

## Chapter 3

# From *Nomos* to *Logos*

## *Torah in First-Century Jewish Texts*

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Ben Bag Bag said: “Turn it over and over because everything is in it. And reflect upon it and grow old and worn in it and do not leave it,” for you have no better lot than that. (*Pirkei Avot* 5:22)<sup>1</sup>

This quotation from the Mishnah<sup>2</sup> is attributed to Ben Bag Bag, a Jew who purportedly lived around or just after the destruction of the second Jewish temple. Although the “it” is not explicitly identified in this quotation, Ben Bag Bag is talking about the Torah. Accordingly, then, the Torah contains everything, if only you keep looking at it, keep thinking about it and keep examining it. This idea is fundamental to rabbinic theology and Jewish theology after it: any answer to any possible dilemma can be found in the Torah. Another famous passage, this time from Rabbi Yehoshua in the Babylonian Talmud (~seventh century) *Bava Metzi’a* 59b, offers the proof text from Deuteronomy 30:12a: “It [the Torah] is not in heaven.” Instead it is present on earth, and in order to understand, it one must not look to God directly, but look instead to the Torah through the interpretive community and its understanding of Torah. Both of these quotations, by Ben Bag Bag in the Mishnah and Rabbi Yehoshua in the Babylonian Talmud, highlight that the Torah is firmly in the interpretive grasp of Jews, and that Jews have the ability to understand and interpret it *ad infinitum*. But what, exactly, do these texts from late antiquity mean when they talk about Torah?

Enter into any yeshivah or synagogue and ask this question to a rabbi, and the most likely answer will be “well, it’s complicated.” Today, just like in the rabbinic period, Torah can mean so many things. It can mean the Pentateuch—the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament), traditionally understood to have been written by Moses. It can mean “the law,” that is, the commandments as found within the Pentateuch and traditionally

numbered at 613 or it can be understood more broadly as Jewish law (*halakhah*) which is the expansive interpretive possibilities of those 613 laws from the Pentateuch. It can also mean the entire Tanakh (Pentateuch/Prophets/Writings) or any text that is held sacred by Jews, including (non-written) traditions (*mesorah*) and the rabbinic interpretations of these traditions. Even the explanations of Torah in this paragraph do not quite get it right, however, as “law,” especially when read within *Religionswissenschaft* which itself is highly influenced from Protestant theology, contains a negative connotation over and against the Protestant conception of grace. Thus, when we read “Torah” or its synonyms (e.g., *nomos* [νόμος], *logos* [λόγος]) in ancient texts, we cannot assume to understand what the author meant by the term.

In second temple texts, the range of meaning of Torah is just as broad as it is in rabbinic literature, scholarly literature, or in Jewish communities today. It can mean divine instruction, divine wisdom, the natural order, or God’s ways, in addition to law and tradition. This chapter will present a comparative analysis of what first-century Jewish authors mean when they say or write about Torah. I argue that, for Paul’s writings and especially for thinking about Paul as a Jew, references to Torah and its translations are flexible and do not delineate a specific set of laws for all Jews. The Torah does relate broadly to conceptions of a shared Jewish history and the relationship and obligations between the Jewish God and the Jewish people. What this means for our reading of the Pauline Epistles, especially in light of the Radical New Perspective, is that while I agree that we must read Paul as a Torah-observant Jew, what exactly that meant is uncertain. The uncertainty of what it meant for Paul to observe Torah does not take away from Paul’s Jewishness, but instead reinforces his participation in the cultural milieu in which he was raised. To ignore the diversity of Paul’s Judaism reinforces the essentializing of Judaism as opposition to the protestant idea of Christianity.

### PAUL’S TORAH OBSERVANCE AND THE RADICAL NEW PERSPECTIVE

The Radical New Perspective—also referred to by other monikers such as the “Paul within Judaism” perspective—situates the apostle Paul firmly within his cultural milieu: Hellenistic, Jewish, Diasporic, and so on.<sup>3</sup> I hesitate to list them separately as the various influences are themselves inseparable from one another; we can talk of variations of how Hellenistic or how Jewish, etc. someone might be, but there was never a pure Hellenism or pure Judaism or, much later, pure Christianity.<sup>4</sup> Situating Paul within his Jewish upbringing, then, should not be radical and certainly should not be a new perspective. What the Radical New Perspective does, however, is challenge the history

of scholarship on the Pauline Epistles, which has been heavily influenced by Protestantism and contains systemic anti-Judaism. What is radical and new about this perspective is the goal to analyze Paul within Judaism *without* the anti-Jewish baggage of the previous centuries.<sup>5</sup>

