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The Israel of God: A literary-historical and sociological examination of Paul's use of Israel

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GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY

THE ISRAEL OF GOD:
A LITERARY-HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL EXAMINATION
OF PAUL'S USE OF Ἰσραήλ

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND PHILOSOPHY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN RELIGION

BY
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To Daniel Eugene Goodman

1968 – 2009

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Introduction

Just who is the Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ, the “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16) and what does Paul mean when he quips, Οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ, οὗτοι Ἰσραὴλ, “for not all who are of Israel are Israel” (Rom 9:6)?¹ Even after a cursory look at Paul’s use of the term Ἰσραὴλ² it becomes apparent that there may have been a technical nature to his usage. This paper examines how Paul used the term and how Ἰσραὴλ was used by individuals and groups in late Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity so as to identify the literary context within which Paul lived and wrote. Establishing Paul’s literary context is especially important for examining if Paul was merely using and describing Ἰσραὴλ just as everyone else or if he was, instead, using Ἰσραὴλ in a specialized manner so that he could support his understanding and interpretation of Ἰσραὴλ. That is, was there one understanding of Ἰσραὴλ that was right, or conventional, and therefore is synonymous with the “Israel of God” or was the meaning of Ἰσραὴλ open to debate?

This paper attempts to test the hypothesis that the meaning of the term Ἰσραὴλ actually was open to debate and that Paul was not the only one who defined Ἰσραὴλ in such a way as to endorse a particular understanding of the term. This paper further examines whether there was literary precedence for Paul’s use of Israel. Paul did not

¹ Unless otherwise noted, translation of all New Testament texts are my own.

² For clarity sake, the terms Ἰσραὴλ and יִשְׂרָאֵל will be used throughout the paper to refer to the term “Israel,” and to highlight the potential that it was actually used as technical or specialized language.

live or write in a vacuum; rather, he was a part of his culture and context. While this may seem to be quite a mundane piece of information, it is vital to understanding Paul and the shape of early Christianity. This paper will argue that it is imperative to understand that Paul's context was one in which the debate of "who is Israel" was alive and well. The concept of Israel was not static.

If the debate of "who is Israel" was indeed ongoing, then the composition of Ἰσραήλ / ישראל was yet to be determined. This paper will assess this claim by examining how the use of "Israel" expanded during the relatively short period of time between the appearance of post-exilic Israelite literature and Paul's writings. This will be accomplished by citing various examples of Jewish and Christian literature during this time period.

Before one can delve into examining the texts and offering conclusions, one must know who has gone before and what they have contributed to the field. For one should neither attempt to begin everything anew nor should one offer conclusions that have no basis in the research of others. Thus, a history of research will be found in chapter 1 that does just this.

The approach to analyzing how the term Ἰσραήλ was interpreted will be two-pronged. The first facet of the approach will be literary historical. This aspect of my research is text based and works to show a literary precedence for Paul's use of Ἰσραήλ. Texts that contain occurrences of "Israel" will be analyzed for the contexts in which the term is used and the manner in which they employ the term. This portion of the paper

will show a variety of understandings that the term “Israel” harbored in late Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity. This section will encompass chapters 2-4, which will examine late Second Temple Judaism literature, early Christian literature, and Pauline writings, respectively.

The second facet of the approach will be sociological. Specifically, the approach will be a sociology-of-religion approach. The sociology of group dynamics and identity building will inform how Paul’s use of Ἰσραήλ is explicated. This paper will examine the sociology of using the term Ἰσραήλ to build individual and group identity. There are three main figures in this area that have shaped my understanding and to whom I am greatly indebted: Emile Durkheim, Mircea Eliade, and Hans Mol. Emile Durkheim was a sociologist of religion whose work indirectly spoke to the role of rituals in identity formation. Mircea Eliade’s work provides the basic dichotomy for understanding religion and religious phenomena. This dichotomy asserts that all religions, at some point, differentiate between that which is sacred and that which is profane. This is the basic foundation, then, from which Mol works. Hans Mol examines how religious people and religious communities couple their identity with that which is understood by them to be sacred. All of these works attempt to understand aspects of religion from a sociological perspective.

The paper will conclude by examining the case that was made to support the thesis that the term Ἰσραήλ was used during late Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity as a means of building identity, both individual and corporate, and that

Paul's use of this term can and should be understood from this perspective. The contents of the paper will be appropriately summarized so as to make examination of them as a whole possible and efficient. Finally, the implications of this research and its contributions to the fields of early Christianity and New Testament will be discussed.

Chapter 1

History of Research

The nature of this project necessitates multiple spheres and methods of research. Because of the multiplicity of areas to be examined, this chapter on the history of research will examine how various aspects of this research topic have been handled by others. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this paper, no work addresses the topic specifically. Thus, works will be examined as they address some aspect relevant to the overall topic or as they provide foundational background information. This chapter will begin by examining works that address uses of לְיִשְׂרָאֵל and Ἰσραήλ in relevant Jewish and Christian texts. To show the importance of attempting to understand Paul's use of Ἰσραήλ sociologically, this chapter looks at the consensus that has emerged as to how Paul used the term and offers Justin Martyr and Martin Luther as contributors to this consensus. Further, this consensus has resulted in what is commonly called "supersessionism." From here, this chapter speaks to the new perspective on Paul, since this movement was based largely on a desire to understand Paul in his own context and not merely through a widely-accepted consensus. Moreover, it was my work in the new perspective on Paul that first brought me to the question of how Paul used Ἰσραήλ .

The last major section of research that this chapter covers is sociology, generally, and sociology of religion specifically. Some of the so-called classics are examined, such as Mircea Eliade and Emile Durkheim, as a foundation for how to go about doing sociology of religion. More recent advances in sociology are also examined, such as identity theory and social identity theory. Both of these theories will be examined in more detail in chapter 5 and will be applied to Paul's use of Ἰσραήλ.

The work of Graham Harvey in *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature* has been especially helpful in compiling the occurrences of the term "Israel" in both Jewish and Christian sources.³ Harvey very thoroughly compiles the occurrences of יִשְׂרָאֵל and Ἰσραήλ; this is his greatest contribution. He offers some commentary, but not enough to make a significant impact on the understandings of the terms "Jew," "Hebrew," and "Israel," respectively. This lack of impact is due to the broad nature of his work. It is, however, a foundational source for this paper. Harvey's work catalogues some of the occurrences of Paul's use of "Israel," but his work is mainly a collection of these instances. C. T. R. Hayward's *Interpretations of the Name Israel in Ancient Judaism & Some Early Christian Writings: From Victorious Athlete to Heavenly Champion* is also quite foundational in compiling various uses of "Israel."⁴ Hayward offers much more commentary than Harvey does and, as such, his volume addresses far fewer occurrences, but is more in

³ Graham Harvey, *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew and Israel in Ancient Jewish & Early Christian Literature* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2001).

⁴ C. T. R. Hayward, *Interpretations of the Name Israel in Ancient Judaism and Some Early Christian Writings: From Victorious Athlete to Heavenly Champion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

depth in its coverage of each occurrence. Hayward asserts that Philo of Alexandria's interpretation of "Israel" as "the one who sees God" is the interpretation that takes root and is picked up by later Christians.⁵ The starting point for any understanding of "Israel" for Hayward, though, is Jacob's change of name.⁶ This is a worthy starting point, but it leaves out a myriad of other understandings of the term that would, to be sure, broaden his study, but would also serve to make his study more encompassing and the title of his work more accurate.

Hayward's work, unlike Harvey's, does not address how Paul uses the term. Thus, Hayward's work is most valuable for the purposes of this paper in the work that it does in literature outside the New Testament, especially in its analyses of the works of Philo of Alexandria and some patristic interpretations of the term "Israel." Outside of Harvey and Hayward's works, respectively, little work has been done on understanding Paul's use of Ἰσραήλ from a literary perspective and no work has been done that examines how Paul uses the term sociologically.

A consensus has emerged about how Paul understood Ἰσραήλ that has been shaped largely by early Christians, such as Justin Martyr. Justin Martyr's view, as displayed in *Dialogue with Trypho*, states unequivocally that Christians are God's new chosen people and that the Jews have been abandoned by God (*Dial.* 11, 135). In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr asserts quite frankly: "For the true spiritual Israel,

⁵ Hayward, *Interpretations of the Name Israel*, 212.

⁶ Hayward, *Interpretations of the Name Israel*, 18. This is clear throughout Hayward's work. Five of his ten chapters are specifically related to Jacob's change of name, while all the others at least reference the event.

and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham (who in uncircumcision was approved of and blessed by God on account of his faith, and called the father of many nations), are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ" (*Dial.* 11). He further states that "we, who have been quarried from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelite race" (*Dial.* 135).

Martin Luther has also been influential in shaping this consensus. Luther's early years seem to have been marked by an appreciation and generally positive attitude toward Jews. This attitude changed dramatically from the 1530s onward, though. He began to make rather incendiary statements such as:

The Jews make a point of the name Israel and claim that they alone are Israel and that we are Gentiles. Now this is true so far as the first part of the prophecy and the old covenant of Moses are concerned, though this has long since been fulfilled. But according to the second part of the prophecy and the new covenant, the Jews are no longer Israel, for all things are to be new, and Israel too must become new. Those alone are the true Israel who have accepted the new covenant which was established and begun at Jerusalem.⁷

Where exactly Luther picked up the view that the true Israel consists of those "who have accepted the new covenant" is not entirely clear, but the resemblance to the views of Justin Martyr cannot be denied. Michael Cranford, then, using much less incendiary tactics, comes to a similar conclusion. Cranford remarks, in his "Election and Ethnicity:

⁷ E. Theodore Bachman, ed., *Word and Sacrament I*, vol. 35 of *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 287-288.

Paul's View of Israel in Romans 9:1-13," that "the boundary marking out the people of God and the boundary marking out the people of Israel are not coterminous."⁸

The views of Martyr, Luther, and Cranford, among others, have led to a view that is typically called supersessionism, or replacement theology. Kendall Soulen, in *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, defines supersessionism this way:

According to this teaching, God chose the Jewish people after the fall of Adam in order to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ, the Savior. After Christ came, however, the special role of the Jewish people came to an end and its place was taken by the church, the new Israel. The church, unlike the Jewish people, is a spiritual community in which the carnal distinction between Jew and Gentile is overcome. Accordingly, the church holds that the preservation of the Jewish identity within the new Israel is a matter of theological indifference at best, and a mortal sin at worst. Yet the Jews themselves failed to recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah and refused to enter the new spiritual Israel. God therefore rejected the Jews and scattered them over the earth, where God will preserve them until the end of time.⁹

This popular view has its foundations in the works of Justin Martyr and Martin Luther. This view became the consensus view and still is in many arenas. Many modern commentators, though, assert that Paul held this view long before Justin Martyr, Martin Luther, and others and that these interpreters were only following in Paul's path. This theory can be tested by examining how scholars understand Paul's use of "Israel." This task, however, proves to be rather difficult, for, while there are a plethora of works that address Paul's use of "Israel," the vast majority of them have as their main concern the

⁸ Michael Cranford, "Election and Ethnicity: Paul's View of Israel in Romans 9.1-13," *JSNT* 50 (1993): 41.

⁹ Kendall R. Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 1.

modern Christian theology of replacement, or supersessionism, either to uphold it or offer a rebuttal. While those works are certainly important in many arenas, they simply do not perform the task this paper is attempting, nor is performing this task a goal of theirs.¹⁰

Some, however, were not content with the questions asked and answers given by those who approached the question of Ἰσραήλ strictly from a theological and Christian point of view. They argued, instead, that one should become aware of the Jewish background and influence on Paul. The 1977 work of E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*,¹¹ and his new perspective on Second Temple Judaism resulted in a refocusing of attention back to the Jewish background of Paul. The goal of Sanders' work, though, was not to be the impetus for a paradigm shift in Pauline studies, but was instead "to compare Judaism, understood on its own terms, with Paul, understood on his own terms."¹² In essence, Sanders was doing a limited comparative study of

¹⁰ For a few differing perspectives on the question of supersessionism and Israel's salvation see J. Christaan Beker, "The Faithfulness of God and the Priority of Israel in Paul's Letter to the Romans," *Harvard Theological Review* 79:1-3 (1986): 10-16; Michael J. Cook, "Paul's Argument in Romans 9-11," *Review and Expositor* 103 (2006): 91-111; Michael Cranford, "Election and Ethnicity: Paul's View of Israel in Romans 9:1-13," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 50 (1993): 27-41; Mary Ann Getty, "Paul and the Salvation of Israel: A Perspective on Romans 9-11," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50/3 (1988): 456-469; John J. Johnson, "A New Testament Understanding of the Jewish Rejection of Jesus: Four Theologians on the Salvation of Israel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43/2 (June 2000): 229-246; Bruce W. Longenecker, "Different Answers to Different Issues: Israel, the Gentiles and Salvation History in Romans 9-11," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 36 (1989): 95-123; Ben L. Merkle, "Romans 11 and the Future of Ethnic Israel," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43/4 (December 2000): 709-721; Michael G. Vanlaningham, "Romans 11:25-27 and the Future of Israel in Paul's Thought," *Master's Seminary Journal* 3/2 (Fall 1992): 141-174; and Andrew H. Wakefield, "Romans 9-11: The Sovereignty of God and the Status of Israel," *Review and Expositor* 100 (2003): 65-80.

¹¹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

¹² Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, xi.

Palestinian Judaism and the most prolific New Testament writer, Paul.¹³ Sanders also published *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63BCE – 66CE*, a work that is invaluable in understanding the Jewish world of Paul.

Sanders' observations in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* were later built upon by James D. G. Dunn.¹⁴ What resulted became known as the "new perspective on Paul." The new perspective on Paul puts much more attention on the Jewishness of Paul and attempts to understand Paul in that light. Mark Nanos,¹⁵ Christian Strecker¹⁶ and James D. G. Dunn are all part of a group that has effectively built a new consensus on Paul. This new consensus, however, is rather limited in its scope, breaching mainly the topics of law and justification. Since James D. G. Dunn is credited with coining the term, his definition of the "new perspective on Paul" should suffice. Dunn, in his recently revised *The New Perspective on Paul*, lays out very clearly what he means when he uses the terminology, "the new perspective on Paul:"

1. It builds on Sanders' new perspective on Second Temple Judaism, and Sanders' reassertion of the basic graciousness expressed in Judaism's understanding and practice of covenantal nomism.
2. It observes that a social function of the law was an integral aspect of Israel's covenantal nomism, where separateness *to* God (holiness) was understood to require separateness *from* the (other) nations as two sides of one coin, and that the law was understood as the means to maintaining both.

¹³ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, xi.

¹⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 16.

¹⁵ See Mark D. Nanos, ed. *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002).

¹⁶ See Christian Strecker, *Die liminale Theologie des Paulus: Zugänge zur paulinischen theologie aus kulturanthropologischer Perspektive* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999).

3. It notes that Paul's own teaching on justification focuses largely if not principally on the need to overcome the barrier which the law was seen to interpose between Jew and Gentile, so that the "all" of "to all who believe" (Rom. 1.17) signifies, in the first place, Gentile as well as Jew.
4. It suggests that "works of the law" became a key slogan in Paul's exposition of his justification gospel because so many of Paul's fellow Jewish believers were insisting on certain works as indispensable to salvation.
5. It protests that failure to recognise this major dimension of Paul's doctrine of justification by faith may have ignored or excluded a vital factor in combating the nationalism and racialism which has so distorted and diminished Christianity past and present.¹⁷

While my work relies heavily on the groundwork already laid by E. P. Sanders and James D. G. Dunn, it also attempts to go beyond what they have done in order to offer a fuller picture of Paul and the context within which he wrote. John M. G. Barclay also realized that the new perspective on Paul is lacking.¹⁸ While his book, *Obedying the Truth: Paul's Ethics in Galatians*, integrates the new perspective on Paul and even expands on the concept, it offers critiques of the new perspective as it seeks to present Paul's ethics in the letter in a way that takes into account the social context of Paul and the letter.

The social context of Paul was unique and diverse and is not to be fully understood by hastily glancing at background material. Moreover, although this paper focuses very heavily on the Jewish background of Paul and his literature, the Hellenistic background and influences cannot go unnoticed. Thus, a hearty background understanding has to be developed prior to undertaking such a specific study as this paper attempts. Numerous volumes have aided in this basic understanding, but none

¹⁷ Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, 16.

¹⁸ See John M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2005).

more than Sanders' *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63BCE – 66CE*,¹⁹ Martin Hengel's *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*,²⁰ and Louis H. Feldman's *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian*.²¹ Additionally important is Philip Davies' "The History of Ancient Israel and Judah."²² For in this piece Davies correctly speaks of recognizing multiple "Israels."²³ "The Bible's 'Israel,'" says Davies, "is a rather complicated kind of thing. Indeed, we should really speak of its 'Israels.'"²⁴ Recognizing that the Hebrew Bible contained multiple "Israels" offers a foundational starting point for examining the suggestion of this paper, namely, that "Israel" begins to be used as a means of identity-building. For when one recognizes the multiple "Israels" referenced in the Hebrew Bible, one can then begin to study how these "Israels" were different and what made them so.

A fuller picture of Paul and the context within which he wrote, though, goes beyond issues of salvation and literary historical analysis. This paper also examines the sociological use of the term Ἰσραήλ, asking the following questions: how was the term

¹⁹ E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice & Belief, 63BCE – 66CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992).

²⁰ Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, 2nd one-volume ed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

²¹ Louis H. Feldman, *Jew & Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions From Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Additionally helpful have been James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999) and Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003).

²² Philip Davies, "The History of Ancient Israel and Judah," *Expository Times* 119 (2007): 15-21.

²³ Davies, "The History of Ancient Israel and Judah," 17-19.

²⁴ Davies, "The History of Ancient Israel and Judah," 17.

understood by those who used it and by those to whom it was being applied? Did the term have any sense of identity attached to it, either at the individual or the group level? There are multiple figures in this area that have laid the groundwork for understanding a religious movement sociologically. The three main persons that make up the foundation of this section are Emile Durkheim,²⁵ Mircea Eliade,²⁶ and Hans Mol.²⁷ Durkheim's *The Rules of Sociological Method* is central to any study of sociology, especially those in the realm of sociology of religion. It is in his *The Division of Labor in Society*, however, that Durkheim begins to offer work that is more germane to a sociology-of-religion approach. For it is in this work that Durkheim describes his understanding of what held together pre-modern societies and what characterizes modern societies. The solidarity that Durkheim speaks of is directly related to identity in the sociological sense. Further, it is logical to contend that a main premise in Durkheim's sociology of religion is the "role of communal ritual in fostering personal and social identity."²⁸

²⁵ See especially Emile Durkheim, *Division of Labor in Society*, trans. George Simpson (New York: The Free Press, 1964) and *The Rules of Sociological Method*, 8th ed., ed. George E. G. Catlin, trans. Sarah A. Solovay and John H. Mueller (New York: The Free Press, 1966).

²⁶ See Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), and *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959).

²⁷ Hans J. Mol, *Identity and the Sacred: A Sketch for a new social-scientific theory of religion* (New York: The Free Press, 1977).

²⁸ Arthur L. Greil and Lynn Davidman, "Religion and Identity" in *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by James A. Beckford and N. J. Deremath III (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2007), 549.

Mircea Eliade's work, specifically *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, provides the basic dichotomy for understanding religion and religious phenomena. This dichotomy asserts that all religions, at some point, differentiate between that which is sacred and that which is profane. This differentiation shapes the practices and beliefs of a religion. This is the basic foundation, then, from which Hans Mol works. Hans Mol examines how religious people and religious communities couple their identity with that which is understood by them to be sacred. More precisely, Mol's work defines religion as the "sacralization of identity."²⁹ In other words, individuals and groups "legitimate the niche of oneself or one's group in a complex arrangement of forces which threaten to change it" by making the niche or identity sacred.³⁰

Peter Berger³¹ is another author who studied religion sociologically. His works are in the same vein as Eliade and Mol's and offer additional background for the sociological examination of this paper. All of these works attempt to understand aspects of religion from a sociological perspective. The authors and works mentioned thus far, with respect to sociology of religion, are considered by many to be classics. That status, however, only comes with age and all of these works are at least forty years old. To be sure, sociology has not been idle since Durkheim, Eliade, Mol, and Berger were actively

²⁹ Hans Mol, *Identity and the Sacred: A Sketch for a New Social-Scientific Theory of Religion* (New York: The Free Press, 1976), 1.

³⁰ Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, 1.

³¹ Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969).

at work.³² More recent works have continued in similar veins as these works and have offered critiques of some of the classics as well as suggestions on how to move forward.

Within the field of sociology the term “identity” has taken on different meanings and with varying degrees of support over the last five or six decades. Arthur Greil and Lynn Davidman³³ show the changes in how the term “identity” has been used and understood by sociologists of religion since as early as William James in their chapter, “Religion and Identity” in *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. The advent of the social identity theory, as formulated by Henri Tajfel, Michael Hogg, Peggy Thoits and others, has ultimately proven to support earlier claims about the importance of identity within religion.³⁴ Social identity theory is different from identity theory in that identity theory “asks how individuals see themselves in relation to role partners”³⁵ and social identity theory is concerned with categorical or group identity. Thoits and Virshup express it thus: identity theory focuses on the “me,” while social identity theory focuses

³² I am not here discarding the classics, only recognizing that a healthy balance between time-tested classics and new research is necessary. Moreover, one can only determine whether a “classic” is still pertinent or not by examining new research and comparing it with previous work. Both the classics and contemporary research act as checks on each other.

³³ Arthur L. Greil and Lynn Davidman, “Religion and Identity” in *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by James A. Beckford and N. J. Deremath III (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2007).

