'The Stages of Redemption According to John the Baptist and Jesus', in *idem, Jesus*, pp. 258-75.

which was designated ‘the days of the Messiah’.¹¹⁴ Jesus’ testimony concerning the Baptist points to John’s advent as the transitional point to that new era: ‘the law and the prophets were until John’ (Lk. 16.16). As we have noted, this idea is also the source of Matthew’s saying, ‘all the prophets have prophesied until John’ (Mt. 11.13). Both forms of the saying in Matthew and Luke point to the ushering in of the messianic age. Yet, Flusser has suggested that, because of Jesus’ own messianic self-understanding, he employed another term for this period: ‘the kingdom of heaven’.¹¹⁵

He [Jesus] adopted contemporary Jewish interpretations which divided history, and he identified the Days of the Messiah with the period of the kingdom of heaven... It had already begun with John the Baptist, and Jesus was now the Messiah. It is also possible to understand how Jesus modified the structure of the concept of the kingdom of heaven. In the understanding of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven became more dynamic than in rabbinic thinking. Since according to Jesus the kingdom was identical with the messianic period, it was no longer, as in rabbinic thought, an eternal suprahistorical entity. It became a dynamic force which broke through into the world at an identifiable point in history. The kingdom of heaven began to break through with John, and Jesus—the Messiah—was in the center of the movement.

5. *Those Who Forcefully Advance*

The double occurrence of פָּרַץ in Mic. 2.13 corresponds to the double occurrence of the Greek root (βία) in Mt. 11.12. Yet, who are these forceful ones (βιασταί)? Clearly, they are associated with the advent of John which marked the inauguration of the kingdom of heaven. But are they enemies or allies of the kingdom of heaven? A clue may lie in the relationship between the role of John as ‘the Breach-maker’, the significance attributed by the Baptist’s movement to its founder, and the aims of his penitent baptism.

Schwartz’s study on the similarities between the Benedictus and 11Q13 focused on the linguistic parallels between the sectarian work and Zacharias’s prophecy.¹¹⁶

114. The tripartite structure of redemptive history may also be witnessed in the apocalyptic *Sib. Or.* 3.652-784.

115. Flusser, *Jesus*, pp. 274-75.

116. D.R. Schwartz, ‘On Quirinius, John the Baptist, the Benedictus, Melchizedek, Qumran and Ephesus’, *RevQ* 13 (1988), pp. 635-46.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (Lk. 1.77-79).

The affinities of the Benedictus and the Dead Sea Sect have been recognized by others.¹¹⁷ However, of particular pertinence to our study are Schwartz's observations regarding the testimony of Zacharias about his son. 'You will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins'. The citation of Mal. 3.1 in the opening clause is unmistakable. So likewise is the allusion to Isa. 52.7, 'to guide our feet into the way of peace'. Both of these verses reflect the testimonial complex which lies behind the testimony heard by Jesus in our present block of sayings. Even more intriguing is Schwartz's recognition that in most of the instances in the Septuagint where the nominal Greek term ἄφεσις appears, it renders Hebrew words associated with the sabbatical or Jubilee year (שָׁמַט, דְּרֹר, יוֹבֵל).¹¹⁸ The only place in extant Jewish literature where the Jubilee is explicitly linked with the notions of salvation and forgiveness of sins is in 11Q13—a sectarian document which we have already suggested shared conceptual and verbal connections with Jesus' testimony about John.

Nevertheless, Schwartz overlooked the fact that the same language is employed to describe John's call to repentance and ritual immersion. Both Mk 1.4 and Lk. 3.3 describe his baptism as one of repentance *for the forgiveness of sins* (εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν),¹¹⁹ the precise phrase which occurs in the Benedictus. If Schwartz is correct that the phrase is intended to correspond to the sectarian understanding of the Jubilee as the era of redemption, then more may have been intended in John's call to the repentance than has been recognized by scholars. Those who

117. D. Flusser, 'The Magnificat, the Benedictus and the War Scroll', in *idem*, *Judaism*, pp. 126-49.

118. Schwartz, 'On Quirinius', p. 640.

119. While John's baptism is called a 'baptism of repentance' in Acts 13.24 and 19.4, the appended purpose for the baptism—εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν—is lacking. It seems that in the early church the phrase is refashioned and the notion identified with Jesus rather than John (Mt. 26.28; Lk. 24.47; Acts 2.38; 5.31; 10.43; 13.38; 26.18; Col. 1.14; Heb. 9.22).

responded to the Baptist's call with repentance and ritual immersion understood their actions to be related to the hoped for initiation of the Jubilee redemption when the iniquities of the nation would be atoned.

Josephus records others in those turbulent times who called the people to the regions of the Jordan river with the hope of divine intervention.