If the Radical New Perspective is to place Paul as a Torah-observant Jew, what might that look like? Karin Hedner Zetterholm analyses the traditional scholarly assumptions about Torah observance that derive from the position that Paul broke with Judaism; in this she challenges the traditional scholarly position that Torah was somehow static and unchanging. Hedner Zetterholm rightly notes that “Jewish law is the result of an ongoing collective interpretation and extension of injunctions and principles laid out in the Hebrew Bible.”<sup>6</sup> While correct in its form to focus on the laws in the Pentateuch and to focus on the various *interpretations* of these laws, this statement emphasizes a canon which did not exist, at least in its present form, in the first century CE and gives equal weight to the Prophets and the Writings, the texts of which certainly carry less influence when examining the origin of the laws.<sup>7</sup> If Torah and its equivalents were never static but always variable within the broad parameters of the covenantal relationship, what could first-century Torah observance look like and what does that tell us about Paul and his participation in Judaism? Below I will explore some samples of what Torah means for some of Paul’s contemporaries before considering what this might tell us as we examine Paul’s own participation in the law.

### LOGOS AND NOMOS IN PHILO

Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE–50 CE) was an elite Roman citizen who lived in the province of Egypt. Philo was well-educated in Greek philosophy as well as Jewish traditions. While previous scholarship often emphasizes how Philo uses Greek philosophical ideas to understand Jewish teachings and history, it is essential to remember that Philo was a product of his time—just as Paul was. Philo likely never considered that Torah should be thought about in any other way than through the lens of philosophy: while emphasizing allegorical interpretations, Philo also reinforces the more literal or plain sense reading of Jewish tradition (*Migr.* 89–93; *Spec. leg.* 1.1–11); for instance, Philo still argued for literal circumcision of Jewish males. Even though the rabbis shunned Philo—and conversely the early church fathers embraced Philo’s approach to Torah<sup>8</sup>—we should not be too quick to measure the gap between the two: the rabbis developed their own approach to Torah through the idea of PARDES (Hebrew: פֶּרֶדֶס), which includes the peshat (פְּשָׁט), or plain sense meaning of the text, remez (רֵמֵז) or allegorical reading, derash (דְּרָשׁ), the

midrashic meaning/comparative meaning of the text, and finally *sod* (סוד), the secret reading, the reading that contains mystery.<sup>9</sup> Thus, we must acknowledge that Philo's allegorical approach to Torah, while rather well-developed and preserved, was not original or overtly "hellenistic," but instead emerged organically from his context. The same can be said for the rabbis. In other words, the multiple approaches to textual interpretation that Philo and the rabbis use is not shared because they copied the approach from one another, but it is shared because they participated in the same cultural milieu.

Philo's approach to Torah was certainly influenced by his elite upbringing and education in Alexandria. While writing his various treatises at different times in his life, Philo was well aware that his audience—a mixed group including Jews and non-Jews—would mainly be comprised of people unfamiliar with Jewish law.<sup>10</sup> Philo's shifts in topical focus and the time between each of his works explain the variety of approaches that he takes in his work on Jewish law. There are different levels of the law: God, who transcends the cosmos, and the cosmos, which is the home of the *logos*, made manifest in the laws of nature and which orders the natural world. John Martens argues that, according to Philo, the law of nature "acts as a bridge through which humanity can come to know God and his workings. Purpose and intention are found in every aspect of creation, and to understand the law of nature is to come to know the purpose and intention of God and humanity's role in the cosmos."<sup>11</sup> The *logos* is connected to the *nomos*, the Mosaic law, in that they are one and the same except that the *nomos* is written. Thus, according to Philo, other written law codes can be judged against the Mosaic law to see if they are accurate or if they are perverted by human intervention.<sup>12</sup>

According to Philo, the difference between the unwritten *logos* and the written *nomos* is that it is possible to keep the *logos* without necessarily having access to the written law because the *logos* is manifest in nature. Philo uses the patriarchs as his example. For instance, in *Abraham* 275–276, following Gen 26:5, Abraham is said to have done (ἐποίησεν) "the divine law and all the divine commandments." Thus for Philo, God's law—through the laws of nature, or *logos*—could be kept without direct knowledge of the *nomos*. As Koester points out:

This theory about the unwritten Torah being available to the men of old before the legislation of Moses does not serve as merely a convenient stopgap for that period in history between Creation and Moses. . . . It produces the extremely momentous insight that a true law of nature is in fact an ultimately superior criterion for the life of the truly wise man.<sup>13</sup>

Philo's understanding of the law, and its potential accessibility for anyone, suggests that Jewish law was not in the least in contrast with what scholars would call Greek philosophical laws, and that, in fact, they could be

understood as one and the same thing. Instead of prioritizing Jewish or Greek law, Philo acknowledges a person's ability to understand and keep the laws; the onus here is on people rather than on a dichotomous relationship between Jewish and Greek law—if people choose to not see God's law in nature, that is on them, not on their ethnic origin of education.<sup>14</sup>

## TORAH IN JOSEPHUS

Much has already been said on Josephus (c. 37–100 CE) and the law.<sup>15</sup> Of particular use here is his description of the laws in *Against Apion*, which was written as an argument defending Judaism against the claims of one Apion. The polemical nature of the text should cause its readers to be suspicious of the rose-colored view of Judaism that Josephus presents, including the representation of the unchanging nature of the laws (2.82) and the virtues inherent in the law, such as “justice, and fortitude, and temperance, and a universal agreement of other members of the community with one another” (2.170). That being said, book 2 does include a useful overview of the laws as Josephus sees fit to describe them, and which, he proclaims, are observed by all pious Israelites (2.82) among whom he includes himself. Among the positive commandments, Josephus notes keeping the Sabbath and circumcision (2.137). Among the negative commandments, he notes the commandment against making idols (2.75), abstaining from pork (2.137) and other dietary restrictions (2.174). Josephus also notes, but does not go into detail, that among the laws are “what communion [the Israelites] should have with others [and] what great diligence they should use in their occupations,” both of which *could* be ascribed to certain traditions (e.g., dietary restrictions, moneylending to other Israelites; 2.174), but which readers should not understand as being limited to only those things. Much, but not all, of what Josephus covers in this portion of *Against Apion* derives from the laws found in the Pentateuch, but note that they are often *derivative*, that is, they already contain a level of interpretation and/or tradition that is rarely based on a literal reading of the Mosaic law as found in the Pentateuch. In other words, *Against Apion* portrays an idealized version of some of the Mosaic laws but does so in a polemical manner over and against the supposed accusations of Apion and his claim of the dominance of Greek and Roman philosophy. Josephus's explanation of the Jewish laws in *Against Apion* places them as better than Greek and Roman laws, while also establishing a firm connection between them through comparison, and he does this by focusing on certain laws from the Pentateuch while avoiding others that would disrupt his comparison.

Shifting to more familiar territory for most New Testament scholars, let us think briefly about Josephus's presentation of laws and the Jewish “philosophies.” In *Jewish War* 2.162, Josephus describes the Pharisees as those who

are considered the “most skillful in the exact explanation of their *nomima* (νόμιμα; customs/legalities).”<sup>16</sup> What exactly these explanations might look like, we do not know, as Josephus only tells us about their general beliefs. His rhetoric suggests that he strongly favors the Pharisees and their interpretation of *nomima*, although he spends hardly any space writing about them or about the Sadducees, instead focusing on the Essenes in great detail. However, while Josephus makes the claim about the skill with which the Pharisees approach the *nomima*, he does not include his evaluation about how the other Jewish groups approach them. What this suggests, then, is that even for Josephus there is more than one legitimate way to approach *nomima*, regardless of *what* the interpretations are.

Not unlike Philo, Josephus finds parallels in Jewish law and Greek philosophy, but for Josephus in *Against Apion*, the Torah is the bar against which everything else should be measured. As for the variety of ways that one might identify within Judaism, Josephus describes three which differ in what it means to observe Torah, but there is never a question of whether or not the Pharisees, Sadducees, or Essenes are Jewish, only of how unusual they might seem to Josephus’s intended audience. *Jewish War* never questions that there are diverse approaches to Torah; Josephus simply describes those he considers most important (the Pharisee’s approach) or most odd (the Essenes).