³⁴ See Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict,” in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, edited by W. G. Austin and S. Worchel (Monterey: Brooks-Cole, 1979); Michael A. Hogg, *The Social Psychology of Group Cohesiveness: From Attraction to Social Identity* (London: Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1992); and Peggy A. Thoits and Lauren K. Virshup, “Me’s and We’s: Forms and Functions of Social Identities,” in *Self and Identity: Fundamental Issues*, edited by Richard Ashmore and Lee Jussim (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

³⁵ Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 553.

on the “we.”³⁶ Of particular interest is a 1999 essay by Jeffrey Seul, “‘Ours Is the Way of God’: Religion, Identity, and Intergroup Conflict,” in which the social identity theory is applied specifically to religious identity in an effort to explain “why intergroup conflict so frequently occurs along religious fault lines.”³⁷ This examination bears out what Hans Mol called the “close affinity between identity-defence and sacralization.”³⁸ It should also be noted that Patrick Miller’s sociological approach in *The Religion of Ancient Israel* served as an example of how to do sociological analysis while maintaining attentiveness to and reliance on historical dimensions and changes.³⁹

From this brief history of research it becomes apparent that while many perspectives and methodologies have been employed in the study of Paul, Paul’s use of the term Ἰσραήλ has rarely been examined from a perspective that is not overtly concerned with determining, anachronistically, whether Paul was supersessionist. To be sure, there are works, such as Graham Harvey’s, that examine Paul’s use of Ἰσραήλ without the question of supersessionism at the forefront of their work. These works, however, only offer literary insight into how Paul used the term Ἰσραήλ, which is extremely valuable, but they offer no insight into the sociology of Paul’s use of the term. That is, they do not address whether Paul’s use of Ἰσραήλ contains any potential identity-building implications. Furthermore, this brief historical examination shows the

³⁶ Peggy A. Thoits and Lauren K. Virshup, “Me’s and We’s: Forms and Functions of Social Identities,” in *Self and Identity: Fundamental Issues*, edited by Richard Ashmore and Lee Jussim (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

³⁷ Jeffrey R. Seul, “Ours Is the Way of God,” *Journal of Peace Research* 36 (1999): 553-69.

³⁸ Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, 5.

³⁹ Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000).

potential fruit of employing sociological methods of examination in the study of Paul, specifically when studying if and how Paul worked to build identity by means of his use of a specific term, Ἰσραήλ.

Chapter 2

Occurrences of 'Iσραήλ/יִשְׂרָאֵל in Jewish Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to examine some of the occurrences of יִשְׂרָאֵל and to illustrate and discuss types of uses of “Israel” during late Second Temple Judaism. This examination intends to look at literature that ranges from post-exile to late 2nd Century CE. As such, not every occurrence will be mentioned explicitly, though all have been taken into account. This chapter will specifically examine post-exilic Hebrew Bible books of Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 & 2 Chronicles. These writings mark the inception of the process of the sacralization of 'Iσραήλ. Sacralization will be discussed at greater length in chapter five.

Other Jewish writings that will be considered are the Dead Sea Scrolls; specifically, Community Rule, Damascus Document, 4QMMT, War Scroll, 4QOrdinances, 4QTohorot A, Rule of the Congregation, Temple Scroll, 4QFlorilegium, 4QTestimonia, Pesharim,⁴⁰ 4QTanhumin, and Words of the Luminaries. Scrolls that are merely copies of Hebrew Bible books have been left out of this examination.

In addition, some of Philo's writings will be included in this section, specifically *Legum allegoriae*, *De posteritate Caini*, *Quod Deus sit immutabilis*, *De Ebrietate*, *De*

⁴⁰ The Pesharim that will be examined are Isaiah Peshar, Hosea Peshar, Nahum Peshar, Habakkuk Peshar, Psalms Peshar, and Genesis Peshar.

Confusione Linguarum, De Fuga et Inventionem, De Præmiis et Pœnis, De Abrahamo, and De migratione Abrahami. This section will explore Philo's use of the term, as his usage serves as an example of the range of uses of "Israel" in Second Temple Jewish literature.

"Israel" in the Hebrew Bible

יִשְׂרָאֵל is used over 2,500 times in the Hebrew Bible.⁴¹ All of these occurrences, however, are not relevant to the discussion and thus they will not all be examined. Instead, the post-exilic books of 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi will be examined. The post-exilic starting point was chosen for four reasons: 1) boundaries are needed and the exile provides a boundary point that allows for adequate work to be done in how "Israel" was used in Jewish literature as background information when addressing how Paul used the term, 2) once some of those who were exiled began to return to their homeland, important distinctions begin to be made between those who were exiled and those who were not, 3) the land "Israel" takes on a more significant role during and after the exile, and 4) it is difficult, if not outright anachronistic, to speak of "Israel" before the exile. While a group of Hebrews likely existed, that does not add to the present discussion. Discussions by Philip

⁴¹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic Based on the Lexicon of William Gesenius as Translated by Edward Robinson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 441 and H. -J. Zobel, "יִשְׂרָאֵל," *TDOT* 6:397-420. BDB records 2507 occurrences; *TDOT* records 2514 occurrences. The Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as opposed to the LXX has been chosen because this section intends to see how "Israel" was used and understood in its original context. Were this section examining how Paul read the Hebrew Bible text, then use of the LXX would not only be appropriate, but would be the only logical text to use.

Davies, John Day, and Lester Grabbe on the existence or non-existence of a pre-exilic “Israel” have aided in establishing this final point.⁴²

Moreover, Zobel,⁴³ in the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* lists numerous occurrences of יִשְׂרָאֵל. This listing has been helpful in finding occurrences of the term, but it has been most helpful in how it categorizes the uses of the term. The category most relevant to this paper is the use of the term to refer to the people of God.

In by far the largest group of occurrences (1006), “Israel” is primarily a comprehensive term for the people of Yahweh identified by that name since their sojourn in Egypt. After the fall of the northern kingdom, however, “Israel” comes to mean more an ideal entity, instantiated in Judah, the exiles, the postexilic community, and last but not least the nation of the age of salvation.⁴⁴

This comment seems to support one of the basic premises of this paper, which is that there is precedence for Paul’s usage of “Israel” that attaches identity to the term.

Whether the text bears this out will be seen in the examination of the occurrences of יִשְׂרָאֵל in postexilic Hebrew Bible books.

⁴² See particularly Philip Davies, *In Search of ‘Ancient Israel,’* 2nd ed. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); John Day, ed., *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004); and Lester L. Grabbe, *Ancient Israel: What do we Know and How do we Know it?* (London: T & T Clark, 2007).

⁴³ Zobel, *TDOT* 6:404.

⁴⁴ Zobel, *TDOT* 6:404.

1 and 2 Chronicles

יִשְׂרָאֵל occurs 366 times within the post-exilic books that this chapter is going to examine. The vast majority of these occurrences are in 1 & 2 Chronicles (302). The semantic range of יִשְׂרָאֵל in 1 & 2 Chronicles is quite broad. Such phrases as “king of Israel,” “God of Israel,” “sons of Israel,” “my people Israel,” and “all Israel” are used.⁴⁵ Also occurring in 1 & 2 Chronicles is the use of יִשְׂרָאֵל as one half of the two groups that make up the larger Israel; Israel and Judah. Zobel remarks that through 1 and 2 Chronicles “‘Israel’ is used to denote both the former northern kingdom (1 Ch. 5:17; 2 Ch. 16:1; etc.) and Judah (1 Ch. 9:1; 2 Ch. 21:2, 4; etc.), and is also the name of the premonarchic Israel (1 Ch. 2:7; 17:5; 2 Ch. 24:6, 9).”⁴⁶ From the uses of יִשְׂרָאֵל in 1 and 2 Chronicles, the observation is then made that “the Chronicler is concerned to emphasize the continuity and totality of Israel.”⁴⁷

One simple way to begin to understand the use of יִשְׂרָאֵל in 1 and 2 Chronicles would be to group the occurrences of Israel in post-exilic literature by the phrases within which they are contained, but that would prove to be misleading. For just because two phrases are the same does not mean that the intended meanings are the same. For instance, Ezra 6:21 uses בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (“sons of Israel”) to refer to the group of people who have returned from the exile, whereas here בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל is used to refer to the whole people of Israel (2 Chr 6:11).

⁴⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all translations of biblical texts are my own.

⁴⁶ Zobel, *TDOT* 6:418.

⁴⁷ Zobel, *TDOT* 6:418.

The range of uses of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is further highlighted in 2 Chronicles 10:17: “But Rehoboam reigned over the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah.” In this instance, **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** by itself refers to all of Israel, but the verse modifies **בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** with “who lived in the cities of Judah.” Adding to the fluidity of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** in this verse, the obvious counterpart to Judah is Israel. So **יִשְׂרָאֵל** here actually refers to all Israel and to those who lived in the cities of Judah, while “Israel,” as the counterpart to Judah, is in the back of the reader’s mind. Sara Japhet notes that “the people is an essential unity” in 2 Chronicles and that “each of its parts may be termed ‘Israel’, ‘the children of Israel’ or ‘all Israel’ – as the literary unit and the context may require.”⁴⁸ Raymond Dillard, though, is a bit more pointed in recognizing the connection between the northern and southern kingdoms in this verse: “‘the children of Israel’ is used of both Southern (10:17) and Northern (10:18) tribes – both are equally the children of Israel.”⁴⁹

That **יִשְׂרָאֵל** would be used differently in back-to-back verses, or even in the same verse, and be understood by the reader could create confusion about just what **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is or to what it refers. The authors of this literature, though, understood the fluidity of **יִשְׂרָאֵל**. That is, the term was used in the way that they deemed most appropriate for that immediate context. Language is fluid, not static. This is evident in this literature especially when a text uses **יִשְׂרָאֵל** more than once in a verse and with different meanings. This is clear once again in 2 Chronicles 30:1: “Hezekiah sent to all Israel and

⁴⁸ Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 658.

⁴⁹ Raymond B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles* (WBC 15; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 88.

Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem to keep the Passover for the LORD God of Israel.” Here *יִשְׂרָאֵל* is used as one part of the Israel/Judah dichotomy as well as in the phrase, “God of Israel.” This verse is also interesting syntactically. It is prose, but has poetic features.⁵⁰ The two parts of the verse that appear to represent different groups, “Israel and Judah” and “Ephraim and Manasseh,” are acting as parallels.⁵¹ Japhet renders the verse this way: “Hezekiah wrote letters and sent to all Israel and Judah, including Ephraim and Manasseh’, which is then continued by a second pair of parallel members: ‘That they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem // to keep Passover to the Lord the God of Israel.’”⁵² It is the people of God who go to “the house of the Lord at Jerusalem” and who “keep Passover to the Lord the God of Israel.” Israel, in this verse, is a part of this people. It is not set apart as a more special part of this people, but it is solidly a part of the people of God.

Another phrase that stands out in 1 & 2 Chronicles is found in 1 Chronicles 17:9: “and I will appoint a place for my people Israel.” The term is coupled with a people whom God understands to be his own. Though this phrase seems to be rich with associations, it is too early to assert that the designation “my people Israel” is already highly sought after.

⁵⁰ Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 937.

⁵¹ Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 937.

⁵² Japhet, *I & II Chronicles*, 937.

Ezra

Ezra contains thirty two occurrences of **יִשְׂרָאֵל**. The range of uses of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** in Ezra is much like that of 1 & 2 Chronicles, but with the exiles returning and the temple being rebuilt, the use of the term starts to increase in significance. Ezra 6:21 offers a glimpse into the range of uses of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** in the Bible: “And the sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the uncleanness of the nations of the land to join them, to seek the LORD God of Israel, ate [the Passover].” The first occurrence of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** in this verse appears to refer to a group of people who have returned from the exile; a group that does not include other worshippers of YHWH that remained in the land while others were exiled. More clearly, that is, “‘Israel’ thus denotes membership in both the people and the cultic community. The two are identical, . . . Others cannot even claim to belong to Israel, for this cultic community is all Israel.”⁵³ The second occurrence of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** in this verse pairs Israel with “God.” This phrase is common in the Hebrew Bible and it seems benign enough, but it is important to note that the phrase **אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**, God of Israel, typically implies that God is God over the entirety of Israel, the entity that includes both “Judah” and “Israel” as well as those who were exiled and those who remained behind. In Ezra, however, this is not the case, for “Israel” refers to the returned group of exiles only. So, **אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**, God of Israel, here refers to the God of the returned exiles.

⁵³ Zobel, *TDOT* 6:418.

Ezra 6:21 is an example of the semantic range of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** in the Hebrew Bible, but this verse can also be examined on another level, for the returned exiles begin to hold a higher place as the remnant that was preserved and as the “sons of Israel.” The verse states: “And the sons of Israel who returned from exile and all those who had separated themselves from the uncleanness of the nations of the land to join them, to seek the LORD God of Israel, ate [the Passover].” Lines are now being drawn between those that were exiles and those that were not. No one “who was not regarded as pure was allowed to attend the festival.”⁵⁴ William Dumbrell asserts that Ezra, together with Nehemiah, “held a view of an ideal Israel, worshipping as a community around an idealized temple conception.”⁵⁵

Moreover, the dichotomous view that clearly distinguishes between the cleanness of Israel and the uncleanness of the nations becomes more pronounced. H. G. M. Williamson notes that this verse likely came about “when Judaism was taking on increasingly the character of a religious community and one which felt the consequent threat of defilement from contacts with those who were ‘outsiders,’ even though they might be living close to or among them.”⁵⁶ As this distinction becomes more prominent in the text, the importance of possessing a certain identity also becomes more important. Thus, not only is it important to note the emphasis that this verse places on

⁵⁴ F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 96.

⁵⁵ William J. Dumbrell, “The Purpose of the Book of Chronicles,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27/3 (1984): 261.

⁵⁶ H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC 16; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 85.

those who have separated themselves from the “uncleanness of the nations of the land to join them, to seek the LORD God of Israel,” but it is also important to observe that the distinction is not simply between Israel as a whole and the “uncleanness of the nations of the land.” Instead, the distinction is between the other nations and “the sons of Israel who returned from the exile and all those who had separated themselves from the uncleanness of the nations of the land to join them.” That is, the returned exiles are the first group that this verse understands as “the sons of Israel” and others then join in with that group to separate themselves from the other nations and, thus seek the LORD God of Israel.⁵⁷

While the text does seem to support an interpretation such as that given by Dumbrell and Williamson, Ralph Klein⁵⁸ and Joseph Blenkinsopp⁵⁹ offer another explanation. Klein sees the makeup of the group in 6:21 as “unexpectedly broad,” noting that “‘those who had separated themselves’ may have been Gentiles who had become proselytes or Jews who had not gone into exile, but who had now become members of the new community.”⁶⁰ Blenkinsopp remarks that “despite its quasi-sectarian character, the golah community was joined in the celebration of the festival by those of the local population, including no doubt some from the region of Samaria, who were willing to

⁵⁷ Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, 85.

⁵⁸ Ralph W. Klein, *The Books of Ezra & Nehemiah*, NIB 3 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

⁵⁹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988).

⁶⁰ Klein, *The Books of Ezra & Nehemiah*, 713.

accept the cult of YHVH alone, for which the phrase used here is to *seek* YHVH.”⁶¹

Blenkinsopp’s nuanced statement may exhibit the best grasp on the spirit of the verse.

Further, Johanna W. H. Van Wijk-Bos⁶² says, “greater openness to others and readiness to break the chain that fearfully excludes those who do not belong are shown by the fact that the community embraces others and is not just drawing its own circle tight.”⁶³

However, simply to remark on the openness of the community as exhibited in 6:21 does not take into account the stipulations that the verse also puts on the worshipping community, namely, that they would have “separated themselves from the uncleanness of the nations” and that they “seek the LORD God of Israel” (Ezr 6:21). Thus, a perspective that incorporates the views of Klein and Blenkinsopp as well as those of Williamson and Dumbrell would be most appropriate. An examination that incorporates both of these views would understand the community of Ezra’s text as being more open to those who were not in the returned exile group joining them in worshipping God, but also desiring to maintain certain stipulations for those who wish to join. This may mean, then, that *יִשְׂרָאֵל* in Ezra should be understood as an “ideal Israel,” but an “ideal Israel” that was open to outsiders.

⁶¹ Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 133.

⁶² Johanna W. H. Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*. Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).

⁶³ Van Wijk-Bos, *Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*. 32.

Nehemiah

The number of uses of the term **יִשְׂרָאֵל** decreases even more in the book of Nehemiah, with the word only occurring twenty two times. As in Ezra, the exiles occupy a prominent place in the text. Of the twenty two occurrences of “Israel” in Nehemiah, ten are part of the phrase “the children of Israel.” Out of context, this phrase seems to refer to the whole of Israel, but upon closer examination, it becomes clear that this phrase, as in Ezra, refers to the returned exiles. Nehemiah 1:2-6 offers a context around verse 6, where this phrase occurs twice:

Hanani, one of my brothers, together with some men of Judah, arrived, and I asked them about the Jews, the remnant who had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. They replied, “The survivors who have survived the captivity there in the province are in dire trouble and disgrace; Jerusalem's wall is full of breaches, and its gates have been destroyed by fire.” When I heard that, I sat and wept, and was in mourning for days, fasting and praying to the God of Heaven. I said, “O LORD, God of Heaven, great and awesome God, who stays faithful to His covenant with those who love Him and keep His commandments! Let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open to receive the prayer of Your servant that I am praying to You now, day and night, on behalf of the children of Israel, Your servants, confessing the sins of the children of Israel, which we have committed against You, sins that I and my father's house have committed.

The context of verse six seems to confirm that the phrase “children of Israel” refers to the exiles that have returned and are in “dire trouble.” It is possible, however, that this phrase could be referring to these returned exiles, but not in a mutually exclusive manner. That is, Nehemiah may be calling the returned exiles “children of Israel” just as he would call any other member of broader Israel that had not been exiled. The text,

though, contains no explicit evidence for the latter option, though it does not explicitly rule it out either.

Further, elsewhere in the book Nehemiah uses “the rest of Israel” (Neh 11:20) to refer to those of Israel that are not part of the returned exile group. This variant usage of “Israel,” then, seems to support the idea that, in Nehemiah, “children of Israel” refers to the returned exiles. Moreover, Ezra 13:3 speaks of the aliens, those of foreign descent, being “separated from Israel.” As Zobel remarked about Ezra, so he remarks about Nehemiah, “Others cannot even claim to belong to Israel, for this cultic community is all Israel.”⁶⁴ When placed against 9:2, though, Zobel’s comments must be further nuanced. Nehemiah 9:2 says, “And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.” The NRSV renders זרע ישראל as “those of Israelite descent,” to really bring out the “offspring” meaning of זרע. While Klein lacks any substantial comment on the phrase,⁶⁵ Blenkinsopp says that this verse “inevitably recalls Ezra 9-10, which uses the same verb for separation (*bdl*), speaks of the community as a “holy seed,” and features fasting accompanied by a confessional prayer.”⁶⁶ Blenkinsopp then offers, as the simplest explanation, “that those of foreign descent who, according to Deut. 16:14, participated in Sukkoth (though according to Lev. 23:42 they did not dwell in booths), could not be

⁶⁴ Zobel, *TDOT* 6:418.

⁶⁵ Klein, *The Books of Ezra & Nehemiah*, 805. Klein merely restates what the verse says with no comment as to the meaning of “seed of Israel.”

⁶⁶ Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 295.

expected to identify with the collective and cumulative sin of Israel confessed in the prayer which follows. In the same way the dwelling in booths was restricted to the native-born (*'ezrāhîm*) since only they shared in this particular aspect of the tradition.”⁶⁷

Zobel’s comment, then, that “others cannot even claim to belong to Israel, for this cultic community is all Israel”⁶⁸ may well be true, but the question still remains. Who is Israel? For Nehemiah 9:1 says, “Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackcloth, and earth upon them.” So, Nehemiah 9:1 speaks of the “children of Israel,” בני־יִשְׂרָאֵל, and then 9:2 seems to add particularities to the events of that day when it says that “the seed of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.” Does, then, “children of Israel” in 9:1 refer to a larger group than “seed of Israel” in 9:2? The NRSV translates the beginning of 9:2 temporally, “then those of Israelite descent.” This translation seems to pick up on some recognizable differences between 9:1 and 9:2. Blenkinsopp’s comments also appear to support this reading, understanding the verse to allow foreigners to participate in Sukkoth, just not all aspects of it.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 296.

⁶⁸ Zobel, *TDOT* 6:418.

⁶⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary*, 296.

Zechariah

Zechariah uses שְׂרָאֵל only five times. Three of these five instances, though, occur in such a manner as to create and support the Judah/Israel dichotomy. The first of these three verses is Zechariah 2:2: “I asked the angel who talked with me, ‘What are those?’ He replied, ‘Those are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.’”⁷⁰ Zechariah’s vision seems to contain a distinction between Judah and Israel, and also interestingly distinguishes Jerusalem from the other two. Zobel notes that this refers to events in the past.⁷¹ David Petersen maintains that reading, but also goes further, giving specific references: “This list allows one to conclude that the scattering includes not only the activity during 597-587 but the demise of Israel in 721 as well.”⁷² Further, the distinction between Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem may not be an actual distinction. Instead, it may refer to “the total destruction of Israel and Judah (including Jerusalem, which may be a secondary addition because of the emphasis on the city itself in Zechariah).”⁷³ In other words, listing out Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem is meant to give a scope of the destruction caused by “the horns” (Zec 2:2).

In chapter eight the apparent distinction remains even when God is speaking: “And just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so, when I vindicate you, you shall become a blessing. Have no fear; take courage!” (Zec

⁷⁰ Zec 1:18 in English Bibles.

⁷¹ Zobel, *TDOT* 6:417.