During the period when Fadus was procurator of Judaea, a certain impostor named Theudas persuaded the majority of the masses to take up their possessions and to follow him to the Jordan river. He stated that he was a prophet and that at his command the river would be parted and would provide them easy passage. With this talk he deceived many (*Ant.* 20.97-98).

The fact that Theudas claimed to be a προφήτης and that his promised miracles parallel those performed by Moses (Exod. 14.21), Joshua—the successor to Moses (Josh. 3.7)—Elijah (2 Kgs 2.8) and Elisha—Elijah's successor (2 Kgs 2.14)—are no coincidence.¹²⁰ The whole episode reflects the contemporary belief in a future prophetic figure who would come in the spirit of Moses and Elijah to inaugurate the era of divine redemption.

Our suggestion is reminiscent of another figure who understood that his actions had the capacity to bring forward the kingdom of heaven with divine vengeance. We have already seen that the language and eschatological expectations witnessed in the *Assumption of Moses* are related to 11Q13 and *Pesiqta Rabbati*. Prior to the advent of the priestly redeemer in ch. 10, we are introduced to Taxo, a descendant of Levi who lived in a period of abject suffering. Rather than bending to the will of their oppressors and transgressing the commandments, he encouraged his sons to fast (i.e. repent) and withdraw to a cave in order not to be drawn into sin.

We shall fast for a three-day period and on the fourth day we shall go into a cave, which is in the open country. There let us die rather than transgress the commandments of the Lord of Lords, the God of our fathers. For if we do this, and do die, our blood will be avenged before

120. R.A. Horsley and J.S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), pp. 164-67; cf. Horsley, 'Popular Prophetic Movements at the Time of Jesus, their Principle Features and Social Origins', *JSNT* 26 (1987), pp. 3-27; P.W. Barnett, 'The Jewish Sign Prophets—AD 40-70 their Intentions and Origins', *NTS* 27 (1981), pp. 679-97.

the Lord. Then his kingdom will appear throughout his whole creation.
Then the devil will have an end. Yea, sorrow will be led away with him
(*Ass. Mos.* 9.6–10.1).

Licht has rightly stated that this is not a story of suicidal martyrdom.¹²¹ Instead, Taxo encouraged his sons *to live* righteously. The levitical figure, however, understood that righteous action might likely lead to persecution and death. In such an event, the unjust death of the righteous would certainly be avenged by the Lord. In effect their life and (possible) death would bring forward the day of divine favor for the righteous and vengeance against the wicked.

It is intriguing to suggest that Jesus saw in John a character much like Taxo. The Baptist also had remained steadfast and refused to bend.¹²² His critique of the adulterous marriage of Antipas to Herodias remained unflinching and led to his death. Yet, equally important was his message to the crowds which came out to him. He called them to follow him in acts of repentance and righteousness. Their renewed commitment was signified by the act of ritual immersion. Jesus' statement, therefore, 'those who break through take hold of¹²³ it [i.e. the kingdom of Heaven]' is an affirmation of John's message and of those who responded in faithful obedience.

Jesus' testimony concerning the Baptist belongs to an intricate mosaic of Jewish opinions regarding the prophet of the End of Days. Although some have questioned the historical value of Mt. 11.12, we have seen that the enigmatic vocabulary corresponds to scriptural allusions to the hope for the advent of an eschatological prophet. Our study has also shown that Jesus' deft combination of selected passages is further evidence for the existence of an ancient pre-Christian testimonial complex. There seems little doubt that Jesus was intimately familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures and the contemporary hermeneutical methods by which they were employed. We can now understand more clearly his opinion of John. The prophetic Messenger¹²⁴ and those who followed him had

121. J. Licht, 'Taxo, or the Apocalyptic Doctrine of Vengeance', *JJS* 12 (1961), pp. 95-103.

122. Mt. 11.7b: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind?' Flusser suggests that the imagery employed by Jesus in this saying is drawn from Aesop's fable of the reed and the oak (*Jesus*, p. 55 n. 31).

123. J. Marcus, 'Entering into the Kingly Power of God', *JBL* 107 (1988), pp. 663-75.

124. Luke's εὐαγγελίζεται in 16.16 is a linguistic equivalent for מְבַשֵּׂר, which

indeed played a strategic role in inaugurating the era of God's redemption. Yet, the significance of the movement that Jesus now led was so great¹²⁵ that it caused the one whom Jesus esteemed as 'more than a prophet' to pale by comparison.

we have seen elsewhere signifies the task of the Messenger of Isa. 52.7. We have noted that this same Old Testament passage is alluded to in the Benedictus (Lk. 1.77-79) to describe John's future role. The verb reappears in Lk. 3.18 to describe the ministry of John. Luke's unique witness of εὐαγγελίζεται in Jesus' testimony about John may be a vestige from his source(s) which was familiar with the ancient testimonial complex and applied the role of the Messenger to John. See J.E. Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 311.

125. 'John's greatness...becomes a foil for the surpassing greatness of the kingdom' (Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, II, p. 251).