## TORAH IN POST-DESTRUCTION JEWISH APOCALYPSES

While the post-destruction apocalypses clearly date after Paul, these apocalypses developed in the same cultural milieu and therefore reflect on the meaning of Torah in the late first century, and thus help us understand better what we should be considering when we read Paul. I will briefly look at two apocalypses here: 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch.

Fourth Ezra is a pseudepigraphic Jewish apocalypse dated to around 100 C.E.<sup>17</sup> The text itself follows the figure of the priest Ezra who lived after the Babylonian exile and returned to Jerusalem where he reintroduced the Torah to God’s people. Fourth Ezra is split into seven episodes that trace Ezra’s lament and dialogue with the angel Uriel (episodes 1–3), Ezra’s witness of the transformation of the mourning woman into the eschatological Zion (episode 4), followed by two more apocalyptic visions all explained by Uriel, and finally Ezra’s direct conversation with God that leads to the re-giving of the Torah—understood broadly in this apocalypse as revealed knowledge, both esoteric and exoteric.

In the early Jewish imagination,<sup>18</sup> the figure of Ezra is closely connected with the Torah (understood as written scripture) and this continues in 4 Ezra.

Ezra transitions to a prophetic figure, interacting directly with the angel Uriel and with God. Ezra re-receives the physical texts of Torah in the seventh episode following a hierophagic event that gives him access to God's revelation *and* the understanding of it.<sup>19</sup>

And it came to pass, on the next day, behold, a voice called me, saying, "Ezra, open your mouth and drink what I give you to drink." Then I opened my mouth, and behold, a full cup was offered to me; it was full of something like water, but its color was like fire. And I took it and drank; and when I had drunk it, my heart poured forth understanding, and my wisdom increased in my breast, and my spirit retained its memory. . . . So during the forty days ninety-four books were written. And when the forty days were ended, the Most High spoke to me, saying, "Make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people. For in them are the springs of understanding, the fountains of wisdom and the river of knowledge." (14:38–40; 44–47)<sup>20</sup>

In the seventh episode, then, Torah means written scripture as revealed by God to Ezra through both the twenty-four "public" books and the seventy "secret" books, which should only be distributed to the wise.<sup>21</sup> While this is the case for the last chapter, the term Torah is referenced throughout the narrative of 4 Ezra, so it must not mean *only* the written scripture referred to at the end of the apocalypse. What, then, does Torah mean throughout the earlier part of the narrative?

Even within the apocalypse of 4 Ezra, Torah has at least three distinct meanings: covenantal commandments, universal moral code, and written scripture. Karina Martin Hogan examines the use of Torah throughout 4 Ezra and notes that the language broadly refers to divine instruction in various forms.<sup>22</sup> Hogan argues that when Ezra uses the term in the first three episodes he is referring specifically to the Sinai covenant and therefore to Mosaic law.<sup>23</sup> The angel Uriel, on the other hand, pushes for a universal understanding of the law as an "unwritten moral code" that all humans have access to and should abide by. Uriel's use of the terminology pushes back against the idea of election of Israel by noting that the law is universal.<sup>24</sup> Fourth Ezra, then, uses the vocabulary of Torah to talk about three distinct definitions. While these definitions are often portrayed through who is speaking—Ezra, Uriel, or God/Ezra in the last chapter—any mention of Torah throughout the narrative could have more than one definition applied to it. Torah, then, is a flexible term in 4 Ezra.

Like 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch is a pseudepigraphic apocalypse written after the destruction of the second temple. It is usually dated to around the same time as 4 Ezra, and the development of the two apocalypses and their relationship

is complicated.<sup>25</sup> In the prophetic book of Jeremiah, Baruch is ostensibly Jeremiah's side-kick. He is Jeremiah's scribe, runs errands for him when he cannot go, and by the end has moved up in status to not-quite-equal with Jeremiah.<sup>26</sup> In 2 Baruch, Baruch is no longer a side-kick and is instead a prophet in his own right, with a standing *at least* equal to Jeremiah's prophetic status. While 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra are often discussed in tandem because of their many similarities, they are two distinct works. One of the places this is clear is in their discussion of Torah.