⁷² David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8* (OTL; Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1984), 163.

⁷³ Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1-8*, 163.

8:13). If it is understood in the same vein as 2:2, then it is again referring to the whole of Judah and Israel. William Brown recognizes Judah and Israel as two parts of seemingly one whole. “No longer a curse among the nations . . . Judah and Israel will experience nothing short of full recognition.”⁷⁴ The third instance of Israel being used in Zechariah as part of the Israel/Judah dichotomy is in 11:14: “Then I broke in two my second staff, Unity, in order to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.” Julia O’Brien says that this “is envisioned as reversed in chapter 10, which calls for the return of those exiled from the northern kingdom.”⁷⁵ This may well be true, but this verse also draws the reader back to that which created the bond between Judah and Israel in the first place, “the national unity created by David.”⁷⁶ William Brown, in contrast, sees this verse as “symbolically annulling the covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai as well as severing any semblance of unity between the northern and southern peoples of Israel.”⁷⁷ The covenant at Mount Sinai, though, seems to be a much less likely referent here than the initial joining of the northern and southern tribes. For in 11:14 the break occurs between Judah and Israel. To be sure, at 11:10 Yahweh annuls his covenant with all the peoples, but one should not read that into this verse. The issue, then, according to Petersen, is “that of the very existence of Yahweh’s people, using the

⁷⁴ William P. Brown, *Obadiah through Malachi* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 163.

⁷⁵ Julia M. O’Brien, Nahum, *Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 254.

⁷⁶ David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 97.

⁷⁷ Brown, *Obadiah through Malachi*, 175.

diction of national entities.”⁷⁸ The balance of the instances of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** in Zechariah, however, appears to use the term as a way to address all of Israel. Zechariah 9:1 address on what all God has an eye, specifically, “all the tribes of Israel.” Zechariah 12:1 uses “Israel” in such a way that it does not refer to only one part of the Israel/Judah dichotomy, simply saying, “the burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel.” Unlike 9:1, though, here “Israel” “is now the subject of Yahweh’s oracle.”⁷⁹

Malachi

Malachi, like Zechariah, only has five occurrences of **יִשְׂרָאֵל**. The range of use in Malachi is a bit broader, though. Malachi opens with this statement: “An oracle. The word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi” (Mal 1:1). The use of “Israel” in this opening verse is basic and most likely refers to Israel as a whole.⁸⁰ “This comprehensive term is used to denote the covenant nation, the exiles mainly from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, together with the descendants of those who remained behind.”⁸¹ A few verses later the statement is made that the recipients of this oracle, presumably all of Israel, will see the work of God and declare: “Great is the LORD beyond the borders of

⁷⁸ Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 98.

⁷⁹ Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*, 110.

⁸⁰ See discussion in Ralph L. Smith, *Micah – Malachi* (WBC 32; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 302-3.

⁸¹ Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 190.

Israel” (Mal 1:5). This verse is in the same vein as the verse that opened the book using “Israel” to refer to Israel as a whole.

The usage of “Israel” becomes a bit more specific in chapter two, though, as can be seen in 2:11: “Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god.” At first glance, this verse seems to be bringing back the Israel/Judah dichotomy that was common in Zechariah. However, Israel and Jerusalem seem to be parts of Judah. Pieter Verhoef explains that “the names *Judah* and *Israel* indicates that the prophet sees the repatriates in Judah as the contemporary heirs of the ancient promises.”⁸² Verhoef goes on to say that “*Israel* is here a parallel description of *Judah* as the true people of God and does not refer to the northern kingdom. . . . The scope of reference is not only spatial but also, and essentially, religious.”⁸³ The occurrence of Israel at 2:16 uses the phrase “God of Israel,” while Malachi 3:22⁸⁴ uses the phrase “all Israel,” thus being in the vein of 1:1 and 1:5⁸⁵ and serving almost as bookends to the book with using “Israel” to refer to “the nation in all its different groups or strata of people.”⁸⁶

⁸² Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 268.

⁸³ Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 268.

⁸⁴ Mal 4:4 in English Bibles.

⁸⁵ Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 339.

⁸⁶ Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, 339. Also see Smith, *Micah – Malachi*, 303.

Haggai

By now, the reader likely realizes that Haggai has not yet been addressed, but all 366 occurrences of “Israel” in the post-exilic books that I have chosen to examine in this section have been dealt with. Thus, one observation should be made and one question asked about Haggai. The observation is simple: Haggai does not use the term **יִשְׂרָאֵל** at all. The question, then, stems from that observation; why examine Haggai in a section that is examining the occurrences of Israel in post-exilic Hebrew Bible books if Haggai does not actually use the term? The answer is that it seems quite odd that Haggai does not use the term “Israel” even once. Is it because the book is a diaspora book as *TDOT* suggests?⁸⁷ To be sure, it is shorter than all of the other books examined, even Zechariah and Malachi, both of which only have the term five times. However, Haggai addresses the return of some of the exiles and the rebuilding of the temple, just as Ezra and Nehemiah do. The omission of “Israel” from Haggai may not be glaring, but it is certainly conspicuous and raises some interesting questions about the relation between Haggai and Ezra and Nehemiah. This omission may also raise questions concerning the dating of Haggai and Ezra and Nehemiah, with the latter two relying fairly heavily on the term “Israel” as an identifying term, while Haggai addresses the issue of rebuilding the temple in fairly generic terms.

To summarize, the semantic range of the use of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** in the Hebrew Bible is very broad, with many occurrences and uses being rather benign. Some of the usages, however, begin to show the transition of the term “Israel” from referring to a large body

⁸⁷ Zobel, *TDOT* 6:417.

of people and to one part of the Israel/Judah dichotomy to referring to a specific subgroup, namely the returned exiles, who have separated themselves from the other nations to seek God. The minor transitional movements in how the term “Israel” is used, seen in the post-exilic Hebrew Bible books examined in this section, also correlate to a heightening sense of identity. This sense of identity is sometimes tied to various aspects such as land, ethnicity, and common experience, but will later be tied almost exclusively to a single word, **יִשְׂרָאֵל**.

“Israel” by the Dead Sea

This section will examine the literature from the Dead Sea scrolls insofar as they use the term “Israel.” As such, the scrolls that are wholly biblical will not be examined, as the relevant Hebrew Bible texts were examined in the previous section. Further, this section makes no claim as to whether all the scrolls were produced and/or read by one group or not. The scrolls are examined literarily to see how they use the term **יִשְׂרָאֵל**.

Community Rule

The Community Rule (1QS) contains occurrences of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** at several places. The first occurrences are at 1QS I, 21-24:

The priests are to rehearse God’s gracious acts made manifest by mighty deeds, heralding His loving mercies on Israel’s behalf. The Levites in turn shall rehearse the wicked acts of the Children of Israel, all their guilty transgressions and sins

committed during the dominion of Belial. All the initiates into the Covenant are to respond by confession, “We have been wicked”⁸⁸

According to Graham Harvey, *יִשְׂרָאֵל* here “includes the three divisions of the nation and the community; priests, levites and people. It refers both to those to whom God has been merciful, and those who have sinned.”⁸⁹ Harvey’s comment leads to the observation that *יִשְׂרָאֵל* includes “the priests” and “the Levites” and is probably parallel to “all the initiates into the Covenant.” Thus, this early passage in the Community Rule maintains a practice that was evident in the discussion of the post-exilic Hebrew Bible books, namely that a group of verses could use the term “Israel” in more than one way.

At 1QS II, 22 *יִשְׂרָאֵל* is used as the name for the priests, Levites, and people collectively who are ordered so that “each Israelite [shall] know his proper standing in the *Yahad* of God, an eternal society” (1QS II, 22-23a). Thus, “Israel” refers to all Israel, yet also refers to the community of God, which is, at times, less inclusive than “all Israel.” P. Wernberg-Møller’s note on this verse asserts that “from the context it is clear that ‘Israel’ here means the community as the spiritual and true Israel.”⁹⁰

The next occurrence of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* is at 1QS III, 24b-25a: “Yet the God of Israel (and the Angel of His Truth) assist all the Sons of Light.” *יִשְׂרָאֵל* is not parallel to the “Sons of Light” in this verse. Rather, here *יִשְׂרָאֵל* still refers to a broad group, while the “Sons of

⁸⁸ Unless otherwise noted all Dead Sea Scrolls translations come from Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005).

⁸⁹ Graham Harvey, *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew and Israel in Ancient Jewish & Early Christian Literature* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2001), 189.

⁹⁰ P. Wernberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline*. Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 1, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957), 56.

Light” refers to a subgroup of the wider group; a subgroup, it should be noted, with which God and the Angel of His Truth are especially interested. Further, while the “Sons of Light” may not be parallel to *יְשֻׁרָאִים* in this verse, it does likely refer to the community responsible for this text. David Flusser remarks that “the sect deems itself to be identical with the righteous part of humanity and calls itself the ‘Sons of Light.’”⁹¹ Yigael Yadin also agrees that “Sons of Light” are “the members of the Essene community.”⁹² While it is true that the identity of the community as Essene is still being debated, the main point to be understood is that Flusser and Yadin both see the “Sons of Light” as referring to the community that is responsible for this text.

Further along in the Community Rule, “the majority of Israel” is distinguished from “the Sons of Aaron,” though both groups are a part of the community, have volunteered freely in the Community, and act as guides to the whole community when examining new initiates:

When anyone enters the Covenant – to live according to all these ordinances, to make common cause with the Congregation of Holiness – they shall investigate his spiritual qualities as a community, each member taking part. They shall investigate his understanding and works vis à vis the Law, guided both by the Sons of Aaron, who have jointly volunteered to uphold His Covenant and to observe all of the ordinances that He commanded them to execute, and by the majority of Israel, who have volunteered to return, as a community, to His Covenant. (1QS V, 20b-22)

⁹¹ David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1988), 26.

⁹² Yigael Yadin, “The Temple Scroll – The Longest Dead Sea Scroll,” in Hershel Shanks, ed., *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Reader from the Biblical Archaeology Review*, (New York: Random House, 1992), 105.

William Sanford LaSor understands the coupling of “the majority of Israel” and “the Sons of Aaron” to refer to “the Community.”⁹³ Further, LaSor says that this expression “indicates that the Sect was composed of priests (‘Aaron’) and laymen (‘Israel’).”⁹⁴ It is this understanding of the composition of the community as gleaned from this passage and others (1QS I, 18-19; II, 19-21; V, 3; IX, 6-7) that, for LaSor, “seems to rule out the suggestion that the Community looked upon itself as ‘an idealized priesthood.’”⁹⁵

This interesting dichotomy is repeated at 1QS IX, 10b-11: “They shall govern themselves using the original precepts by which the men of the *Yahad* began to be instructed, doing so until there come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.” Wenberg-Møller notes that some scholars “maintain that ‘Aaron and Israel’ is a designation for the community and take the phrase to mean that the community expected their Messiah to arise from their own midst.”⁹⁶ The range of uses of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* in the Community Rule is broadened at 1QS VI, 13. The passage refers to someone from outside the community volunteering for enrollment in the party of the *Yahad*: “If anyone of Israel volunteers” Though it may seem odd to use *יִשְׂרָאֵל* to refer to those in the *Yahad* as well as those outside the *Yahad*, it offers insight into the ongoing transition of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* and to the fact that the term, as all words do, took on whatever

⁹³ William Sanford LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 49.

⁹⁴ LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 49.

⁹⁵ LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 50.

⁹⁶ Wernberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline*, 135. LaSor would be one who views ‘Aaron and Israel’ as referring to the whole community.

meaning the authors deemed necessary for the context. Wenberg-Møller comments that “the phraseology appears to suggest that non-Jews could not be admitted to the community.”⁹⁷ What Wenberg-Møller does not speak to is the apparent allowance of Jews who are not already members of the community to join the community.

The last main section of the Community Rule that contains **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is in column eight. Lines 4b-12a are of note here:

When [these twelve laymen and three priests who are blameless in the light of all that has been revealed from the whole Law] come to be in Israel, then shall the party of the *Yahad* truly be established, an “eternal planting,” a temple for Israel, and – mystery! – a Holy of Holies for Aaron; true witnesses to justice, chosen by God’s will to atone for the land and to recompense the wicked their due. They will be “the tested wall, the precious cornerstone” whose foundations shall neither be shaken nor swayed, a fortress, a Holy of Holies for Aaron, for all of them knowing the Covenant of Justice and thereby offering a sweet savor. They shall be a blameless and true house in Israel, upholding the covenant of eternal statutes. They shall be an acceptable sacrifice, atoning for the land and ringing in the verdict against evil, so that perversity ceases to exist. When these men have been grounded in the instruction of the *Yahad* for two years – provided they be blameless in their conduct – they shall be set apart as holy in the midst of the men of the *Yahad*. No biblical doctrine concealed from Israel but discovered by the Interpreter is to be hidden from these men out of fear that they might backslide. (1QS VIII, 4b-12a)

In this passage **יִשְׂרָאֵל** appears to be referring to the wider community, but also

“suggests a renewed cultic community which will eventually embrace the whole nation.”⁹⁸ Wenberg-Møller notes the “Aaron-Israel” dichotomy numerous times in his

⁹⁷ Wenberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline*, 106.

⁹⁸ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 189.

notes on this passage and seems to consistently understand that “Israel” refers to the laity.⁹⁹

Further, this passage anticipates a “blameless and true house in Israel,” language that very much harbors the idea of the “true Israel.” The idea of a “true Israel” is inferred by Flusser even apart from the language of a “blameless and true house in Israel.” Flusser understands this text as a means of showing not only that the Temple is not necessary, but also that the “Sectarian life” is a worthy replacement.¹⁰⁰ Flusser argues this point by stating that “both the context and the insistence that the ‘House’ shall be formed by ‘separation’ clearly show that no material temple is intended.”¹⁰¹ His conclusion on this topic is that “the passage is a full poetical and symbolical elaboration of the idea that ‘perfection of way’ is equivalent to the ‘gift of an acceptable offering’, or that the Sectarian life is comparable to the Temple service.”¹⁰² Flusser’s argument, if accepted, increases the likelihood that this text should be understood through the lens of the “true Israel.” For the community sees itself as no longer needing the Temple, but instead being a worthy alternative due to its lifestyle and code of conduct. Wernberg-Møller agrees with Flusser in some general comments on the scroll, “The members were all Jewish and regarded themselves as the true Israel and as the proper heirs of the spiritual inheritance of Israel: they understood the history of Israel and the promises to

⁹⁹ Wernberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline*, 124, 127.

¹⁰⁰ Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 39.

¹⁰¹ Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 39.

¹⁰² Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 39.

the Patriarchs as being fulfilled in them, the actually existing pious community.”¹⁰³ As support for this, Wernberg-Møller notes, as Flusser does, the “spiritualizing tendency which is particularly clear in the notion of the community as the spiritual Temple.”¹⁰⁴ A. R. C. Leaney also understands 1QS as a text that promotes the idea of an ideal Israel, “the men of Qumran contemplated an Israel only of Israelites, and their intention was to restore Israel as she was of old.”¹⁰⁵

Damascus Document

The Damascus Document (CD) contains 43 occurrences of **יִשְׂרָאֵל**. The initial occurrences are historical, referring to various periods and experiences of the people:

For when Israel abandoned Him by being faithless, He turned away from Israel and from His sanctuary and gave them up to the sword. But when He called to mind the covenant He made with their forefathers, He left a remnant for Israel and did not allow them to be exterminated. In the era of wrath – three hundred and ninety years at the time He handed them over to the power of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon – He took care of them and caused to grow from Israel and from Aaron a root of planting to inherit. (CD I, 3-7)

Here **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is referred to when the people were unfaithful, at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, when God looks after them, and when God begins to return them to the land. The “remnant for Israel” has been saved because “it kept God’s

¹⁰³ Wernberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline*, 13-14.

¹⁰⁴ Wernberg-Møller, *The Manual of Discipline*, 14.

¹⁰⁵ A. R. C. Leaney, *The Rule of Qumran and its Meaning: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), 168.

commandments, i.e. remained faithful to the original covenant.”¹⁰⁶ God has “made an everlasting covenant with the righteous remnant.”¹⁰⁷ The Damascus Document uses *יִשְׂרָאֵל* in this historical way often. Uses of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* in this category include the positive and negative. For instance, at CD V, 19-20 *יִשְׂרָאֵל* refers to the people delivered in the exodus as well as to those who were led astray. André Dupont-Sommer also draws this connection to the exodus, specifically Moses’ confrontation by Jannes and Jambres, two of Pharaoh’s sorcerers.¹⁰⁸

The term is also used as a self-designation in the Damascus Document, such as at CD III, 18-20, which says that God “atoned for their iniquity and forgave their transgression. So He built for them a faithful house in Israel, like none that had ever appeared before; and even at this day, those who hold firm to it shall receive everlasting life, and all human honor is rightly theirs.” The community of this text is the “faithful house in Israel.” LaSor and Flusser understand this passage as a self-designation as well.¹⁰⁹ Flusser even goes on to remark that not only is this a self-designation, but that it is also commentary on the standing of the community among others: “as a divine institution the sect is superior to all similar institutions which preceded it during the course of Jewish history. It regards itself as something new and better than traditional

¹⁰⁶ Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 46. Also see Flusser’s fuller discussion of how the idea of remaining faithful is central to the definition of the community at Qumran, 46-7.

¹⁰⁷ G. R. Driver, *The Judean Scrolls: The Problem and a Solution*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 52.

¹⁰⁸ André Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran*, trans. G. Vermes (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1961), 130.

¹⁰⁹ LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 46 and Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 48.

Judaism.”¹¹⁰ Dupont-Sommer does not offer a definition of the “faithful house in Israel,” or as he translates, “a sure House in Israel,” but he does offer other places in the scrolls where “the Community of the Covenant” receives similar names.¹¹¹ This type of self-designation is also seen at CD XII, 22 where the community is the “seed of Israel.”

The final category of uses of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* in the Damascus Document is as a name for those outside the group. At CD XVI, 1 God has a covenant with “all Israel,” not just with the community. Also, CD XX, 23 speaks of the “age of Israel’s unfaithfulness” which will soon provoke the wrath of God to “burn against Israel.”

The occurrences of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* in the Damascus Document can mostly be divided into three types: as a historical designation, as a self-designation, and as a name for those outside the group. As in the Community Rule, *יִשְׂרָאֵל* in the Damascus Document sometimes refers to the entire nation and sometimes refers solely to the group responsible for the document. Unlike the Community Rule, though, the Damascus Document does not make an outright claim that there is a “true Israel,” either separated from the rest of Israel or scattered among the rest of the nation. Dupont-Sommer, however, sees the text as conveying the idea of a “true Israel.” When speaking about the Teacher of Righteousness in CD, Dupont-Sommer says that the Teacher “organized the community of the New Covenant, which, in opposition to the ‘Congregation of perverse men’ – his name for the official Synagogue – was to represent the true Israel,

¹¹⁰ Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 48.

¹¹¹ Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran*, 126.

the Israel of God.”¹¹² This sense can certainly be gleaned from the entirety of the scroll, even if it a “true Israel” is not mentioned explicitly. At the least, though there is an “obedient Israel” who speaks on behalf of God and the community responsible for the document that is contained within the broader “Israel.”

Halakhic Letter

The Halakhic Letter (4QMMT) contains **יִשְׂרָאֵל** ten times. The range of use that has become almost typical is present once again in the Halakhic Letter. In the text, Jerusalem is “the place [God] chose from among the tribes of Israel” (4QMMT I, 36, 63) because it is the “head of the camps of Israel” (4QMMT I, 65). There is also a command for “the sons of Israel” to keep themselves from all uncleanness of the male (4QMMT I, 51). Further, the text states, “a plant in the land of Israel is like the first-fruits, it is for the priests” (4QMMT I, 66) and “Israel is holy” (4QMMT I, 79). Moshe Bernstein regards this the phrase, “Israel is holy” (4QMMT 1, 79), to be a “two-word biblical citation which affirms the sanctity of Israel.”¹¹³ Bernstein takes this position against Elisha Qimron who prefers to read this passage as stating “that Israel is holy according to the Scripture.”¹¹⁴

¹¹² Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran*, 359-360.

¹¹³ Moshe J. Bernstein, “The Employment and Interpretation of Scripture in 4QMMT: Preliminary Observations,” in John Kampen and Moshe J. Bernstein, eds. *Reading 4QMMT: New Perspectives on Qumran Law and History* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 45.

¹¹⁴ Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell. *Qumran Cave 4, V: Miqṣat Ma’āse Ha-Torah*. Discoveries in the Judean Desert X (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 55.

To this point, *יִשְׂרָאֵל* has been a land as well as the people that inhabit that land. The most interesting usage of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* in the Halakhic Letter, though, is at line 107 where *יִשְׂרָאֵל* is once again a land: “this is the end of days when they return to Israel” (4QMMT I, 107). Here, *יִשְׂרָאֵל*, the people, is anticipating and awaiting a return to *יִשְׂרָאֵל*, the land. It appears, however, that many of the people are already in the land, “thus what is meant is a return to national sovereignty as well as a return of the rest of the (still exiled) people.”¹¹⁵ In the Halakhic Letter, the people and the land are holy. The statement at line 79 that “Israel is holy” follows a discussion about mixed marriages, and thus, it is most likely that this statement refers specifically to the people *יִשְׂרָאֵל*. Even with the statement that *יִשְׂרָאֵל*, the people, is holy, the text still lacks the idea of a perfect, “true Israel.”¹¹⁶ John Strugnell, the initial scholar to work with 4QMMT, speaks generally about Elsie Qimron’s thesis of 4QMMT:

Qimron’s thesis, which in general I followed in the *edition major*, was that we had in MMT a letter addressed by the ‘we’ group, a priestly group led by the Teacher of Righteousness, to a ‘you’ group, a group broken up into ‘thee’ and ‘thy people Israel.’ This Qimron understands as a priestly group, led by the ‘Wicked Priest’ who is familiar to us from the *Pesharim*. The ‘they’ group are legal opponents of the ‘we’ group; the ‘you’ group is warned against the practices of the first.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 197.