Torah is central to the core of 2 Baruch's message. Baruch states that "Your Torah is life, and your wisdom is uprightness" (38:2) and also that Torah observance is Israel's only way to righteousness (17:4, 19:3, 67:6).<sup>27</sup> Unlike 4 Ezra, however, the author of 2 Baruch has the observance of Torah as the only factor that will decide who enters the eschatological kingdom and who does not; Matthias Henze notes that while Torah observance is understood through a strictly Deuteronomic lens in 2 Baruch, the reward of observance moves from an earthly reward to a reward which will be granted in the world to come.<sup>28</sup> Even with this focus on Torah as being the access point to eschatological rewards, however, what Torah means in 2 Baruch is left undefined. The closest the text comes to a definition occurs in chapter 84, in the part of the apocalypse that is called the Epistle of 2 Baruch (78–87):

Let then this letter be a testimony between me and you, so that you will remember the commandments of the Mighty One, and so that in this way I will also have an excuse before him who has sent me. Remember Zion and the Torah, also the Holy Land, and your brothers, and the covenant, and our fathers, and the festivals, and the Sabbaths do not forget. And pass this letter and the traditions of the Torah on to your sons after you, as your fathers have also passed on to you. At all times petition and pray diligently with all your soul so that the Mighty One may be content with you and not reckon the abundance of your sins but remember the uprightness of your fathers. (84:7–10)

Torah in 2 Baruch is nebulous even in this more specific description. Does it differ from keeping the Sabbath, the covenant, the festivals? Or are they the same? There is an assumption in the narrative that the audience will know what the author of 2 Baruch means when he writes that his audience should keep the Torah. Yet Torah remains undefined in this text even though according to 2 Baruch it is the only way to gain salvation.

### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PAUL'S TORAH OBSERVANCE?

I have thus far explored what Torah means in Jewish writings—besides Paul—from the first century CE. It is now time to return to Paul and



reconsider what we mean by his Torah observance alongside Philo, Josephus, and the Jewish apocalypses of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. Like these other authors and texts, Paul's Torah observance and his message about salvation should be understood only from within the context of his cultural milieu. In extant Jewish texts from the first century what it means to be Torah observant is variable and flexible—as shown through the analysis above—and often left undefined. We should not expect it to be any different for Paul's writings, and we should not expect the malleability of what it means to observe the laws to disappear with the advent of Paul's apostolic activity to the "uncircumcised." Paul's letters contain a multiplicity of ideas on what function the law has served and still serves—Paul is not consistent in presenting the law as good or as bad.<sup>29</sup> To paraphrase Pamela Eisenbaum, Paul was not a Christian and did not teach that the law is *only* bad; we need to be ever wary of applying interpretive filters from Augustine to the Reformation.<sup>30</sup>

So what can we know about Paul's own observance of the Torah? Paul's purpose in his letters is less about him, *per se*, and more about his apostolic program and the authority of his gospel. However, Paul does offer his audience periodic glimpses of himself as an individual. For instance, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul argues for his apostolic authority in the assembly over and above competing apostles. Through his argument, he provides us with a little insight into his person. He notes that in his earlier years, he was the kind of Jew who persecuted others—"others here likely being 'other Jews'" who had accepted Christ (1:13). Following his acknowledgment of those younger years, Paul also notes that he is learned in his observance of Judaism: "I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors" (1:14)—though he never identifies what those traditions are or how they play out in his own life. Paul claims his authority through his enthusiasm for Judaism.<sup>31</sup> In other words, despite his original persecution of Christ followers, Paul understands himself as a good Jew to whom God revealed God's gospel about salvation through Christ. This reading is further supported as we move into the letter itself, where Paul claims that his gospel to the non-Jews is one that has been received directly from God, not from other apostles. That is, Paul would never have received any revelation directly from the divine if he had been a "bad Jew." Paul never once calls into question his observance of Torah or his identification as a Jew in the letter. Indeed, through his firm insistence in his Jewish identity Paul is reinforcing his authority and his gospel as being divinely received over and against the other Jewish apostles. Paul is using his *bona fides* to try to convince his audience that—despite urging non-Jewish believers in Christ not to follow Torah—he does not disparage Torah observance for Jews but only discredits the claim that non-Jewish believers in Christ need to keep the Mosaic law. These other Jewish apostles are those who led Peter into rejecting table fellowship with non-Jewish believers in

Christ (Gal 2:11–14). Paul’s continued diatribe is not against the Torah (or the law), but against those who tried to convince those in Paul’s communities that the law was the only way to salvation for non-Jews as it has been for Jews. This is, of course, part of Paul’s own gospel, that for “the nations” salvation comes from confidence in Jesus’s death and resurrection, and the believer’s ability to be saved through that confidence, rather than through following the law. For Paul, non-Jews were never supposed to follow the law, except in the Noachide sense of giving up idols and committing only to the God of Israel. When it comes to Torah, for Paul what is sweetness to the Jew is poison to the non-Jew.