¹¹⁶ See Harvey’s discussion of the idea of a “mixed community” in *The True Israel*, 197.

¹¹⁷ John Strugnell, “MMT: Second Thoughts on a Forthcoming Edition,” in Eugene Ulrich and James VanderKam, eds. *The Community of the Renewed Covenant: The Notre Dame Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity Series 10 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 70.

Strugnell also offers his points of disagreement. The most notable point Strugnell makes is that

although the leader of the “you” group was the head of his people Israel and therefore probably a High Priest, he is in no way depicted as wicked. In fact, his legal knowledge and prudence are singled out for praise . . . We would then have to describe MMT as addressed to a not-yet-Wicked Priest, though the difference is perhaps not important, in that one of the features clearly attested of the Qumrânite Wicked Priest was that he started off well but became evil.¹¹⁸

This interpretation gives credence to the perspective that, while the community of 4QMMT was certainly concerned with right living, the community was not a perfect or pure manifestation of Israel.

War Scroll

There are 29 occurrences of יְהוָה in the War Scroll (1QM). Over half of these occurrences (15) are contained in the phrase “God of Israel.” This is a common enough phrase, but it takes on more significance when one considers that the War Scroll is all about the “war to end all wars.”¹¹⁹ The War Scroll sets out to show the sovereignty and dominance of the “God of Israel” as well as that of the people Israel. That the “God of Israel” can and will overcome can be seen:

On the day when the Kittim fall there shall be a battle and horrible carnage before the God of Israel, for it is a day appointed by Him from ancient times as a

¹¹⁸ Strugnell, “MMT: Second Thoughts on a Forthcoming Edition,” 71.

¹¹⁹ Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr., and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005), 146. Also see Fluser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 446 n. 187.

battle of annihilation for the Sons of Darkness. On that day the congregation of the gods and the congregation of men shall engage one another, resulting in great carnage. The Sons of Light and the forces of Darkness shall fight together to show the strength of God with the roar of a great multitude and the shout of gods and men; a day of disaster. (1QM I, 9b-11)

Further, the War Scroll states unequivocally that “the kingship shall belong to the God of Israel, and by the holy ones of His people He shall act powerfully” (1QM XI, 6).

The War Scroll contains similarities to the biblical Psalms with how it describes the “God of Israel,” as at 1QM X, 8: “Who is like You, O God of Israel, in heaven and on earth?” This is immediately followed by the question, “Who is like Your people Israel, whom you have chosen for Yourself from all the peoples of the land?” (1QM X, 9). Israel is thus described as the “people of the holy ones of the covenant” (1QM X, 10). The statement that gives the most insight into how the War Scroll sees **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is at 1QM XVII, 6-8a where the future of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** after all the conflict and judgment is being discussed: “He will send eternal support to the company of His redeemed by the power of the majestic angel of the authority of Michael. By eternal light He shall joyfully light up the covenant of Israel; peace and blessing for the lot of God, to exalt the authority of Michael among the gods and the dominion of Israel among all flesh.” Michael secures the outcome of the final battle on behalf of Israel.¹²⁰ **יִשְׂרָאֵל** here “participates in the

¹²⁰ LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 84.

divine realm.”¹²¹ Israel’s status among “all flesh” is the same as that of Michael “among the gods.” The realm of the flesh and the divine realm are linked by the people *יִשְׂרָאֵל*.¹²²

יִשְׂרָאֵל in the War Scroll has a rich history that extends from the ancestors with the whole people being called both *יִשְׂרָאֵל* and “Jacob” (1QM XI, 6-7). Calling the whole people both “Israel” and “Jacob” emphasizes the connection with the ancestor who was also known by both names. Thus, the community of War Scroll is not interested in being a new, sectarian group, but rather is concerned with connecting itself with biblical ancestors. That being said, *יִשְׂרָאֵל* is clearly defined as being over and against foreigners, the enemy, Sons of Darkness.

Ordinances

The Ordinances text (4QOrdinances, 4Q159) only remains in fragments, but these fragments contain six occurrences of *יִשְׂרָאֵל*. Ordinances is similar to a pesher in that biblical texts are discussed, but unlike the pesharim, Ordinances does not offer interpretation of the text, but rather “expansions or applications of laws found in the Torah.”¹²³ Wise, Abegg, and Cook state that since “the Bible often left out important details that one need to know in order to obey” the law, this text supplies “the necessary details as a supplement to the biblical text, intended to help readers obey

¹²¹ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 200.

¹²² Harvey, *The True Israel*, 200.

¹²³ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 198.

God.”¹²⁴ The first occurrences of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* expand or apply Deut 23:25-26, which concerns produce for the poor. The text in Deuteronomy permits one to gather grapes and grain in a neighbor’s field by hand, but forbids using a sickle to do so. Ordinances says, “the Israelite who has nothing may eat of it and gather for himself but for [his] househ[old he shall not gather...]” (4Q159 1 II, 4). The spirit of the text in Ordinances is the same as that in Deuteronomy with only a small bit of expansion in line 5.

Poverty is the discussion in fragments 2-4 of Ordinances. These fragments concern the text in Lev 25:47-55, which deal with the treatment of Israelite slaves, specifically as it relates to the year of Jubilee. The command in Leviticus, which is repeated in Ordinances, is not to govern ruthlessly in the presence of Israel. *יִשְׂרָאֵל* here is in contrast to the foreigners that were previously mentioned. Further, because God brought *יִשְׂרָאֵל* out of Egypt, Israelites should not be sold as slaves to gentiles (4Q159 2-4 I, 1-3). The *יִשְׂרָאֵל* in Ordinances refers to people who are not “offspring of the family of a stranger” (4Q159 2-4 I, 3). So, *יִשְׂרָאֵל* refers to the whole nation as opposed to foreigners, but makes no mention of an *יִשְׂרָאֵל* that is either separate from or scattered throughout the whole nation.

¹²⁴ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 204.

4QTohorot A

4QTohorot A (4Q274) deals with purification rules. This is so much the case that Wise, Abegg, and Cook title the document “Ritual Purity Laws Concerning Liquids.”¹²⁵ The main matter of interest in the text is that **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is not polluted:

She who has a flow of blood, for seven days let her not touch the man who has a discharge or any vessel [t]hat he touches or that he has lain upon or sat upon. And if she has touched anything, she shall wash her clothes and bathe and then she may eat. She must make every effort [no]t to mingle during her seven days that she might n[o]t defile the camps of the hol[y ones of] Israel. (4Q274 1 I, 4b-6a)

The text views women as recurring sources of pollution, yet does not reject them entirely from **יִשְׂרָאֵל**. The idea was not to reject members of the community, but rather to maintain purity. “Areas of life we consider very private were a public concern for these ancients, since one unclean person could ‘infect’ everybody, with the result that an unknowingly unclean person might touch holy things or, worse yet, enter the Temple – an abomination according to biblical law.”¹²⁶ The **יִשְׂרָאֵל** in 4QTohorot A is one that, as the biblical Israel, continually moves back and forth between “sanctity, normality and pollution.”¹²⁷ Therefore, the **יִשְׂרָאֵל** in this text is not a completely pure or “true Israel” even though the community of the text is one that works vehemently to maintain purity and live according to God’s law.

¹²⁵ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 281.

¹²⁶ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 281.

¹²⁷ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 199.

Rule of the Congregation

The Rule of the Congregation (1QSa) uses **יְשׁוּעָאֵל** in three ways: 1) connected with congregation as in the “congregation of Israel,” 2) as a reference to the community of “the last days,” and 3) with messiah as in the “Messiah of Israel.” The text opens with an example of the first usage of **יְשׁוּעָאֵל** as well as with a description of what this “congregation of Israel” looks like.

This is the rule for all the congregation of Israel in the Last Days, when they are mobilized [to join the *Yahad*. They must live by the law of the Sons of Zadok, the priests, and the men of their Covenant, they who ceased to walk in the way of the people. These same are the men of His party who kept His Covenant during evil times, and so atoned for the land. As they arrive, all the newcomers shall be assembled – women and children included – and read [a]ll the statutes of the Covenant. They shall be indoctrinated in all of their laws, for fear that otherwise they may sin accidentally. (1QSa I, 1-5)

יְשׁוּעָאֵל is made up of men, women, and children¹²⁸ and is intensely concerned with living by the law, even instructing women and children in the statutes of the Covenant to guard against accidental sinning.¹²⁹ This passage may also imply that the community harbored hope that it would “embrace all Israel in the future.”¹³⁰ Flusser supposes that if this was an actual hope of the community responsible for the Rule of the Congregation, then “the sect imagined that the utterly wicked would be destroyed, but

¹²⁸ LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 62, 102.

¹²⁹ Flusser, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 46.

¹³⁰ Flusser, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 49.

that the majority of the people would somehow in the last minute escape damnation and enter the New Covenant.”¹³¹

The most remarkable aspect of the usage of *ישׁמאל* in this text may be its collocation with “messiah.” The “Messiah of Israel” is the “head of the entire congregation of Israel” (1QSa II, 12). Moreover, 1QSa II, 11 may refer to this Messiah being “fathered” by God: “The procedure for the [mee]ting of the men of reputation [when they are called] to the banquet held by the party of the *Yahad*, when [God] has fa[th]ered the Messiah among them.” There is much discrepancy surrounding this line, though, and others assert that it should be read “when the Messiah has been revealed.”¹³² Regardless of which reading is accurate, the mention of a “Messiah of *ישׁמאל*” is intriguing, especially because this “Messiah of *ישׁמאל*” is present at the banquet that will be held in the last days to celebrate the “period of perfect order” that is being ushered in by this Messiah.¹³³

Temple Scroll

The Temple Scroll (11Q19 and 11Q20) contains forty six occurrences of *ישׁמאל*. At three places *ישׁמאל* is joined with “land.” For example, at 11Q19 LVIII, 6 the text speaks to the responsibility of the king in wartime. It is his responsibility to raise a

¹³¹ Flusser, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 50.

¹³² Émile Puech, “Préséance sacerdotale et Messie – Roi dans la Règle de la Congrégation (1QSa ii 11-22),” *Revue de Qumran* 16 (1994):351-66 opts for the latter reading. See discussion in Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 146.

¹³³ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 202.

sufficiently large army “if a mighty army comes to the land of Israel.” At other places, though, *יִשְׂרָאֵל* refers to the people, but in such a way as to distinguish them from the “priests.” Column 37 contains explicit instructions that the “peace offerings sacrificed by the children of Israel must never mix with those of the priests” (11Q19 XXXVII, 11b-12). Further, in column 39, the gates of the Temple “shall be according to the na[m]es of Is[r]ael sons” (11Q19 XXXIX, 11-12). According to Graham Harvey, the distinctions contained in the Temple Scroll between the priests, levites, people, and twelve tribes “reveals the scroll’s intended function,” that is, “it is the eschatological law, the law hoped for by CD (Damascus Document).”¹³⁴ Others, however, do not necessarily see the intended function of the scroll as eschatological in nature, but simply “a new law for life in the land” or “a direct revelation from God to the author.”¹³⁵

יִשְׂרָאֵל in the Temple Scroll is supposed to keep separate from uncleanness.

Column 49 speaks to what is unclean for a person of *יִשְׂרָאֵל*.¹³⁶ *יִשְׂרָאֵל* is used in the Temple Scroll, at times, to refer to people who should be pure, and are taught to be this way, but often find themselves to be unclean. Remedies for this uncleanness are spelled out in the Scroll. On the whole, though, the occurrences of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* are in reference to the whole nation. There is one occurrence, though, of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* referring to God’s people. At 11Q19 LXIII, 6-7 the people will affirm, “Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it shed. Exonerate Your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, O LORD, and

¹³⁴ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 204.

¹³⁵ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 457-8.

¹³⁶ For example, see 11Q19 XLIX, 5-10.

let not the guilt of innocent blood remain among Your people Israel.” Even when **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is the people of God, they are not a pure community, they are still in need of pardoning. This may not be the ideal, though. As Wise, Abegg, and Cook put it, the “author conceives of an Israel in which no foreigner lives within the boundaries of the land – none at all.”¹³⁷ Wise, Abegg, and Cook call this “extreme xenophobia.”¹³⁸ I say that it sounds a lot like a community that desires to be the “true Israel.”

Pesharim

The pesharim are texts that offer interpretations of biblical texts. Wise, Abegg, and Cook say that *peshar* “as a rule refers to the interpretations of dreams (Dan. 2, 4) and visions (the ‘handwriting on the wall,’ Dan. 5) not through native ability, but because God has revealed the secrets to him.”¹³⁹ In addition, “Qumran scribes understood their task in the same way: to penetrate the secrets of Scripture not through reflection on the text itself, but through openness to the revelation of God.”¹⁴⁰ Authors of these pesharim, then, appear to have believed that the biblical texts contained two levels of meaning, one for the ordinary reader and another level concealed for those that had higher knowledge. When they unlocked the code, as it were, they

¹³⁷ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 459.

¹³⁸ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 459.

¹³⁹ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 114.

¹⁴⁰ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 114.

reinterpreted it for their present situation, while preserving the coded nature. Wise, Abegg, and Cook present it this way:

The writers saw their own group's history in the words of Scripture, foretold long ago, but are cautious about naming names. Instead, they use symbolic titles with biblical overtones: the Teacher of Righteousness, the Wicked Priest, the Man of the Lie. When they find these characters in the words of the Bible, the disconcerting outcome is not a decoded message, but one code translated into another code.¹⁴¹

Isaiah Pesher

Most of the occurrences of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* in the Isaiah Pesher are quotations from the biblical text of Isaiah. Examples can be seen at 4Q161 1 I, 1-4, which quotes Isaiah 10:20-21, and 4Q163 23 I, 3, which quotes Isaiah 30:15-18. The most interesting occurrence of *יִשְׂרָאֵל* among the various fragments that make up the Isaiah Pesher is in 4Q165. 4Q165 6 I, 1 contains the phrase, "the chosen ones of Israel." Due to the fragmentary nature of the text, determining precisely to whom the text is referring is unlikely. One theory, put forth by Graham Harvey, is that this phrase is likely "the name ... applied to a group within the nation, probably the author's Community."¹⁴² Although this fragment is most likely interpreting verses from Isaiah 32, determining who the text considers to be "the chosen ones of Israel" is very difficult. With the paucity of context for this phrase any guess at the referent is simply conjecture. Nonetheless, it is intriguing to see this pesher interpreting this text of Isaiah with the concept of a chosen group of Israel. This may not support a reading which holds that the author harbored a

¹⁴¹ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 115.

¹⁴² Harvey, *The True Israel*, 207.

view of his community as being the “True Israel,” but it does appear to be evidence of sectarian bias.

Nahum Pesher

The commentary on Nahum (4Q169) contains five occurrences of *יִשְׂרָאֵל*. Two occurrences occur at 4Q169 III, 3-5 in an interpretation of Nahum 3:6-7:

This refers to the Flattery-Seekers. In the Last Time, their bad deeds will be made manifest to all Israel and many will perceive their wrongdoing and reject them and be disgusted with them because of their criminal arrogance; and when the glory of Judah is made manifest, the simple-hearted folk of Ephraim will withdraw from their company, abandon the ones who deceive them, and ally themselves to the [God of] Israel.

“All Israel” here clearly refers to the whole nation, or at least the majority of it, which includes the Flattery-Seekers.¹⁴³ The condemnation that follows is fierce, presenting the idea that those who have been deceived will abandon their deceivers and “ally themselves to the [God of] Israel,” presumably by joining the Community, having been convinced of their correctness. The implication is that these people were not previously allied to the God of Israel and that the way that they will finally be connected with the God of Israel is to join the community behind this text.

Habakkuk Pesher

Column eight of the commentary on Habakkuk (1QpHab) relates Habakkuk 2:5-6 to the “Wicked Priest” who “had a reputation for reliability at the beginning of his

¹⁴³ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 218 notes, “It is tolerably clear that the ruthless ‘Flattery-Seekers’ are the Pharisees.”

term of service; but when he became ruler over Israel, he became proud and forsook God and betrayed the commandments for the sake of riches” (1QpHab VIII, 8b-10). Here *יִשְׂרָאֵל* refers to the whole nation, but it is important to note that *יִשְׂרָאֵל* is not the party being condemned, but rather, the “Wicked Priest.”¹⁴⁴ To further solidify that this text has the entire nation in mind when using *יִשְׂרָאֵל*, one need only read the opening of the column in question. For column eight speaks of “all those who obey the Law among the Jews” being rescued from the place of judgment “because of their suffering and their loyalty to the Teacher of Righteousness” (1QpHab VIII, 1-3).¹⁴⁵

Psalms Peshar

4QPsalms Peshar (4Q171) contains *יִשְׂרָאֵל* three times. The first occurrence is at 4Q171 III, 10-11 where the text is interpreting “those whom God blesses” in Psalm 37:21-22: “This refers to the company of the poor, w[ho will ge]t the possessions of all [. . . , who] will inherit the lofty mount of Is[rael and] enjoy His holy place.” The second occurrence interprets “those whom He curses” in Psalm 37:21-22 as “the tyrants of the co[venant, the w]icked of Israel who will be exterminated and destroyed forever” (4Q171 III, 12). Column Four connects Psalm 45:1 to “the seven divisions of the repentant of Is[rael . . .]” (4Q171 IV, 23b-24a). The word that Martin Wise translates as “repentant,” *שָׁבִי*, seems to carry both the idea of “exile” and “penitence.” The meaning of this word, though, remains a source of discussion among many scholars such as Philip

¹⁴⁴ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 120.

¹⁴⁵ LaSor, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 89.

Davies and Shemaryahu Talmon.¹⁴⁶ Thus, some translation that would convey both the idea of “exile” and the idea of “penitence” would be most appropriate. Harvey surmises, “perhaps ‘saved’ or ‘redeemed’ carry a similar weight to שְׁבִי יִשְׂרָאֵל.”¹⁴⁷ שְׁבִי יִשְׂרָאֵל in this Psalms peshar appears to simply be “all Israel,” as both “those whom God blesses” (Ps 37:22) and “those whom He curses” (Ps 37:22) are part of יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Genesis Peshar

The text in Genesis 49:10 is about Jacob’s blessing on Judah. 4QGenesis Peshar (4Q252) interprets this passage thusly:

[. . .] a ruler shall [no]t depart from the tribe of Judah while Israel has dominion. [And] the one who sits on the throne of David [shall never] be cut off, because the “ruler’s staff” is the covenant of the kingdom, [and the thous]ands of Israel are “the feet,” until the Righteous Messiah, the Branch of David, has come. For to him and to his seed the covenant of the kingdom of His people has been given for the eternal generations, because he has kept [. . .] the Law with the men of the *Yahad*. (4Q252 V, 1-5)

The obvious desire of the authors of this scroll is that they would one day be independent of foreign rule and even rule over other nations. For, the authors’ purpose here is not “to discover current fulfillments of biblical prophecies,” as it was in Habakkuk and Psalms pesharim, but, instead, is “to give selected passages a particular ‘spin,’ to show how they support the authors’ ideas.”¹⁴⁸ The rule of יִשְׂרָאֵל that will make this

¹⁴⁶ See Philip Davies, *The Damascus Covenant: An Interpretation of the “Damascus Document”* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 92-94 and nn.63 and 64 and Shemaryahu Talmon, *Between the Bible and the Mishnah: The World of Qumran from Within* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990), 244.

¹⁴⁷ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 194. Also see Harvey’s fuller discussion on pp. 192-194.

¹⁴⁸ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 274.

happen is one from the line of David, the “Righteous Messiah.” *ישׁמאל*, then, probably refers to both the community behind this text as well as the whole nation. Moreover, the “hoped for independence results from the activity of a Messiah sent by God, clearly *ישׁמאל* is the name of a group intimately related to God’s plans.”¹⁴⁹

Tanhumin

4QTanhumin (4Q176) is a commentary on various biblical passages, but the comments are minimal. This is likely due to the paucity of this text that has survived. Wise, Abegg, and Cook suggest that “if more of this commentary remained, no doubt we would find more explanatory comments from the compiler of these passages.”¹⁵⁰ The first of the three occurrences of *ישׁמאל* quotes Isaiah 48:1: “But you, Israel, are [my] serva[nt, J]ac[o]b [whom I] have chosen” (4Q176 1-2 I, 9). The other two occurrences both speak of a holy redeemer of Israel. The first of these two defines this redeemer as the LORD: “Thus says the LORD, Israel’s redeemer, its Holy One” (4Q176 1-2 II, 1). The final occurrence does the same with slightly different wording: “Your redeemer is the Holy One of Is[rael; the] G[od of al]l [the ea]rth He is called” (4Q176 8-11 I, 7). The text as a whole seems to be about the consolation of Israel. This Israel was an Israel that

¹⁴⁹ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 210.

¹⁵⁰ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 231. This comment is expanded upon as well: “Yet the proportion of comment to quotation in the fragments that survive shows that in general these verses from the Old Testament Prophets, all foretelling the future comfort of Israel, were allowed to speak for themselves.”

“was much in need of the consoling and saving power of God”¹⁵¹ and thus not yet a pure or “true Israel.”

Words of the Luminaries

4QWords of the Luminaries (4Q504) is a text that highlights the relationship between God and the people **יִשְׂרָאֵל**. At numerous places, **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is called “your people” when God is addressed (4Q504 II, 11; 4Q504 IV, 9; 4Q504 V, 11; 4Q504 VI, 12). The text also offers God a reminder, “You have called [I]srael ‘My son, My firstborn’” (4Q504 III, 6) for they have been “adopted . . . in the sight of all the nations” (4Q504 III, 3). The inception of the relationship between **יִשְׂרָאֵל** and God is described at 4Q504 IV, 4b-7: “Surely You love Israel more than all the other peoples; more narrowly, You chose the tribe of Judah. You have established Your covenant with David, making him a princely shepherd over Your people, that he sit before You upon the throne of Israel eternally.”

Even with the intimate language used to describe the relationship between **יִשְׂרָאֵל** and God, Maurice Baillet remarks that this text is lacking in sectarian bias.¹⁵² Baillet’s observation is supported especially by the view that the text takes of the exile. For although the exile was, according to 4Q504 V, 4-6, God’s judgment on **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, it was not the end of God’s working among **יִשְׂרָאֵל**.

¹⁵¹ Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 231.

¹⁵² Maurice Baillet, “Un Recueil Liturgique de Qumrân Grotte 4: ‘Les paroles des luminaires,’” *Revue Biblique* 68/2 (April 1961):249-50.

Nevertheless, You did not reject the seed of Jacob nor spew Israel out, making an end of them and voiding Your covenant with them. Surely You alone are the living God; beside You is none other. You have remembered Your covenant whereby You brought us forth from Egypt while the nations looked on. You have not abandoned us among the nations; rather, You have shown covenant mercies to Your people Israel in all [the] lands to which You have exiled them. You have again placed it on their hearts to return to You, to obey Your voice [according] to all that You have commanded through Your servant Moses. (4Q504 V, 6b-14)

God may have exiled **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, but God was also bringing **יִשְׂרָאֵל** back and turning their hearts once again to God. **יִשְׂרָאֵל** in this passage, and the text as a whole, does exclude foreigners, but it encompasses the whole of the nation.

While not all of the Qumran scrolls were examined, those that are most relevant to the purposes of this paper were. Further, some scrolls, such as the hymnic work 1Q37 may have been very helpful and may have offered unequivocal examples of literature that holds the view that their community is the “true Israel.”¹⁵³ This text, however, is extremely fragmentary and simply does not offer enough text for extensive analysis. Thus, this text and some others were just too fragmentary and could only be discussed with copious amounts of conjecture.

As in the Hebrew Bible literature, throughout the Dead Sea scrolls, the term “Israel” is used in a variety of ways, ranging from a designation for the community itself to being a referent to outsiders. This section has shown **יִשְׂרָאֵל** being used a variety of ways and as part of various, sometimes wildly different, phrases. The term is used to describe the whole nation, parts of the nation, a specific group of people (as opposed to

¹⁵³ Line 2 of 1Q37 mentions the “souls” of some as being “rewarded with evil” and this is presumably contrasted with those in line 3 that are described as “the chosen of Israel.”

priests or Levites), and even as those outside the community. Many of the scrolls speak of the intimate relationship between “Israel” and God, yet no text definitively purports the idea that any one community is a pure and “true” Israel, at least as far as Graham Harvey is concerned. Sigurd Grindheim, though, argues that Harvey’s definition of a “true Israel” is much too narrow.

If the concept "true Israel" is defined as narrowly as Harvey does, so that it can only be properly used to describe the self-consciousness of a group that holds that God not only has rejected ethnic Israel but altogether ceased to address her, he is correct. But it is probably better to apply the expression to a group that identifies itself as retaining the covenant relationship with God, the relationship that they believe the people of Israel to have lost because of their rebellion.¹⁵⁴

Regardless of which definition one accepts, it cannot be denied that contained within the literature from the Dead Sea there is a good and a bad “Israel,” insofar as some members of “Israel” work to maintain purity, while others remain as sinners. The idea is present, as in the Nahum Pesher, that those who wish to finally join themselves with God will join the *Yahad*. Further, The Community Rule seems to have a definite understanding of what is a “blameless and true” Israel and what is a perverted, wicked Israel. A line has been drawn between these two occasions of “Israel” and the respective communities behind these texts undoubtedly view themselves as being the “blameless and true house in Israel.” Their identity is tied to them occupying this understanding of יִשְׂרָאֵל.

¹⁵⁴ Sigurd Grindheim, *The Crux of the Election: Paul’s Critique of the Jewish Confidence in the Election of Israel*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament*. (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1989), 67 n. 120.

“Israel” in Philo

The shift in understandings of “Israel” from the literature previously discussed to the works of Philo is significant. The ideas that were latent in many of the Dead Sea scrolls, and non-existent in others, appear to be much more explicit in Philo. Philo’s works contain almost 100 occurrences of Ἰσραήλ. Many of these occurrences are contained in biblical quotations. The occurrences can be divided into two categories: references to the ancestor Jacob and references to the nation.¹⁵⁵ This categorization, however, does not allow one to understand how Philo was truly using Ἰσραήλ. This section will examine Philo’s use of Ἰσραήλ in hopes of determining Philo’s understanding of the term as well as how the term functioned for him.

Philo’s understanding of Ἰσραήλ has its foundations in the change of Jacob’s name to Israel. Philo explains the difference between the two names when interpreting Numbers 23:7: “an expression which is equivalent to, ‘Destroy both these things, the sight and the hearing of the soul, that it may neither see nor hear any true and genuine good thing;’ for Israel is the emblem of seeing and Jacob of hearing” (*Conf.* 72).

Elsewhere, Philo explains the superiority of seeing to hearing:

Ishmael, being interpreted, means "the hearing of God;" and hearing is considered as entitled to only the second prize after seeing; but seeing is the inheritance of the legitimate and first-born son, Israel; for the name Israel, being interpreted, means "seeing God." For it is possible for a man to hear false statements as though they were true, because hearing is a deceitful thing; but seeing is a sense which cannot be deceived, by which a man perceives existing things as they really are. (*Fug.* 208)

¹⁵⁵ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 219.

Whether Philo determined that seeing was superior to hearing prior to understanding Ἰσραήλ as “seeing God” or his prior understanding of Ἰσραήλ influenced this view of seeing being superior to hearing is difficult to determine and not immediately helpful. What is helpful, though, is recognizing the link, in Philo’s writings, between seeing God and Ἰσραήλ. Philo explains what “seeing God” actually means in *De Præmiis et Pœnis*:

In this company is the man who in the Chaldaean language is called Israel, but in the Greek "seeing God;" not meaning by this expression seeing what kind of being God is, for that is impossible, as I have said before, but seeing that he really does exist; not having learnt this fact from anyone else, nor from anything on earth, nor from anything in heaven, nor from any one of the elements, nor from anything compounded of them, whether mortal or immortal, but being instructed in the fact by God himself, who is willing to reveal his own existence to his suppliant. (*Praem.* 44)

Thus, for Philo, “seeing God” means not that one sees God physically, but instead that one is able to see that God really is and to receive this illumination directly from God and not through any mediating source. Samuel Sandmel says it this way, “‘Sees’ is not here meant to be perception by the eyes, but by the mind; such ‘sight’ is the highest point to which man can advance.”¹⁵⁶ For Philo, then, Ἰσραήλ, since it by its very nature means “seeing God,” is the group that has reached this “highest point to which man can advance.”¹⁵⁷

The occurrences to this point have mostly centered around Philo’s use of Ἰσραήλ as it relates to the ancestor Jacob. Philo also uses Ἰσραήλ to refer to people. For instance, Philo explicates Exodus 17:11, which says, “whenever Moses lifted his hands

¹⁵⁶ Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria*, 59.

¹⁵⁷ Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria*, 59.

Israel prevailed,” as meaning “when the mind raises itself up from mortal affairs and is elevated on high, it is very vigorous because it beholds God; and the mind here means Israel” (*Leg.* 3:186). Philo also highlights the uncommon language in Exodus 19:6 of a “royal priesthood, and a holy nation” in *De Abrahamo*:

And that venerable, and estimable, and glorious triad [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob] is comprehended by the sacred scriptures under one class, and called, "A royal priesthood, and a holy nation." And its name shows its power; for the nation is further called, in the language of the Hebrews, Israel, which name being interpreted means, "seeing God." But of sight, that which is exercised by means of the eyes is the most excellent of all the outward senses, since by that alone all the most beautiful of existing things are comprehended, the sun and the moon, and the whole heaven, and the whole world; but the sight of the soul which is exercised, through the medium of its dominant part excels all the other powers of the soul, as much as the powers of the soul excel all other powers; and this is prudence, which is the sight of the mind. (*Abr.* 56-57)

Choosing to emphasize the language of “a royal priesthood, and a holy nation” in Exodus 19 and relating it to Ἰσραήλ further intensifies that Philo’s view of Ἰσραήλ as those who “see God” was such that it harbored within all of its meaning some idea of a “true Israel.” Sandmel remarks that, for Philo, “there are those who through the senses, rather than through reason, apprehend God; such persons constitute Israel (‘God Seer’), the people who see that God exists.”¹⁵⁸ Elsewhere, Sandmel asserts that Philo’s understanding of “Israel” is open to all Jews: “A Jew is a man of Israel, and Israel is ‘the race’ which sees God. Even those Jews who lack the exceptional gifts of the patriarchs can live in the intelligible world of spirit and immortality.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria*, 73.

¹⁵⁹ Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria*, 88.

Against Sandmel, Grindheim assesses Philo's usage of Ἰσραήλ, asserting that it is "for Philo an honorary title, and is not another name for the Jewish people. Rather, it signifies a spiritual level reached only by an elite."¹⁶⁰ At first glance it appears that Sandmel has more correctly interpreted Philo than Grindheim, for Philo equates "Israel" with "seeing God" and does so, seemingly, without qualification. In actuality, though, Sandmel has only picked up on one aspect of Philo's understanding of Israel, namely, that "the revelation of the law was a special gift to Israel."¹⁶¹ Sandmel, though, fails to observe, as Harry Wolfson does, that "The name 'Israel,' according to Philo, means 'seeing God' and the people of Israel are described by him as 'those who are members of that race endowed with vision . . . ' or as those to whose lot it has fallen 'to see the best, that is the Truly Existing.' And *not only Israel but all virtuous men may be seeing God.*"¹⁶² Wolfson notices other places (*Ebr.* 20:83, *Mut.* 12:82) where Philo speaks of the virtue of sight and that in these sections Philo's language is inclusive.¹⁶³ Furthermore, in *De Vita Contemplativa*, Philo speaks of the therapeutic sect, saying that they, "being continually taught to see without interruption, may well aim at obtaining a sight of the living God, and may pass by the sun, which is visible to the outward sense, and never leave this order which conducts to perfect happiness. . . . until they see the object which

¹⁶⁰ Grindheim, *The Crux of the Election*, 69-70.

¹⁶¹ Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 2:52.

¹⁶² Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:84. Italics mine.

¹⁶³ Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:84-5.

they have been earnestly desiring” (*Vit. Cont.* 2:11-12).¹⁶⁴ Thus, if “seeing God” in Philo is attained by these elites whose knowledge is “directly derived from God by revelation and prophecy,”¹⁶⁵ then one should be careful to imply that all Jews are automatically members of “Israel.”

Grindheim goes on to observe that Philo did not explicitly deny that non-Jews could be a part of Ἰσραήλ.¹⁶⁶ Not explicitly denying a particular view and allowing it outright are two wholly different things, though. Thus, Grindheim tests whether Philo would have allowed Gentiles to be part of Israel. Grindheim posits that the best way to determine how Philo may have responded to this idea is to see how Philo viewed converts or proselytes.¹⁶⁷ “Philo was evidently aware of the discussions regarding the necessity of requiring circumcision from proselytes.”¹⁶⁸ This is clear from his discussions on the topic. Philo emphasized the spiritual interpretation of circumcision, as he did for many things (*QG* 3:46-49, *Spec.* 1:2-11). Grindheim’s reasoning is then that one might expect that if Philo would have been open to Gentiles being included in Ἰσραήλ that he would have considered “the physical sign of circumcision to be superfluous,”¹⁶⁹ which he denies outright in *De migratione Abrahami* 92-94.

¹⁶⁴ Also see Wolfson’s discussion in *Philo*, 2:91.

¹⁶⁵ Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:85.

¹⁶⁶ Grindheim, *The Crux of the Election*, 71.

¹⁶⁷ Grindheim, *The Crux of the Election*, 71.

¹⁶⁸ Grindheim, *The Crux of the Election*, 73.

¹⁶⁹ Grindheim, *The Crux of the Election*, 73.

Harvey disagrees with Grindheim on this point, saying directly that for Philo the knowledge of God was “also available to non-Jews.”¹⁷⁰ Harvey continues this thought saying, “Philo’s ‘Israel’ is a standard of visionary experience with which to compare the current generation. No group can claim to be the only one to which the name is applicable. Everyone, including Gentiles, are exhorted to live up to the name, to live in a ‘visionary’ way.”¹⁷¹ The problem with Grindheim’s argument is that he seems to be equating ethnic Israel with Philo’s allegorical Israel. Wolfson rightly distinguishes these two in a note:

With regard to the term ‘Israel,’ which he considers as ‘the general name of the nation’ . . . it may be assumed that in his allegorical interpretation of it as meaning ‘the race endowed with vision’ (τὸ ὁρατικὸν γένος) (*Immut.* 30, 144), he applies it also to proselytes. But when he singles out Israel as the people especially favored by God with the highest grade of prophecy, namely, prophecy by the voice of God, such as manifested itself on Mount Sinai (*Mos.* II, 35, 189), he would seem to exclude proselytes.¹⁷²

Philo’s usage and understanding of Ἰσραήλ appears to line up with part of Grindheim’s assessment, namely, that it is elitist, and with Harvey’s and Wolfson’s assessments that Ἰσραήλ, as a group that sees God, is open to Jews and Gentiles.

Ἰσραήλ, then, as “one who sees God” in Philo describes those who “ought to embody a certain mythical construct, an enlightened, visionary people.”¹⁷³ Philo’s interest lies more in the philosophical construct than in any actual individual or group.

¹⁷⁰ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 223.

¹⁷¹ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 224.

¹⁷² Wolfson, *Philo*, 2:401 n.25.

¹⁷³ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 222.

Jacob Neusner supports this perspective: “In the philosophical system of Philo, ‘Israel’ constitutes a philosophical category, not a social entity in the everyday sense.”¹⁷⁴

Neusner’s note on this comment is quite helpful to understanding this aspect of Philo’s literature:

That is not to suggest that Philo does not see Jews as a living social entity, a community. The opposite is the case, but when he constructs his philosophical statement, the importance of “Israel” derives from its singular capacity to gain knowledge of God, which other categories of the system cannot have. When writing about the Jews in a political context, he does not appeal to their singular knowledge of God, and when writing about the Jews as “Israel” in the philosophical context, he does not appeal to their having formed a this-worldly community.¹⁷⁵

Accordingly, Philo’s Ἰσραήλ is about knowledge of God and not necessarily used to refer to a specific group of people living contemporary to him.

Samuel Sandmel rightly concludes that, in most cases, Philo says that Ἰσραήλ means either “him who sees” or “the seeing nation.”¹⁷⁶ *Legum allegoriae* speaks of how God will not allow the “offspring of the seeing Israel” to be struck down, but rather God will lift this portion up and save them (*Leg.* 2:34). *De posteritate Caini* 92 modifies Ἰσραήλ with “he who sees God,” *Quod Deus sit immutabilis* 144 notes that “the seeing” are called Ἰσραήλ, and at *De Ebrietate* 82 Philo says that Ἰσραήλ is “the name of perfection, for the name being interpreted means ‘the sight of God.’” Philo’s view of

¹⁷⁴ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and its Social Metaphors: Israel in the History of Jewish Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 221.

¹⁷⁵ Neusner, *Judaism and its Social Metaphors*, 221 n. 12.

¹⁷⁶ Samuel Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 59, 73, 87-88.

Ἰσραήλ, then, is a lofty one that seems to hold it above all other categories because of its apparently innate ability to “see God.”

“Israel” takes on various roles and meanings in Second Temple Jewish literature. There are over 2,500 occurrences of יִשְׂרָאֵל in the Hebrew Bible and this count does not include non-biblical Jewish writings or early Christian writings that use Ἰσραήλ. The sheer volume of occurrences, though, is not particularly meaningful if they all have the same referent or are all used the same way. This, however, is not the case. Verses like Ezra 6:21 show how the term יִשְׂרָאֵל can be used in a variety of ways, even within the same verse. This section examined post-exilic Hebrew bible books for various reasons. One of the main reasons though is related to the aforementioned discussion of pre-exilic “Israel.”

This chapter has examined various occurrences of יִשְׂרָאֵל in Second Temple Jewish literature. These occurrences serve to demonstrate how the use of “Israel” had expanded by Paul’s day. This chapter has shown that the term “Israel” began to transition from referring to a large body of people and to one part of the Israel/Judah dichotomy to referring to a specific subgroup of people. In the Hebrew Bible, this subgroup was the returned exiles. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, this subgroup begins to resemble a “True Israel.” Finally, in Philo, the term is a referent for an elite group of people who “see God.” The variety of understandings of the term “Israel” also correlate to heightened senses of identity. In the Hebrew Bible this identity is often tied to the land and common experience. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, the identity of importance is

typically that of the community that produced each text. Then, in Philo's works, the identity desired is one of an elite status that speaks to the closeness of one's relationship with God.

The constant expansion and reworking of the term "Israel" continues in Christian literature as well. This chapter serves as necessary background information when examining the New Testament, and especially Paul's writings. However, serving as background information is not the extent of the importance of how "Israel" is used in Jewish literature. For the Jewish literature examined in this chapter also serves to influence Christian usage of "Israel" and to serve as literary precedence for how Christian texts will interpret "Israel."

Chapter 3

Occurrences of Ἰσραήλ in Christian Literature

Ἰσραήλ shows up only 77 times in the Christian scriptures known as the New Testament.¹⁷⁷ This is significantly less than the number of times its Hebrew equivalent shows up in the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, the term “Jew” occurs much more than “Israel” in the New Testament, occurring 70 times in John’s Gospel alone.¹⁷⁸ If these terms are not synonymous, then the unbalanced use of the respective terms merits note.¹⁷⁹ This chapter will examine the occurrences of Ἰσραήλ in early Christian literature, which, for the purposes of this paper, will include the New Testament texts of Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, John, and Revelation. In addition, examination will include the deutero-Pauline New Testament work of Ephesians, *1 Clement*, Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* and *First Apology*, and Melito of Sardis’ *Peri Pascha*. It is my hope that these texts will aid in establishing the context in which Paul may have understood Ἰσραήλ and some of the implications of Paul’s interpretation of the then-sacred term. Texts will be dealt with in chronological order, as best as can be determined.

¹⁷⁷ Being fully aware of the connotations associated with “New Testament,” I prefer not to use the terms. However, for ease of use and recognition, “New Testament” will be used from this point forward when referring to the Christian Scriptures that are typically called the “New Testament.”

¹⁷⁸ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 225.

¹⁷⁹ Some may question whether the two terms might be synonyms, but even a quick examination of the use of the two terms in John’s gospel shows that the term “Jew” appears to be coupled with much more negative sentiments than does the term “Israel.” Thus, an examination of the term “Jew” is justified, but it is not within the scope of this paper.

Ephesians

There is one occurrence of Ἰσραήλ in Ephesians. Tradition has recognized this letter as having been authored by Paul, though that is unlikely.¹⁸⁰ The occurrence of Ἰσραήλ comes in the midst of a passage that highlights the division between Ἰσραήλ and the “Gentiles.”

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands – remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (Eph 2:11-12)

These Gentiles were seemingly in quite dire circumstances, “having no hope and without God in the world.” The “commonwealth,” τῆς πολιτείας, of Israel is a political term, as John Muddiman notes,¹⁸¹ but given the context of receiving promises and being not “strangers and aliens” (Eph 2:19), but instead “fellow citizens” (Eph 2:19), it seems that Ἰσραήλ harbors a socio-spiritual aspect. E. K. Simpson, though, understands Ἰσραήλ here to refer only to the land: “Yet it was no slight calamity to be estranged from that land of Judah where God as known, no minor evil to reside in centres of pagan idolatry, foul with obscene temple-orgies, or where altars reared to an unknown Deity bore

¹⁸⁰ See Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), lx-lxxiii; Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, Sacra Pagina Series 17, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 15-17; John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 2-23; and Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England: Apollos, 1999), 4-47.

¹⁸¹ John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 120.

witness to an aching void, an unsated famine of the heart.”¹⁸² Andrew Lincoln, though, recognizes that while “πολιτεία can mean right of citizenship,” here it more likely refers to Israel as “a theocratically constituted nation.”¹⁸³ Thus, being outside of Israel was a “grave disadvantage” for the Gentiles “because of all that is involved in being outside God’s election, his covenant relationship, and his line of promise.”¹⁸⁴ The underlying assumption, though, as Margaret MacDonald points out, is that “Gentile believers are now part of the commonwealth of Israel.”¹⁸⁵ The Gentile believers “were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel,” but are no longer. For As John Muddiman notes, “it was the Gentiles who were excluded – or rather had excluded themselves – from the only possible source of salvation, namely Israel.”¹⁸⁶ This has changed, though, now that they are “in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:13). They are “no longer strangers and aliens,” but are now “fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Eph 2:19). Moreover, “the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body” as Jewish believers (Eph 3:6). As MacDonald puts it, “the author of Ephesians seems to be equating Israel with the church.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1968), 58-59.

¹⁸³ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1991), 137.

¹⁸⁴ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 137.

¹⁸⁵ Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, Sacra Pagina Series 17, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 242.

¹⁸⁶ Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, 120.

¹⁸⁷ MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 242.