Let me say this plainly: what Galatians does not state is that Paul rejected the law for himself, or even for other Christ-following Jews. Instead what is being emphasized is Paul’s own message, that *through confidence in Christ* both Jewish—that is, those who are circumcised and whatever else the “traditions of my ancestors” could mean—and non-Jewish believers in Christ can access salvation in the eschatological timeline. It is not the law but this confidence in Christ that leads to salvation for non-Jews. This is not a rejection of the law (however we might define that for Paul), as the law also comes from God, but it is a new way of understanding how to access salvation.<sup>32</sup>

As our discussion of Galatians highlights Paul’s self-identification as a Jewish believer in Christ, and thus contributes to our understanding of Paul’s definition of “Torah,” so too does Paul’s bibliographic information in Philipians. In 3:2–10, Paul offers up more information about himself in order to justify his apostolic authority, just as in Galatians. Paul notes that those who are doing evil works (3:2) are claiming their authority through circumcision—that is, through the observation of a commandment. Paul’s argument here is parallel to the one in Galatians: Paul reiterates his Jewish credentials and his observance of the law—again, without specification as to what that means—but goes on to note that even all of this was not enough to reach salvation without confidence in Christ. Paul’s authority is *based on* his thorough Jewishness, including Torah observance, as well as on the revelation of his gospel directly from God. The point, then, is that Paul’s identification as a Jew is essential to his missionary work among non-Jews since it grounds access to salvation through Christ *through Paul*. But what this actually means in terms of Paul as Torah observant remains undefined.

For Paul, being Torah observant could mean avoiding pork or shellfish. It may mean avoiding meat known to be sacrificed to other gods (1 Cor 8), but probably not. It could mean not eating at the same table with people who were eating pork or meat sacrificed to other gods, but again, probably not. Perhaps Paul avoided bread that had not been prepared in a certain way, or perhaps he skipped any food that mixed meat and dairy. We know that Paul claims to be circumcised, but that he thinks that non-Jewish followers of Christ must

never be circumcised to attain salvation. Whether or not these prescriptions were the kind of law that Paul was zealous about as a younger man, the vagueness of what Paul means when he talks about the law does not make him less Jewish or any less a participant in his cultural milieu.

Adding our analysis of Paul and his conception of Torah observance into the mix with other first-century authors such as Philo, Josephus, and the authors of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, it becomes evident that what “torah observance” meant in this period is unclear. Not one of the three major Jewish writers (Philo, Paul, Josephus) who are responsible for our primary textual evidence as to the practice of Torah in the first century seemed to have what we later came to think of as normative practice of Torah, nor do they reflect that anyone else does either. In fact, Josephus may be the most explicit with his discussion of the different Jewish groups, but what he highlights are their differences even while identifying them all as Jewish.

Paul’s understanding of the law may be, just as it was for other first-century Jews, variegated, flexible, and changing depending on the circumstance. To study Paul while holding, consciously or unconsciously, to a conception of Torah that is static and unchanging, is a product of the interpretive filters of the Reformation, and this view reinforces an anti-Jewish bias in scholarship. Just as the early Jesus movement was adapting and shifting as it moved beyond the first century, and just as it has continued to do so throughout the centuries, Judaism and Jewish law before, during, and after the first century likewise adapts and shift within its socio-cultural context. Foregrounding how diverse the idea of Jewish law was in the first century, even by the same individual, is the only way to actually encounter Paul as a Jew.

## NOTES

1. Special thanks to Dr. Meredith Warren, Dr. Sara Parks, and Dr. Matthew Anderson for their reading and commenting on early drafts of this chapter.

2. Codified c. 200 CE.

3. For a description of the Paul within Judaism perspective, see, for instance, Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle Paul* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), especially Nanos, “Introduction,” 1–11 and Zetterholm, “Paul within Judaism: The State of the Question,” 31–51.

4. For an excellent analysis of the problems of terminology, see Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul at the Crossroads of Cultures: Theologizing in the Space-Between* (London: Bloomsbury and T&T Clark, 2013), especially chapters 2 and 3. Ehrensperger gets at the complicated nature of even using distinct terminology such as “Hellenistic” or “Jewish” and problematizes it at the theoretical level, before moving on to examine Paul in this context.