Mark

Mark contains two occurrences of Ἰσραήλ. The term first occurs at 12:29 when Jesus is quoting the *Shema*.¹⁸⁸ Jesus is responding to a scribe who asked, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” (Mk 12:28). In this passage Ἰσραήλ refers to the original audience that would have read these words in Deuteronomy and potentially to the “contemporary community who are united to the generation of Moses via the application of the Law.”¹⁸⁹ Using Ἰσραήλ this way offers distinguishing aspects of Ἰσραήλ. These distinguishing aspects include “non-Gentiles,” “descendents of Abraham,” and a community that upholds the religious teachings contained in the *Shema*.¹⁹⁰

The second occurrence of Ἰσραήλ is at 15:32 in the crucifixion account. The chief priests and scribes are said to be mocking Jesus, saying, “Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe” (Mk 15:32). This is an interesting use of Ἰσραήλ especially because just prior the reader is informed that “the inscription of the charge against him read, ‘The King of the Jews’” (Mk 15:26). Moreover, even earlier in the story the soldiers mock Jesus, saluting him and saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (Mk 15:18). It would seem odd that the author of Mark did this accidentally. It may be that for Mark these terms are nearly synonymous, as Graham

¹⁸⁸ Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

¹⁸⁹ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 233.

¹⁹⁰ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 233.

Harvey asserts.¹⁹¹ This certainly seems to be the most logical explanation. Thus, if Ἰσραήλ is a group that is not Gentile, is descended from Abraham, and upholds the religious teachings contained in the *Shema*, and Jesus is the king of that group, then Mark is asserting that Jesus is far from rejecting Judaism, but instead is the Jewish Messiah.

This conclusion, though, could be reached without the use of Ἰσραήλ in 15:32. For the entirety of Pilate's conversation with Jesus and with the Jewish leaders centers around whether or not Jesus is the "King of the Jews,"¹⁹² not the "King of Israel." The mocking of Jesus by the chief priests and the scribes should have been, "Let the Christ, the King of the Jews, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe," for that is what they accused him of proclaiming and that is the charge for which he was sentenced to die, according to Mark.

William Lane comments, rather oddly, that "'the King of Israel' is the correct Palestinian form of the claim of Jesus."¹⁹³ Lane's comment may be better understood through John Donahue and Daniel Harrington's explanation of the term as being an "'insider' title" and "King of the Jews" as being an "'outsider' title."¹⁹⁴ R. T. France, then, does not speak of insider/outsider language, but instead notes, in his commentary on

¹⁹¹ See Harvey's discussion in *The True Israel* 233-4.

¹⁹² See Mk 15: 2, 9, 12, 18, 26.

¹⁹³ William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 570.

¹⁹⁴ John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, Sacra Pagina Series 2, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 444.

the Greek text, that ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραήλ, the king of Israel, has a “patriotic, even theological, tone which makes its use in mockery by the leaders of Israel particularly poignant.”¹⁹⁵ These explanations are adequate, but they all have forgotten the only other place in the letter that uses the term Ἰσραήλ, 15:32.

The best understanding of this passage, then, should take into account the comments of Lane, Donahue, Harrington, and France, but should also comment on the potential relationship between 15:32 and 12:29. In light of this, I conclude that the surprising use of Ἰσραήλ in 15:32 is intended to draw the hearer’s attention back a few chapters to Jesus’ recitation of the *Shema*, since that is the only other time the term occurs in this book. Thus, in Mark if Jesus is king of anything he is not the “King of the Jews” as he was charged, but is, instead, the “King of Israel.” While one may not be able to determine the specifics which differentiate “Jews” and “Israel” in Mark, it should be noted that they are distinct. Graham Harvey’s assertion, then, that Jesus being mocked as the “King of Israel” equals him being the Jewish messiah is quite a leap as the two ideas are not shown to be related in Mark.

Matthew

Ἰσραήλ occurs twelve times in Matthew. The first of these is at 2:6 where the author is recounting the prophecy of Micah 5:2, “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler

¹⁹⁵ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 648.

who will shepherd my people Israel.” ’Ισραήλ here clearly refers to a people, perhaps the “people of God,” whereas “Judah” refers to the land area and the tribe. In other places, though, ’Ισραήλ is used to refer to the land. Joseph is told to “take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel” (Mt 2:20) and he complies in the next verse.¹⁹⁶

Elsewhere in Matthew ’Ισραήλ is used in opposition to “Gentiles” as they occur in the text by various names. At 8:10 ’Ισραήλ is opposed to “a centurion.” This centurion has come to Jesus asking him to heal his servant. The centurion even believed that Jesus could “only say the word” and his servant would be healed. Jesus marveled at his response and told those following him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith” (Mt 8:10). Clearly, the centurion is not a part of ’Ισραήλ in this text. Further, the implication is that those who have such great faith should come out of ’Ισραήλ, not be outsiders to it.¹⁹⁷ Donald Hagner’s observation supports this reading: “The effect of this statement is not only a criticism of the slowness of Israel to believe, a motif that will have increasing prominence as the Gospel proceeds, but also, and more importantly, to call attention to the genuine possibility of gentile faith, and hence participation in the kingdom.”¹⁹⁸ This passage also works literarily to foreshadow the

¹⁹⁶ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC 33A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 39. Hagner also notes the “obvious echo of the exodus narrative.”

¹⁹⁷ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 356.

¹⁹⁸ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 205.

experience that Jesus will have, namely, “that Jesus’ experience with Israel is going to be negative.”¹⁹⁹

The distinction between Ἰσραήλ and “Gentiles” continues in chapter 10. Jesus is sending out his twelve disciples and instructs them, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 10:5-6). Ἰσραήλ is markedly different from “the Gentiles” and “the Samaritans.” It is also interesting to see this command from Jesus to not preach about the Kingdom of Heaven being at hand to anyone but the “lost sheep of the house of Israel”²⁰⁰ when Paul was quite open to “Gentiles” joining in with this community. Moreover, many of the auditors of Matthew were likely surprised by this restriction as well, since many of them would have themselves been gentiles.²⁰¹

As to how to understand the phrase, “the lost sheep of Israel,” scholarship appears to be fairly evenly split. Donald Hagner and Craig Blomberg both argue for understanding “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” as referring “to all of Israel”²⁰² and “to all the people,”²⁰³ respectively. Ulrich Luz argues for this reading too, though he does so on the basis of the grammar. Luz argues that “the lost sheep of the house of

¹⁹⁹ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*, Hermeneia, ed. James E. Crouch, trans. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 10.

²⁰⁰ One can also see the connection between this command and the prophecy of Micah 5:2 that was quoted earlier in the text. Jesus himself seems to act contrary to this command in 15:21-28, albeit reluctantly.

²⁰¹ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 270.

²⁰² Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 270.

²⁰³ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 171.

Israel who are contrasted with the Gentiles and Samaritans are not (partitively) the sinners, outcasts, and marginalized in Israel but (explicatively) all Israel.”²⁰⁴ Krister Stendahl, in contrast, understands the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” to refer to only a portion of Israel.²⁰⁵ Daniel Harrington agrees: “The expression refers to all Israel, not simply one group within Israel. This is suggested by the collective nouns in 10:5 (Gentiles, Samaritans), other Matthean texts (9:36; 15:25), and OT texts such as Ezekiel 34.”²⁰⁶ John Nolland argues in support of Stendahl and Harrington:

Since it is unlikely that Matthew wants to insist here that all of Israel were lost sheep (though he would have assumed that all were lost in the sense of being in need of the coming kingdom of God), it is best to take the genitive as partitive (so: those of the house of Israel who were lost) rather than explicative (so: all of the house of Israel constitute the lost). Nonetheless, Matthew does not intend to focus ministry here to some marginalized subsection of Israel, but rather to need in Israel wherever that was evident.²⁰⁷

The arguments offered by Stendahl, Harrington, and Nolland are more compelling and seem to have a better grasp on the text, both grammatically and narratively.

Jesus promises that those who have followed him will “sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 19:28). This passage is quite noteworthy if only for the fact that the twelve disciples are themselves part of Ἰσραήλ and yet will be judging Ἰσραήλ. As Nolland notes, “there is a fittingness in having the Twelve

²⁰⁴ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 73.

²⁰⁵ Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968).

²⁰⁶ Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina Series 1, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 140.

²⁰⁷ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 416-17.

participate in the judgment of Israel” because “the choice of the Twelve represents God’s claim on Israel.”²⁰⁸ The understanding, then, is that when the disciples enter the “Kingdom of Heaven,” which the surrounding verses talk about, they do not cease being part of Ἰσραήλ. In other words, Ἰσραήλ and the “Kingdom of Heaven” are not mutually exclusive; neither are they synonyms. It is also important to note that “there is no reason to interpret the twelve tribes of Israel as a symbol for the Church. Matthew meant Israel.”²⁰⁹ Craig Blomberg makes this mistake in his supersessionist reading of this text, “the comparison of the Twelve with the twelve tribes of Israel again highlights the theme of the church replacing Israel as the locus of God’s saving activity in the new age.”²¹⁰

In Matthew, Ἰσραήλ is used to refer to the land and the people. The majority of the occurrences of Ἰσραήλ refer to the people, though the reference is sometimes all of Israel and sometimes only part. There does not seem to be a sense in Matthew of a “true Israel,” but Ἰσραήλ certainly has an identity. If anything, the identity of Ἰσραήλ in Matthew may not be wholly positive, for it is a centurion who is not a member of Ἰσραήλ that strikes Jesus with his faith (Mt 8:10) and sending the disciples to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6) is ambiguous at best.

²⁰⁸ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 801.

²⁰⁹ Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 279.

²¹⁰ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 301.

Luke-Acts

Ἰσραήλ first occurs in Luke at 1:16, speaking of what John the Baptist would be like: “and he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God.” This verse prefaces the quotation of Malachi 4:5-6, which speaks of making ready “for the Lord a people prepared” (Lk 1:17). The “many of the sons of Ἰσραήλ” is parallel to this people that will be prepared for the Lord.²¹¹ As Joel Green notes, the inclusion of “many” “provides a proleptic sign that the response to John’s ‘good news’ (3:18) – and so to God’s salvific initiative – will not be universally positive.”²¹² Moreover, this verse puts John “in the roles of Elijah and Elisha”²¹³ of turning the people of Israel back to God. In Mary’s Magnificat, Ἰσραήλ is the servant of God: “He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever” (Lk 1:54-55). These two verses draw the auditor to look backwards at the history of Israel’s relationship with God. “All of these operative words in vv 54-55 – servant, remember, mercy, promise, ancestors, and Abraham – point backward to God’s history with Israel, to their election, to their covenantal relationship.”²¹⁴

²¹¹ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 76.

²¹² Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 76. Also see François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, Hermeneia, ed. James E. Crouch, trans. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 37 and John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, WBC 35A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 31.

²¹³ Richard B. Vinson, *Luke*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2008), 32.

²¹⁴ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 105. Also see John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, WBC 35A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 73.

The connection between John the Baptist and Ἰσραήλ continues toward the end of chapter one. Of John, the text says, “and the child grew and became strong in spirit and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel” (Lk 1:80).

Zechariah’s prophecy about John offers insight into who Ἰσραήλ was.

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 by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, 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 1:76-79)

John is preparing the way for the Lord, giving “knowledge of salvation to his people.”

Ἰσραήλ, then, is already “God’s people.” John Nolland puts it this way, “Forgiveness here implies the call of repentance of 1:17; 3:3 and thus fits the People of God for the rescue from their enemies of v 71 and lifelong worship of vv 74-75.”²¹⁵ Even though they are the People of God they remain in need of “knowledge of salvation,” that is to say that they must still experience salvation.²¹⁶

Simeon is a “righteous and devout man” living in Jerusalem who was “looking forward to the consolation of Israel” (Lk 2:25). The παράκλησιν τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, “consolation of Israel,” according to François Bovon, harbors “an unmistakable eschatological tenor.”²¹⁷ Some apparently see this “eschatological tenor” that Bovon speaks of and then, as Green says, read this text as “compromise[ing] the status of Israel

²¹⁵ John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, WBC 35A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1989), 89.

²¹⁶ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 89. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 118. François Bovon, *Luke 1*, 75.

²¹⁷ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 100.

as God's people."²¹⁸ Both Green and Bovon, though, argue against this reading. Green understands Simeon's message as "a message of one who is working from within the historic purpose of Israel's God. What is more, he is working from within the hopes of Israel for deliverance from its oppressors."²¹⁹ Bovon's interpretation is comparable, "He hopes in *God*, not for himself but for the people of *Israel*. Luke's message is striking in its simplicity: belief in Christ is the legitimate answer to the legitimate expectation of the Jews."²²⁰

The text further states that it had been revealed to Simeon that he would not die before seeing the "Lord's Messiah" (Lk 2:26). Once he sees the child Jesus, Simeon praised God, saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Lk 2:29-32). This "glory to your people Israel" is not entirely positive, though, as Simeon explains in Luke 2:34: "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel." The metaphors in Luke 2:29-32 are "not only of consolation but also of eschatological crisis."²²¹ Some who are part of Ἰσραήλ will experience disaster. Others, also part of Ἰσραήλ, will rise and thus will be able to celebrate. Ἰσραήλ is mixed with those who would oppose Jesus, and thus experience the falling, and seemingly those

²¹⁸ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 145.

²¹⁹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 145.

²²⁰ Bovon, *Luke 1*, 100.

²²¹ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 149. Also see Bovon, *Luke 1*, 103.

who would support Jesus, and thus experience the rising (Lk 2:34).²²² Green reads these verses as “explicit manifestation of the reality that God’s purpose will not be universally supported, and the first candid portent that the narrative to follow will be a story of conflict.”²²³ The lines seem clearly drawn. However, even Mary is told, “a sword will pierce your own soul too” (Lk 2:35). No one, it seems, will escape intact.

The audience of the message, the introduction shows, has “consistently offered a mixed reception to God.”²²⁴ Opening the gospel in such a manner is an important literary technique to recognize. For the fact that Ἰσραήλ is not completely opposed from the outset serves to emphasize the rejection when it does come.²²⁵ Part of this rejection comes in chapter four when Jesus goes to the synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah and proclaims the fulfillment of that scripture, amazing the audience. He responds, though, that they will not truly accept him, for

“... no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led

²²² Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 149.

²²³ Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 149.

²²⁴ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 240.

²²⁵ See Harvey’s discussion in *The True Israel*, 240. He posits that “Israel” is “set up as particularly privileged” so as to “magnify the denunciation” that later comes. To support this theory he quotes Philo’s portrayal of Flaccus, which, in part, says, “I praise Flaccus not because I thought it right to laud an enemy but to show his villainy in a greater light” (*Flacc.* 6-7).

him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. (Lk 4:24-29)

While their response seems to fulfill his prediction, Jesus' remarks about former prophets reveals the author's understanding of 'Ισραήλ. 'Ισραήλ is set against a location, Zarephath in Sidon, and a person, Naaman the Syrian. The passage that follows this one shows the people of Capernaum being much more welcoming (Lk 4:31-32). Juxtaposing these two passages serves to treat Nazareth as "a microcosm of the whole of 'Israel.'" ²²⁶ Just as the prophets of old had to leave "Israel" and go to foreign lands to preach their message, so Jesus had to leave Nazareth to preach his. ²²⁷

Acts contains 20 occurrences of 'Ισραήλ. The first of these comes at 1:6 when Jesus has presented himself to the disciples after his resurrection. The disciples then ask him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus' response to this is that they do not need "to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). Instead, they will soon "receive power when they Holy Spirit" has come upon them and they will be Jesus' "witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This passage is certainly concerned with the disciples' reception of the "Holy Spirit," as Hans Conzelmann observes, ²²⁸ but it is also concerned with geography. "If there is any relation between question and answer then there is a relationship between the 'kingdom' of 'Israel' and

²²⁶ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 240.

²²⁷ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 200.

²²⁸ Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia, ed. James E. Crouch, trans. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1987), 6.

these geographical locations.”²²⁹ That is, there is a connection between Luke 24:21, which speaks of the disciples’ disappointed hopes that Jesus was “the one to redeem Israel” and their questioning of Jesus in Acts 1:6 when he will “restore the kingdom to Israel.” Further, the disciples have linked the restoration of Israel to a physical kingdom which results in geographical expansion and the routing of their present oppressors. F. F. Bruce’s explanation of this perspective is perhaps the most accurate and lucid: “The question in v. 6 appears to have been the last flicker of their former burning expectation of an imminent political theocracy with themselves as its chief executives.”²³⁰

Peter addresses a crowd as *Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται*, “men of Israel,” at 2:22 during his speech. Here, *Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται* is synonymous with three other terms: 1) “men of Judah and all who live in Jerusalem,” 2) *Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί*, “brothers,” and 3) *πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραήλ*, “all the house of Israel” (Acts 2:5, 29, 36). The phrase *Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται* occurs four other times in Acts (Acts 3:12; 5:35; 13:16; 21:28). In all of these occurrences, the address is one of respect and one that bears the understanding that the speaker and the audience are part of *Ἰσραήλ*. The manner in which *Ἰσραήλ* is used in the various speeches throughout Acts implies that *Ἰσραήλ* is associated with the relationship between God and his people over a long period of time. This long period of time includes “Abraham and the ancestors,” “Moses and the prophets,” and the present generation. Moreover, the parallelism of *Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται* with *πᾶς οἶκος Ἰσραήλ*

²²⁹ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 241.

²³⁰ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 38.

works to convey the unity of the people known as Ἰσραήλ throughout their common history.

The final occurrence of Ἰσραήλ in Acts is contained in a speech attributed to Paul. His claim is that it is “for the sake of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain” (Acts 28:20). Since the leaders had “received no letters from Judea” about Paul they decided to hear him at a later meeting (Acts 28:21-23). It is at this meeting that Paul spent an entire day “trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets” (Acts 28:23). With some being convinced and others not being convinced Paul offered one final statement as they left.

The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah, “Go to this people and say, ‘You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn – and I would heal them.’ Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen. (Acts 28:25b-28)

The conclusion is simple: they have rejected God’s Messiah and have thus forfeited the salvation of God to the Gentiles.²³¹ The entirety of Luke-Acts has been pointing toward this conclusion. Ἰσραήλ had every opportunity to hear, see, and believe, but instead they have refused to believe; a refusal that is magnified by their history as the “people of God.” In other words, “For Luke’s message (that this uniquely privileged group has

²³¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina Series 5, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 469.

refused the gospel, which has therefore gone to Gentiles) 'Israel' was the most suitable word."²³²

Luke-Acts sets 'Ισραήλ up somewhat positively at first with John, Mary, and Simeon all being members of 'Ισραήλ who ultimately recognize what God is doing. 'Ισραήλ's journey throughout Luke-Acts is one that continues to push it to the outskirts of God's activity. This happens increasingly in Acts with first Peter's and then Paul's mission to the gentiles. To be sure, 'Ισραήλ is still in the picture, but many members of 'Ισραήλ are portrayed as rejecting the message (Acts 28:25b-28), a rejection made all the more poignant and disappointing given the initial positive response by members of 'Ισραήλ in Luke.

John

The Gospel of John only contains five occurrences of 'Ισραήλ, yet contains 70 occurrences of 'Ιουδαῖος. The paucity of occurrences of 'Ισραήλ makes it possible that the author chose the term because of the rich associations which it harbored. The first occurrence of 'Ισραήλ is at 1:31 in a passage much like Luke 1:80. John the Baptist speaks of his purpose, "I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." There are two possible interpretations of this verse. The first option understands John's baptism in general as that which reveals Jesus to Israel. The second option posits that the text is speaking of the specific

²³² Harvey, *The True Israel*, 245.

baptism of Jesus by John. Leon Morris holds to the first option: “Ye the whole purpose of his baptism was to make Him manifest to Israel. . . One might have thought that John’s baptism was concerned largely with leading men to repent. But this was not its final purpose. John baptized in view of the coming Messiah. He baptized in order that the Messiah should be ‘made manifest to Israel.’”²³³ Ernst Haenchen entertains the second option briefly, but is ultimately left with a lack of clarity: “the water baptism of John has the function of making Jesus known to Israel. But since it is not said in the Johannine report that John baptized Jesus, it is not clear how the sending of John the Baptist is to fulfill that purpose.”²³⁴

Ἰσραήλ also occurs in the story of Nicodemus. Nicodemus secretly visits Jesus and says, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God” (Jn 3:2). Jesus replies telling Nicodemus that he must be “born of water and Spirit” (Jn 3:5). Jesus then, responding to Nicodemus’ questioning of what he has just said, asks, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?” (Jn 3:10). He is a “teacher of Israel” and thus “ought to have known that no man is able to come to God in his own strength or righteousness.”²³⁵ Nicodemus, being a “teacher of Israel,” perhaps represents all other Jewish leaders in his lack of understanding. Haenchen, at least, reads the text this way,

²³³ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 150-51.

²³⁴ Ernst Haenchen, *John 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1-6*, Hermeneia, ed. Robert W. Funk with Ulrich Busse, trans. Robert W. Funk (Philadelphia, MN: Fortress Press, 1984), 153-54.

²³⁵ Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 221.

asserting that “the reader is probably meant to conclude that, even in its highest moment, Israel remains closed to the Christian mystery.”²³⁶ Nicodemus shows up a few other times in the gospel, but remains among “the Jews.”

At 12:13, Jesus is met by a crowd shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord – the King of Israel.” This traditional exclamation comes from Psalm 118:26 and is usually recited at Passover. The author of John, however, appends ὁ βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, “King of Israel,” to the phrase, emphasizing that this is to be taken prophetically. That is, the crowd in this text is not speaking generally of “one who comes in the name of the Lord,” but rather is welcoming a messianic king.²³⁷ In addition to conveying prophetic overtones, this collocation serves to connect the contemporary Ἰσραήλ with the Ἰσραήλ of history that has always celebrated the Passover.

Ἰσραήλ in John refers to a mixed community. Nicodemus is a “teacher of Israel” yet does not understand Jesus and therefore remains among “the Jews” and outside of the author’s community. While Ἰσραήλ could have been chosen because of its rich associations, it does not bask in a completely positive light. It is, however, used less negatively than “Jews” is, which suggests that the two terms were not interchangeable, even if someone could be a member of both groups.

²³⁶ Haenchen, *John 1*, 202.

²³⁷ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC 36, 2nd ed. (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1999), 210. Also see Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 586.

Revelation

The first occurrence of Ἰσραήλ in Revelation is in the midst of the message to Pergamum. “But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication” (Rv 2:14). This warning makes the most sense if there is at least a perceived link between the generation of Balaam and Balak and the writer’s present generation.²³⁸ The implication, then, is that the church in Pergamum inherits traditions from Ἰσραήλ.²³⁹

The phrase φυλῆς υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ, “tribes of sons of Israel,” occurs at 7:4 and 21:12. The context around the phrase in chapter 7 is that of the 144,000 of Israel that are selected. The twelve tribes are named and out of each tribe come 12,000 who are “sealed” as the “servants of our God” (Rv 7:3). In chapter 21 the twelve gates of the new Jerusalem are described as being inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes. On the twelve foundations of the city wall are inscribed the “twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rv 21:14). Hence, a continuity is declared from the twelve tribes of Israel through the twelve apostles to the revealed “new Jerusalem.”²⁴⁰

It is clear in Revelation that the Church is the only community that can rightfully be called the people of God and who correctly understand what God is doing. Wilfred

²³⁸ David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, WBC 52A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1997), 185.

²³⁹ Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 248.

²⁴⁰ See discussion in Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed. NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 158-60.

Harrington states that “in early Christianity ‘Israel’ represents the Church as the continuation of Israel.”²⁴¹ While this may be a bit of a generalization, Harrington’s analysis of 7:4 and 21:12 does seem to be accurate. Harrington continues by saying, “here, then, we have the twelve tribes of the old Israel and the twelve apostles of the new Israel.”²⁴² Ἰσραήλ is used in Revelation to connect the present generation with generations of old.²⁴³ It also functions as a means of implicitly labeling that which has been replaced.

1 Clement

Ἰσραήλ occurs seven times in *1 Clement*. The first occurrence, at 4:13, is amidst the letter’s warning against division and jealousy, “By reason of jealousy David was envied not only by the Philistines, but was persecuted also by Saul [king of Israel].” At 8:4, God apparently says, “Repent ye, O house of Israel, of your iniquity; say unto the sons of My people, Though your sins reach from the earth even unto the heaven, and though they be redder than scarlet and blacker than sackcloth, and ye turn unto Me with your whole heart and say Father, I will give ear unto you as unto a holy people.” This command is given so that “us,” the church, can be obedient and repent as well.

The main purpose in using Ἰσραήλ in *1 Clement* is shown in chapter 29:

²⁴¹ Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, Sacra Pagina Series 16, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 98.

²⁴² Harrington, *Revelation*, 98.

²⁴³ Harrington, *Revelation*, 213. Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. ed. NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 390.

Let us therefore approach Him in holiness of soul, lifting up pure and undefiled hands unto Him, with love towards our gentle and compassionate Father who made us an elect portion unto Himself. For thus it is written: “When the Most High divided the nations, when He dispersed the sons of Adam, He fixed the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the angels of God. His people Jacob became the portion of the Lord, and Israel the measurement of His inheritance.” And in another place He says, “Behold, the Lord takes for Himself a nation out of the midst of the nations, as a man takes the first fruits of his threshing floor; and the holy of holies shall come forth from that nation. (*1 Clem.* 29:1-3)

The author asserts that Ἰσραήλ is the choice from among the nations and therefore labels himself and his community as Ἰσραήλ. He and his community, i.e. Christians, are “a special portion of a Holy God” (*1 Clem.* 30:1). The author and his community are Ἰσραήλ because that is the Bible’s name for God’s chosen people. The other occurrences of Ἰσραήλ in *1 Clement* are used of biblical examples that are relevant to Christians and still applicable or are to serve as lessons for those in danger now.²⁴⁴

Ἰσραήλ in *1 Clement* really has nothing to do with Jews. Clement is not concerned with contemporary Jews at all. James Walters argues rather convincingly that “although Jews and Judaism are omnipresent in *1 Clement*, the author refers to them only in the context of Scripture. Not only does *1 Clement* reveal no contact with Jews or Judaism, it shows no trace of or fallout from polemical encounters with Jews in the past.”²⁴⁵ Instead, Ἰσραήλ is used to speak of Christians, God’s chosen people. Because the author of *1 Clement* sees himself and his community as the God’s chosen people,

²⁴⁴ See *1 Clement* 31:4-32:4; 43:1-6; 55:6.

²⁴⁵ James C. Walters, “Romans, Jews, and Christians: The Impact of the Romans on Jewish/Christian Relations in First-Century Rome” in Karl P. Donfried and Peter Richardson, eds. *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 192.

there is no other name that should be applied to them but Ἰσραήλ. Likewise, Ἰσραήλ is so connected to Christians for the author of *1 Clement* that “any other possible reference is unthinkable.”²⁴⁶

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* asserts that Christians are the “true Israel,” the “true sons of God,” because of their relationship with Christ who is the “Israel” spoken of by the prophets. Chapter 11 asserts, “For the true spiritual Israel . . . are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ.” In chapter 135, *Dialogue* reasserts that Christians are the “true Israel” because of their relationship with Christ: “As, therefore, Christ is the Israel and the Jacob, even so we, who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelite race.”²⁴⁷ Justin “is willing to reject Jews as inappropriately named ‘Israel’ (they only have physical descent from those God addressed) and assert that only Christians are truly ‘Israel.’”²⁴⁸ This physical relationship only allows them to become “Jews,” a relationship to God that is worse than that of Gentiles. Justin's *First Apology* supports this view that “the Jews” are completely opposed to Christ. They do not recognize him and treat him disgracefully, actions which merit that they and their land be destroyed (1 *Apol.* 47, 49).

²⁴⁶ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 251.

²⁴⁷ L. W. Barnard supports this reading at L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 130.

²⁴⁸ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 254.

Melito of Sardis

Melito of Sardis utilizes Philo's interpretation of Ἰσραήλ as "those who see God" in *Peri Pascha* as if it were widely known and accepted.²⁴⁹ "Israel" is accused of committing the "extraordinary crime" of "casting your Lord into new sufferings."²⁵⁰ Moreover, this "Lord" is the

master who formed you,
the one who made you,
the one who honored you,
the one who called you "Israel."
But you were found not really to be "Israel,"
for you did not see God,
you did not recognize the Lord."²⁵¹

Ἰσραήλ is, for Melito of Sardis, reserved for those who "see God" and "recognize the Lord."²⁵² Not doing so results in losing the right to be called Ἰσραήλ.²⁵³ This works out well for Melito of Sardis because of his understanding that the church has superseded

²⁴⁹ Lynn Cohick, "Melito of Sardis's *Peri Pascha* and Its 'Israel,'" *Harvard Theological Review* 91/4 (1998): 363.

²⁵⁰ *Peri Pascha* 81.

²⁵¹ *Peri Pascha* 81b-82a.

²⁵² Also see Cohick, "Melito of Sardis's *Peri Pascha* and Its 'Israel,'" 365.

²⁵³ Cohick, "Melito of Sardis's *Peri Pascha* and Its 'Israel,'" 363.

the Jews.²⁵⁴ Melito of Sardis accents “the continuity between Israel and the Church, but in such a way that the Church took the place of Israel.”²⁵⁵

This chapter has examined various early Christian uses of Ἰσραήλ. Some of these occurrences appear to be very much in similar veins to Jewish uses of the term. Ephesians, for instance, highlights the division between Ἰσραήλ and the Gentiles and Matthew quotes Micah 5:2 to speak of “my people Israel.” Other uses of Ἰσραήλ, though serve very specific purposes. The use of Ἰσραήλ in Luke-Acts has as its purpose highlighting the Jewish rejection of Jesus. For Ἰσραήλ was the “people of God,” but they refused to believe in God’s Messiah. Melito of Sardis’ *Peri Pascha* seems to draw on Philo’s interpretation of Ἰσραήλ as an elite group who “sees God,” for that is the very group for which the term is reserved in this text.

Revelation, 1 *Clement*, and Justin Martyr’s works all go further than the rest of the texts examined and assert the understanding that Christians (or the Church) are the only ones who can rightfully be called Ἰσραήλ. In these texts, Ἰσραήλ is understood as “God’s chosen people” and because the Jews have rejected Jesus they no longer have the right to bear this name. The shift in understandings of the term may seem sudden, but it is the next logical step after Ἰσραήλ has been identified as the “people of God.” If your group understands itself to be a part of the “people of God,” then you must also bear the title which contains that meaning, Ἰσραήλ.

²⁵⁴ Cohick, “Melito of Sardis’s *Peri Pascha* and Its ‘Israel,’” 355.

²⁵⁵ Robert L. Wilken, “Melito, the Jewish Community at Sardis, and the Sacrifice of Isaac,” *Theological Studies* 37/1 (1976): 57.

Chapter 4

Paul's Use of Ἰσραήλ

The previous two chapters have worked to show the diversity of how “Israel” has been used in Jewish and Christian literature. Many of the sources examined utilized “Israel” in technical ways which gave the term special significance and which served as literary precedence for the manner in which Paul uses the term. The way in which some of the Dead Sea scrolls and Philo used “Israel” show that Paul was not novel in connecting identity to “Israel.” The section on how **יִשְׂרָאֵל** was used in the Dead Sea scrolls showed that quite a few of the scrolls attached identity to **יִשְׂרָאֵל**. Philo’s works, though, show possible development in how identity was tied to the term “Israel.” The understanding of Ἰσραήλ in Philo shows that the term was not attached solely to one’s place in a community, but was now directly tied to one’s relationship with God, namely, one’s ability to receive direct illumination from God. This chapter examines how Paul uses Ἰσραήλ. This examination will include Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans to observe how Paul used Ἰσραήλ before turning to the application of sociological theories to his usage of the term.

Galatians

It is perhaps in Paul's writings that the idea of a "True Israel" becomes most clear. Further, the best example of this may well be in Galatians, at 6:16: "And as for all who walk by this rule, peace upon them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." This enigmatic phrase, "Israel of God," implies very clearly that there is an Ἰσραήλ that is not "of God." James Dunn, in his Galatians commentary, offers two ways to further understand what Paul is doing in this verse. The first option understands Paul to be "reinforcing the complete redrawing of definitions already implicit in his argument."²⁵⁶ This option understands "Israel" as "other than ethnic Israel."²⁵⁷ Option two views "the Israel of God" as referring "to the Jewish people as a whole," though in a manner that means "the Jewish people in their covenant identity, 'Israel' rather than 'the Jews.'"²⁵⁸ Dunn further nuances this perspective by adding that this is an Israel "understood in terms of the promise to Abraham (and Jacob/Israel), the very promise which included blessings for the Gentiles (chs. iiii-iv) – in other words, Israel understood *not* as excluding Jews as a whole, but as *including* Gentile believers."²⁵⁹ Dunn sees the second option as preferred over the first. Doing so allows the earlier theology of the letter to speak to this verse and not to divorce this verse from its context, as option one would almost certainly do.

²⁵⁶ Dunn, James D. G. *The Epistle to the Galatians*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 344.

²⁵⁷ Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 344.

²⁵⁸ Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 345.

²⁵⁹ Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 345.

The “Israel of God,” then, is a redefinition of “Israel” that allows the inclusion of Gentiles. John M. G. Barclay states that Paul here “reapplies the very title ‘Israel’ to those (Gentiles as well as Jews) who believe in Christ.”²⁶⁰ Others, such as Nils A. Dahl, defend the popular position of Justin Martyr that the Christian church is “the true, spiritual Israel” (*Dial.* 11.5).²⁶¹ Others still, such as Gottlob Schrenk and Donald W. B. Robinson, maintain that Paul is distinguishing, to some degree or another, between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.²⁶² These other opinions, however, fail to adequately relate this verse, with the understanding that they have of it, to the broader context. That Paul is only redefining “Israel” to allow for the inclusion of Gentiles and not completely redrawing the boundary lines so that ethnic Israel now has no place in the “Israel of God” fits the broader context of this letter and the undisputed Pauline corpus much better than do explanations that rely on Justin Martyr’s anti-Jewish polemic or on descriptions that separate what Paul has worked so hard to join.

The context surrounding Galatians 6:16 continues to deal with the theme of circumcision that has been so pervasive in the letter. The immediate context contains Paul’s warning against those who still desire to see circumcision as a mark of true faith. Paul argues that “neither circumcision is anything nor uncircumcision, but a new

²⁶⁰ John M. G. Barclay, *Obedying the Truth: Paul’s Ethics in Galatians* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2005), 98.

²⁶¹ See Nils A. Dahl, “Der Name Israel: Zur Auslegung von Gal. 6, 16,” *Judaica* 6 (1950): 161-70.

²⁶² See Gottlob Schrenk, “Der Segenswunsch nach der Kampfepestel,” *Judaica* 6 (1950): 170-190 and D. W. B. Robinson, “Distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers in Galatians,” *ABR* 13 (1965): 29-48. F. F. Bruce also has a detailed discussion on the issue and various positions that have been held by various scholars and exegetes in *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 273-275.

creation” (Gal 6:15). That is, who is among the favored of God is no longer determined (Paul would say it never was) on the basis of whether or not one has been circumcised. Instead, everyone is able to receive designation as Ἰσραήλ. Harvey imagines Paul’s tone in this manner: “all those names and signs are irrelevant because we are talking about something new and God decides what Israel is.”²⁶³ One vital point to be made, though, is that Paul claims to know *how* God determines what/who is Ἰσραήλ. That is, one’s membership status in Ἰσραήλ is based on faith. Throughout the letter, “faith emerges as the key factor both in identity . . . and in behaviour.”²⁶⁴

To Paul, throughout Galatians, Ἰσραήλ is synonymous with “the sons of Abraham.” Paul defines the sons of Abraham as “those who are of faith” (Gal 3:7). Faith, then, replaces circumcision as the litmus test to determine who is in and who is out, so to speak. Paul’s argument continues, “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith” (Gal 3:8-9). Paul contends that it actually is appropriate to look to Abraham for guidance on this matter. His reasoning is as follows:

To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. . . . This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. (Gal 3:15-16a, 17-18)

²⁶³ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 226.

²⁶⁴ Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 83.

The issue, then, is no longer that “Jews” are on one side and “Gentiles” on the other. For the faith of Abraham is now being displayed among the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Paul expresses the rending of the barrier this way: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Paul is trying to do away with the divisive terms “Jew” and “Gentile” in favor of a term that has typically been associated with the “people of God,” Ἰσραήλ. While Ἰσραήλ may not have the connotations associated with it that, say, “Gentile” does, it can still prove to be just as divisive. Indeed there are those who, like Paul, think Ἰσραήλ can and should be applied to Gentiles “of faith.” There are also likely others, potentially like Paul’s opponents in Galatians, that think Ἰσραήλ should only be used to refer to “Jews.”

1 Corinthians

Ἰσραήλ only occurs one time in 1 Corinthians. The occurrence comes in the midst of Paul’s discussion of idolatry, specifically food that has been offered to idols. Paul directs his readers to βλέπετε τὸν Ἰσραήλ κατὰ σάρκα, “consider the people of Israel” (1 Cor 10:18). Literally, the text could be translated, “See the Israel *that is* according to flesh.” Collocating Ἰσραήλ with κατὰ σάρκα is not derogatory. Instead, the intended meaning is “the racial group” Israel.²⁶⁵ The phrase Ἰσραήλ κατὰ σάρκα does not refer to a “carnal Israel” that would be opposed to a “spiritual Israel.” The context makes this

²⁶⁵ See Harvey, *The True Israel*, 227.

clear, as does the fact that elsewhere when a group has been qualified this way, it meant something along the lines of the “racial group” or even “kinship.”²⁶⁶

Despite the clarity of this text on how Ἰσραήλ should be read, some commentators insist on using this text to somehow prove that Christians are the “new Israel of God.” Gösta Lindeskog claims that Paul coined the phrase Ἰσραήλ κατὰ σάρκα because he understood that “Christianity must take the step out of Judaism.”²⁶⁷ This claim is despite also noting that “Paul has not expressively [sic] spoken of the *Israel kata pneuma*,”²⁶⁸ which one would assume would be present if Ἰσραήλ κατὰ σάρκα were actually intended to be in opposition to an Israel that is “according to the spirit.”

2 Corinthians

Ἰσραήλ occurs three times in 2 Corinthians. At 3:7, 13 Ἰσραήλ refers to the generation of Moses.²⁶⁹ The υἱοὺς Ἰσραήλ, “sons of Israel” or “Israelites,” “could not gaze at Moses’ face because of its glory.” The idea is present, though, that the present generation that Paul is writing to are somehow better than the generation of Moses.

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what

²⁶⁶ See Genesis 2:23 and Harvey’s discussion, *The True Israel*, 227.

²⁶⁷ Gösta Lindeskog, “Israel in the New Testament: Some Few Remarks on a Great Problem” *SEÅ* 26 (1961): 74.

²⁶⁸ Lindeskog, “Israel in the New Testament,” 74 n.23.

²⁶⁹ See C. K. Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 115, 119 and Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 60, 67.

was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. (2 Cor 3:12-15)

While Ἰσραήλ is not explicitly applied to this present generation that no longer has a veil over their minds or hearts, there is a clear distinction being drawn between those who were and remain veiled and those who have had their veil lifted through Christ.²⁷⁰

The final occurrence of Ἰσραήλ in 2 Corinthians is at 11:22. To be precise, the form is actually Ἰσραηλιταί. Here is the text in context: “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Ἰσραηλιταί, “Israelites”? So am I. Are they Abraham’s descendents? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one – I am talking like a madman – with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death” (2 Cor 11:22-23). The final question makes it clear that Paul is aiming this critique at Christians; he will not be outdone. Ralph Martin notes that this verse is a “rhetorical asyndeton.”²⁷¹ In other words, “the increasing force of the words used is to be seen, showing that ‘servants of Christ’ is the most audacious of all the claims made and surpassed.”²⁷² It is unclear, however, what exactly Paul intends Ἰσραηλιταί to mean. Harvey says that it “means more than ‘not Gentiles,’ it is a claim to be one of ‘God’s people.’”²⁷³ This may be true, but an examination is merited before the statement is asserted outright.

²⁷⁰ Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 122.

²⁷¹ Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 373.

²⁷² Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 373.

²⁷³ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 228.

There seems to be distinction in the text between being Hebrews, Ἰσραηλῖται, and Abraham's descendents. If, then, these distinctions are drawn out, it becomes possible that Ἰσραηλῖται here means "people of God," though one would not expect that to be distinguished from Abraham's descendents, unless, of course, "Abraham's descendents" refers only to Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα, as in 1 Corinthians, and is not synonymous with Ἰσραήλ, as in Galatians. The former is most likely since in Galatians they are υἱοὶ Ἀβραάμ, sons or children of Abraham, whereas in 2 Corinthians they are σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ, the seed of Abraham. Thus, σπέρμα Ἀβραάμ most likely bears resemblance to Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα, meaning that there is a distinction between "descendents of Abraham" and "Israelites" in this passage. Likewise, if Ἑβραῖοί, Hebrews, "is a claim to be following tradition, to be 'conservative' and non-innovative,"²⁷⁴ as Harvey suggests, then the term that stands out as unique is Ἰσραηλῖται, making real the possibility that Ἰσραηλῖται here is intended to be understood as "people of God." Moreover, C. K. Barrett, remarking on the difference between "Hebrew" and "Israelite", says that "from Paul's point of view the word may be said to describe the same fact from a new angle; *Hebrew* deals with it from the racial, *Israelite* from the social and religious angle."²⁷⁵ Martin follows Barrett in this understanding and adds that "it denotes membership in the community of salvation-history and a share in God's purposes."²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 228.

²⁷⁵ Barrett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 293.

²⁷⁶ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 375.

Romans

Ἰσραήλ occurs eleven times in Romans, all in chapters 9-11. This is not particularly surprising, given that the purpose of these chapters is discussing the relationship between Ἰσραήλ and God, and between Ἰσραήλ and Gentiles. Paul begins this section by saying that his “kinsmen according to the flesh” are Ἰσραηλῖται, Israelites (Rom 9:3-4). It is just two verses later, though, that Paul remarks, οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραήλ οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ, “for not all who are out of/descended from Israel are Israel” (Rom 9:6). Paul seems to be employing a technical sense of Ἰσραήλ in this verse. William S. Campbell supports this reading, remarking, “it seems therefore that some such term as the ‘real Israel,’ ‘true Israel’ or ‘inner Israel’ is logically required to express Paul’s intent. The true Israel is “of Israel” in terms of physical descent but not coextensive with historical Israel.”²⁷⁷ Leander Keck, in his commentary on Romans, asserts that 9:6b points “to the way Paul will argue his case: by identifying God’s word as the reality that determines who really *is* Israel.”²⁷⁸ Further, Keck remarks that Paul’s logic operates in this manner: “if God’s purpose continues in a way that is consistent with election, then the fact that only part of ethnic Israel says Yes to the gospel shows the God’s word ‘has not failed.’ The identity of real Israel has never been determined by lineal descent alone.”²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ William S. Campbell, “Israel” in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 442.

²⁷⁸ Leander E. Keck, *Romans*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 229.

²⁷⁹ Keck, *Romans*, 230.