5. Some proponents of the “new perspective” on Paul (e.g., E. P. Sanders, K. Stendahl, N. T. Wright, and J. D. G. Dunn) tried to do this, but failed whenever they proposed that Christianity “improved” on Judaism not in some law-gospel way, but by taking the ancient faith of Israel and somehow making it universal and “non-ethnic.” What the Radical New Perspective attempts to do differently is to keep Paul not only Jewish but also focused on Jewish apocalyptic expectations; non-Jews are secondary in this equation.

6. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, “The Question of Assumptions: Torah Observance in the First Century,” in *Paul Within Judaism: Restoring First-Century Context to the Apostle*, eds. M. D. Nanos and M. Zetterholm (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015) 31–51, here 81.

7. For a discussion of fluidity of “canon” see Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

8. See, for instance, Jennifer Otto’s monograph, *Philo of Alexandria and the Construction of Jewishness in Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

9. The סדרה narrative originally derives from Tosefta Hagigah 2:2 (cf. BT *Hagigah* 14b, PT *Hagigah* 2:1), which talks about four tannaim (~1st century CE.) who visit paradise and only one, Rabbi Akiva, survives.

10. Maren Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2018), 1–24.

11. John W. Martens, *One God, One Law: Philo of Alexandria on the Mosaic and Greco-Roman Law* (Boston, and Leiden: Brill, 2003), 80–81. Compare the language of nature with Paul’s discussion of God and nature in Romans 1:18ff.

12. Martens, *One God, One Law*, 100–1.

13. Helmut Koester, “νόμος φύσεως: The Concept of Natural Law in Greek Thought,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E. R. Goodenough*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 535.

14. Philo’s approach is ripe for an analysis utilizing the tools that Ehrensperger uses in *Paul at the Crossroads*.

15. As just one example, see Louis Feldman, “Torah and Greek Culture in Josephus,” *The Torah U-Madda Journal* 7 (1997): 41–87.

16. For my choice of translation for νόμιμα as customs or legalities rather than “laws,” see the LSJ.

17. M. E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 10.

18. For instance, see Ezra-Nehemiah, 1 Esdras, *t. Sanh.* 4.7.

19. Previously in 4 Ezra, Ezra received revelation but always needed the *angelus interpretes* to assist in understanding it. For the importance of the hierophagic event and its shared meaning in the wider ancient Mediterranean, see Meredith Warren, “My Heart Poured Forth Understanding: 4 Ezra’s Fiery Cup as Hierophagic Consumption,” *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 44, no. 3 (2015): 320–33. For a broader cultural consideration of hierophagic events, see Warren, *Food and Transformation in Ancient Mediterranean Literature* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming in 2019).

20. Translation from Stone, *Fourth Ezra*.

21. For an identification on “the wise” in 4 Ezra, see S. Sheinfeld, “Identifying ‘the Wise’ in 4 Ezra 14,” in preparation.

22. Karina Martin Hogan, "The Meaning of *tōra'* in 4 Ezra," *JSJ* 38 (2007): 530–52.
23. Hogan, "The Meaning," 536–39.
24. *Ibid.*, 539–45.
25. Matthias Henze, "4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Literary Composition and Oral Performance in First-Century Apocalyptic Literature," *JBL* 131, no. 1 (2012): 181–200.
26. J. Edward Wright, *Baruch Ben Neriah: From Biblical Scribe to Apocalyptic Seer* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).
27. Translations of 2 Baruch are from M. E. Stone and M. Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Translations, Introductions, and Notes* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013).
28. Matthias Henze, "Torah and Eschatology in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch," in *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions About Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, eds. G. J. Brooke, H. Najman, and L. T. Stuckenbruck (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 203–05.
29. Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2017), 94–130.
30. Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HaperOne, 2009), 28. For more on the reformation reading of Paul, see Eisenbaum's third chapter.
31. Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian*, 134–36. Eisenbaum explains how Paul's claiming of authority within Judaism here should not be linked to his persecution of Jesus followers in terms of one following the other. Instead, Paul is noting his advanced learning in Judaism through Jewish teachers *who were not themselves followers of Jesus*, hence his persecution of them. Instead, his authority as an apostle is tied directly to his divine revelation from God about Jesus, and not through any human.
32. Fredriksen, *Paul*, especially chapter 4.

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