Charles Talbert explains that “for God’s promises to Abraham and his descendants to be fulfilled does not require every Israelite to believe in Jesus, because God’s promises were not made to Abraham’s physical descendants but to those to whom, in God’s mercy, the promise applied (vv. 6b-16).”²⁸⁰ The implication is that not all who are a part of Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα are a part of this other Ἰσραὴλ. In other words, “continuity from the ancestors is not simply a matter of birth.”²⁸¹ Paul draws this out in 9:24-26:

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory – even us whom he has called, not from Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea, “Those who were not my people I will call ‘my people,’ and her who was not beloved I will call ‘beloved.’ And in the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God.’”

The designation “people of God” is now open to those who were not previously God’s people, namely, Gentiles. Paul is wondering whether God has endured “vessels of wrath” so that he can make known “the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy.” These “vessels of mercy,” Paul posits, could come from Jews *and* Gentiles. This seems to be the only answer that Paul can settle on because he has before him the problem that not everyone who is a part of ethnic Ἰσραὴλ is a part of his community of believers, Ἰσραὴλ. He then consults the Jewish scriptures again, this time quoting Isaiah’s prophecy about Ἰσραὴλ at 10:22-23: “Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of

²⁸⁰ Charles Talbert, *Romans*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Incorporated, 2002), 249.

²⁸¹ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 229.

the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved, for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the earth fully and without delay.”²⁸²

At 9:30 Ἰσραήλ is opposed to “Gentiles.” The “Gentiles” have attained righteousness without pursuing it while Ἰσραήλ pursued “a law that would lead to righteousness” yet did not succeed in reaching that law (Rom 9:31). The picture is of Gentiles and Jews as two runners. One runner, the Gentiles, reaches the goal, while the other runner, the Jews, does not. The picture is an odd one, though, as Keck explains: “The anomaly lies in the fact that the runner who ‘attained’ the goal, the Christian Gentiles, did not even ‘strive’ (*diōkōn*, pursue, run for, press on) for the goal, while the runner ‘who did strive’ for it, unbelieving Israel, did not arrive at it.”²⁸³ The difference between “Gentiles” here and Ἰσραήλ is a matter of faith, to be sure, for the “Gentiles” pursued righteousness by faith, while Ἰσραήλ did not. The picture also highlights Paul’s comments at the beginning of the chapter about God’s election. In 9:19-29, Paul makes his case as to why God has complete freedom to have “mercy on whomever he desires” and to “harden whomever he desires” (Rom 9:18).

Chapter 10 is a treatise on how salvation is for all and how it was always intended to be that way, according to Paul. Paul holds that relationship with God has always been on the basis of faith, as he does in Galatians. Does Ἰσραήλ not understand this, though? Paul quotes Isaiah 65:2, which says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.” This people, though they are disobedient is not

²⁸² Romans 9:27-28 quoting Isaiah 10:22-23.

²⁸³ Keck, *Romans*, 242.

rejected. “I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendent of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew” (Rom 11:1-2a). Paul’s reasoning as to why God has not rejected “his people,” according to Harvey, is that Paul “responded positively to Christ as the Law intended all of Israel should.”²⁸⁴ This is certainly one aspect of Paul’s use of himself as evidence. Keck, however, further, and more appropriately, nuances this point. To Keck, Paul is the “evidence that God has not rejected the *people*” because, “as throughout chapters 9-11, he is not thinking of individual Jews and Gentiles but of both as groups.”²⁸⁵ That is, Israel “*as a people*” cannot be seen as rejected by God if there are some of ethnic Israel that have not been rejected (i.e. have responded positively to the gospel).²⁸⁶

Ἰσραήλ, though, “failed to obtain what it was seeking” (Rom 11:7). Instead, “the elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened” (Rom 11:7). Ἰσραήλ has been hardened and God has given them a “spirit of stupor,” (Rom 11:8) according to Paul. Moreover, the Gentiles have received salvation “so as to make Israel jealous” (Rom 11:11). Paul’s argument moves along with a story about the olive tree that recounts the process of natural branches being cut off and wild branches being grafted in (Rom 11:16-24). The imagery is obvious, but Paul’s conclusion at 11:25-27 remains an enigma.

²⁸⁴ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 230.

²⁸⁵ Keck, *Romans*, 264.

²⁸⁶ Keck, *Romans*, 264. Italics original.

For I want you to understand this mystery, brothers, in order that you might not be wise in your own sight: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

Ἰσραήλ is the roots, trunk, and branches of the olive tree. Some of these branches have been broken off, apparently because they were being unproductive,²⁸⁷ while Gentiles, the wild olive shoots, have been grafted in to the open spots. The hope is that the branches that have been broken off will be jealous of the acceptance of the Gentiles by God and will “not continue in their unbelief” so that again they may “be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again” (Rom 11:23-24).²⁸⁸

Harvey claims that “only if read on its own” and, implied, out of context, “could 9:6 be read as support for the use of the phrase ‘True Israel.’”²⁸⁹ The claim at 9:6 is that οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ, “for not all who are out of/descended from Israel are Israel.” Harvey is right that, “In context ‘Israel’ is used as the name of a mixed group including believers like Elijah and Paul (followers of the example of Abraham’s faith) *and* those who are ‘hardened against the word of God’ (a state which is normative

²⁸⁷ So Harvey, *The True Israel*, 230.

²⁸⁸ Flusser, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament*, 242 draws a connection with this and literature in the Dead Sea Scrolls: “We may suppose that the sect imagined that the utterly wicked would be destroyed, but that the majority of the people would somehow in the last minute escape damnation and enter the New Covenant. This problem, so incompletely solved by the sect, became even more complicated and pressing when confronted by Paul, who was forced to clarify the relationship between the historical Israel and his new universal community as well as the function of Divine grace towards both bodies. Hence his profound discussion of the problem in the whole of chapter xi of the Epistle to the Romans. The solution is offered mainly in vss. 28-9: ‘As far as the gospel goes, they are enemies of God - which is to your advantage; but as far as election goes, they are beloved for their fathers’ sake.’”

²⁸⁹ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 231.

for ‘outsiders’ like Pharaoh).”²⁹⁰ However, Harvey seems to be glossing over the dual use of Ἰσραήλ in 9:6.²⁹¹ Paul seems to be using Ἰσραήλ in a specialized manner here, saying that there is one group, Ἰσραήλ, that is somehow different from another group, also called Ἰσραήλ. The claim about 9:6 that Harvey makes seems out of place when on the same page he remarks, “In Romans Paul labels two not (yet) entirely separate entities, ‘Israel.’ One is an ‘Israel after the flesh,’ descendants of Abraham. The other is a community of those who have believed in Jesus.”²⁹² There is clearly a difference between the two groups that bear the name Ἰσραήλ. Harvey continues that “the latter are a sub-group of the former, do not replace it and remain, for Paul, linked to it.”²⁹³ This qualification might be true if Paul had not spent three chapters talking about how the Gentiles are receiving righteousness even though they did not pursue it. Gentiles who are believers in Jesus cannot be a part of a group that is only a sub-group of ethnic Israel.

For Paul, Ἰσραήλ refers to both ethnic Israel as well as the group that contains members of ethnic Israel and Gentiles. Paul appears to constantly struggle with defining Ἰσραήλ so that he can reconcile his understanding of Ἰσραήλ as the people of God with his conviction that Gentiles are now becoming members of the people of God. Thus, while Paul does not use the phrase “True Israel” in his writings to describe the Ἰσραήλ

²⁹⁰ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 231.

²⁹¹ Talbert recognizes this dual use as well. Talbert, *Romans*, 249.

²⁹² Harvey, *The True Israel*, 231.

²⁹³ Harvey, *The True Israel*, 231.

that is equated with the “people of God,” the sentiment is present. Keck supports this conclusion as well when he speaks of Paul’s work to determine “who really *is* Israel”²⁹⁴ and when he speaks of the “identity of real Israel.”²⁹⁵ In addition, it is true that Paul does not assert what others who follow him do; namely, that ethnic Israel fully rejected Christ and thus now has no reason to continue existing.²⁹⁶ Paul also does not limit the term Ἰσραὴλ to Christians as Justin Martyr and *1 Clement* later do. Both of these facts need to be recognized and stated. However, one would be remiss to not also observe that Paul walked a very fine line with how he treated Ἰσραήλ; a position that he seemed to not even be certain about, laboring intensely over why all of Ἰσραὴλ had not yet become part of Ἰσραήλ.

²⁹⁴ Keck, *Romans*, 229.

²⁹⁵ Keck, *Romans*, 230.

²⁹⁶ See Harvey’s discussion, *The True Israel*, 232. In this discussion Harvey quotes Gager as saying, “Israel’s disobedience is not only not accidental to God’s plan of salvation, it has become an essential part of its fulfillment.”

Chapter 5

The Sociology of Paul's Use of Ἰσραήλ

This chapter will attempt to demonstrate what this paper holds as vital to understanding the term Ἰσραήλ, namely, that it was used to build individual and group identities. The concept of identity will be shown to be central to how Ἰσραήλ is interpreted and to who is posited as being a member. This highly sought after designation becomes such due to the process of the sacralization of the label. The desire for identity is elemental in humans, to be sure, but is also much more than this, especially in a case where religious identity is concerned. Once a certain identity becomes sacralized, or the object/symbol becomes sacralized, it is then necessary to defend that identity. This defense is most often done through interpretation and the use of insider/outsider language.

Yet, before one can delve into how Paul used Ἰσραήλ to establish identity on the personal and corporate level, an understanding of “identity” must be established. This chapter will work to understand “identity” by examining two relatively recent, though adequately vetted theories about identity: identity theory and social identity theory. Both theories will be applied to Paul and his use of Ἰσραήλ in an attempt to show that Paul's use of Ἰσραήλ was done in such a manner so as to build individual and group

identity around the term. Paul's struggle with just how to interpret Ἰσραήλ will be viewed through the lenses of both theories.

Erik Erikson holds that the term identity “connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others.”²⁹⁷ Erikson's conception of identity, though, has been subjected to the usual academic criticism and has been met with some resistance. The main critique of Erikson has been that his view “is imprecise and hard to operationalize.”²⁹⁸

Two theories of identity have taken hold in the academic study of the sociology of religion in more recent decades: identity theory and social identity theory. For Identity theory, “identity is the pivotal concept linking social structure with individual behavior.”²⁹⁹ In addition, “since everyone has multiple roles and, therefore, multiple role identities, the key question for identity theory becomes discovering which identities get translated into behavior.”³⁰⁰ Identity theory is somewhat opposed to the perspective of William James that “a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their minds.”³⁰¹ Identity theory holds that, while many others may have varying conceptions of who we are, we

²⁹⁷ Erik Erikson, “The Problem of Ego Identity,” in Maurice Stein, Arthur, Vidich, David Manning White, eds., *Identity and Anxiety* (Illinois: Free Press, 1960), 30 quoted in Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, 57.

²⁹⁸ Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 550.

²⁹⁹ Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 552.

³⁰⁰ Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 552.

³⁰¹ William James, *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1890), 294.

feel as if we are one person.³⁰² Social Identity theory differs from identity theory by focusing on group identity. Identity theory focuses on the “me,” while social identity theory focuses on the “we.”³⁰³ Social identity theory “emphasizes the importance of self-definitions of membership in social categories.”³⁰⁴ Membership in a social category, in social identity theory, becomes the primary basis for “behavior and self-regulation via the process of depersonalization and self-verification.”³⁰⁵ Social identity theory primarily deals with basic social categories such as ethnicity, race, and gender.³⁰⁶ Some attention has been given, though, to examining religious identity through the lens of social identity theory.³⁰⁷

Hans Mol examines how religious people and religious communities couple their identity with that which is understood by them to be sacred.³⁰⁸ Moreover, Mol asserts that religious communities sacralize their identity, that is, make their identity sacred. Mol fully defines sacralization thusly:

By sacralization, I refer to the process by means of which on the level of symbol-systems certain patterns acquire the same taken-for-granted, stable, eternal, quality which on the level of instinctive behavior was acquired by the

³⁰² Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 553.

³⁰³ Thoits and Virshup, “Me’s and We’s.”

³⁰⁴ Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 553.

³⁰⁵ Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 553.

³⁰⁶ Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 553.

³⁰⁷ Jeffrey R. Seal’s “Ours Is the Way of God” is one such example and will be briefly examined later.

³⁰⁸ Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, 1.

consolidation and stabilization of new genetic materials. Sacralization, then, is a sort of brake applied to unchecked infinite adaptations in symbol systems for which there is increasingly less evolutionary necessity and which become increasingly more dysfunctional for the emotional security of personality and for the integration of tribe or community. To say the same in an over-simplified way: sacralization is to the dysfunctional potential of symbol-systems what antibodies are to the dysfunctional, cancerous, possibilities in physical systems.³⁰⁹

Mol's point is that in a world of seemingly countless symbols, sacralization serves to set one symbol or symbol-system above the rest by giving it a sacred status.

For an identity to be established, though, one has to draw certain boundaries. James Dunn recognized the relationship between boundary and identity in Paul's writings, remarking that "the more a group or society feels itself under threat, the more it will tend to emphasize its boundaries."³¹⁰ Mol speaks of the "close affinity between identity-defence and sacralization."³¹¹ Mol is able to speak of this "close affinity" because of the definition that he offers for identity.

Identity on the personal level is the stable niche that man occupies in a potentially chaotic environment which he is therefore prepared vigorously to defend. Similarly, on the social level, a stable aggregate of basic and commonly held beliefs, patterns, and values maintains itself over against the potential threat of its environment and its members. "Consciousnesses" and "awareness" are less central to the usage of the concept than "boundaries."³¹²

Jeffrey Seul, in his essay, "'Ours Is the Way of God': Religion, Identity, and Intergroup Conflict," applies the social identity theory to religious identity in an effort to explain

³⁰⁹ Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, 5.

³¹⁰ Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, 122.

³¹¹ Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, 5.

³¹² Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, 65.

“why intergroup conflict so frequently occurs along religious fault lines.”³¹³ Seul links individual and group identity and speaks to how they affect intergroup conflicts.

Because individual identity is partially dependent upon the integrity of the in-group’s identity, threats to the in-group are experienced as threats to individual identity (Bloom, 1990). Conversely, threats to the identity of individual group members often will be perceived as threats to the group as a whole. Hence, group identity tends to intensify during periods of crisis (Stein, 1996).³¹⁴

When Paul experienced conflict with how he understood Ἰσραήλ, it was not just his personal identity at stake, which Galatians 1-2 shows he took very seriously and was quite sensitive about. Instead, the potential identity of all who accepted Jesus the same way he did was at stake, whether Jew or Gentile. Paul’s group of believers in Jesus needed a solid identity that served to legitimate them.

The identity formation of closely knit groups can be regarded as an astute response to the erosion of social, and the anomie of personal, identity. Groups are often the defenders of social values *vis-a-vis* the individual and the protectors of individuals against social alienation. They create miniature communities in a segmentalized, differentiated social whole. Through sacralizing their identities they counterbalance potential chaos with an emotionally anchored order.³¹⁵

This process of forming an identity for the group was not an easy task, though. This identity, if it was to gain traction and provide the group with order and a “stable niche,” had to be defended.

³¹³ Seul, “Ours Is the Way of God,” *Journal of Peace Research* 36 (1999): 553.

³¹⁴ Seul, “Ours Is the Way of God,” *Journal of Peace Research* 36 (1999): 557-8.

³¹⁵ Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, 183.

Defending an identity under attack necessarily results in insider/outsider language. This language often shows up when a group is defining its boundaries. Hence, the us/them language present in many of the Dead Sea scrolls. The War Scroll is an appropriate example because of its usage of “Sons of Light” and “Sons of Darkness.” The “Sons of Light” are part of the in-group, whereas the “Sons of Darkness” are part of the out-group. This type of language can be seen in Paul’s writings as well. Romans 9:6 states that οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ, “for not all who are out of/descended from Israel are Israel.” The us/them language is potentially a bit more difficult to recognize in Paul because the same term, Ἰσραήλ, is used for both groups. The language is clearer in the symbolism of Romans 11 of the olive tree with branches that have fallen off and others that have been grafted in. Further, Paul’s use of the phrase “Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16 implies very clearly that there is an Ἰσραήλ that is not “of God,” once again employing insider/outsider language.

Both identity theory and social identity theory provide the basis for how identity is understood in this section. For when Paul is working to establish identity, he appears to be working to establish his own identity as well as the identity of his group. Identity theory’s basis that “identity is the pivotal concept linking social structure with individual behavior”³¹⁶ is particularly helpful when analyzing Paul sociologically. When applied to Paul and his use of Ἰσραήλ, identity theory highlights the struggle that Paul had in determining “which identities get translated into behavior.”³¹⁷ For Paul had many

³¹⁶ Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 552.

³¹⁷ Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 552.

identities; some that complemented others and some that seemed to contradict others. He was a Hebrew, and Israelite, a follower of Jesus, a Hellenized Jew, an apostle, and an outsider to the Jerusalem church. Paul attempts to allow all of his identities to be equally translated into behavior, but that is not possible. Because Paul had, as identity theory tells us, “multiple roles and, therefore, multiple role identities,”³¹⁸ Paul had to determine which role identity was most important and would most affect his behavior.

Social identity theory also yields positive results when it is applied to Paul’s use of Ἰσραήλ. In social identity theory “behavior and self-regulation via the process of depersonalization and self-verification”³¹⁹ is a direct result of one’s membership in a social category. In other words, a person’s membership in a social category is one of the major factors for that person’s behavior. For Paul the process appears to go both ways. That is to say, a person’s membership in a social category influences that person’s behavior and a person’s behavior influences their membership in a social category. On the one hand, Paul’s behavior was certainly influenced by his being a member of Ἰσραήλ, as can be seen through his writings. On the other hand, Paul’s understanding of Ἰσραήλ was such that one had to have faith, a behavior of sorts, to be a member. Barclay appears to recognize this when he remarks that “faith emerges as the key factor in both identity . . . and in behaviour.”³²⁰

³¹⁸ Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 552.

³¹⁹ Greil and Davidman, “Religion and Identity,” 553.

³²⁰ Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 83.

In Paul's case, being a member of Ἰσραήλ had personal and group level implications. Paul understood himself as an Israelite (2 Cor 11:22), yet he had also chosen to follow Jesus. The transition made sense to Paul, but not all of his fellow Israelites saw things the same way. This led Paul to ask if God had rejected his people (Rom 11:1). He emphatically answers in the negative and then uses himself and Elijah as test cases (Rom 11:1-6). This section of Romans, chapters 9-11, conveys the struggle that Paul was experiencing because not all of ethnic Israel had responded positively to the gospel that he was preaching. He is able, though, to speak to the fate of ethnic Israel by using two individual test cases because, as Keck put it, "he is not thinking of individual Jews and Gentiles but of both as groups."³²¹ Viewing the individual as a representative of the group and the group as representing the individual not only means that how Paul ultimately understands Ἰσραήλ has consequences for him personally, but also on all who are members of ethnic Israel.

Moreover, according to Barclay, "the issues at stake in the Galatian crisis were *the identity* of these Galatian Christians and their *appropriate patterns of behaviour*."³²² Barclay understands Paul's rebuke of Peter and his redefinition of the Abrahamic family in terms of Paul either correcting misunderstandings about the "identity of Jewish and

³²¹ Keck, *Romans*, 264.

³²² Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 73.

Gentile believers”³²³ or “redefining the identity in ways which contradict some standard Jewish assumptions but are based on what he calls ‘the truth of the gospel.’”³²⁴

Establishing the correct identity for Ἰσραήλ was a taxing endeavor for Paul. He cared greatly for his fellow ethnic Ἰσραήλ, but also understood God to be working among the Gentiles (Rom 9-11). Gentiles, too, must be able to be part of Ἰσραήλ, for they are responding positively to the work of God through Jesus. This is clear by Paul’s use of “the Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16 to redefine Ἰσραήλ not so that it *excludes* Jews, but so that it *includes* Gentiles. Paul was surely aware of how “Israel” had been used before him by others. The fact that he redefines the term indicates that he was also an active participant in the debate over “who is Israel?” Paul’s redefinition of Ἰσραήλ effectively made the term sacred by equating it with the “people of God.”

Paul is a quintessential example of a religious leader who sacralized his group’s identity with his use of Ἰσραήλ. Paul knew full well what was at stake, “a people’s identity and self-understanding.”³²⁵ Ἰσραήλ was a sacred designation for Paul. Paul was not the first to sacralize the term, though. Philo sacralized the term when he interpreted the term as referring to an elite group of Jews who “see God.” Philo’s sacralization of Ἰσραήλ worked as a precedence for Paul’s sacralization of the term. For it seems that Paul’s sacralized understanding of Ἰσραήλ matches up very closely to Philo’s. Where Philo’s Ἰσραήλ was a group of elite Jews that “sees God,” Paul’s Ἰσραήλ is a group based

³²³ Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 77.

³²⁴ Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 81-2. See also 86, 92, 94.

³²⁵ Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, 123.

on faith in God and God's work. Being able to properly "see God" and rightly receive illumination from God is what allows one to maintain their faith in God. The main difference, then, between Philo's understanding of Ἰσραήλ and Paul's understanding of Ἰσραήλ is that Paul held that Gentiles could also be a part of Ἰσραήλ. Paul was working off of prior precedence to establish the identity of Ἰσραήλ.

What makes Paul's use of Ἰσραήλ to build individual and group identity more intriguing is that its very nature necessitates the coupling of sectarian as well as ethnic group identity formation characteristics. Ethnic groups, such as ethnic Ἰσραήλ, like sects, "tend to sacralize group identity. Yet, in contrast to sects, they do not generally forge a new identity but preserve an old one. This may explain why their fervour is less pronounced, although the maintenance of any strong boundary (whether old or new) requires emotional commitment."³²⁶ Using Ἰσραήλ to build identity means that there is a mix of sectarian and ethnic group characteristics. Thus, to form and sacralize the identity of Ἰσραήλ Paul preserves the old identity of ethnic Ἰσραήλ, but co-opts it so that it relates to his present, sectarian group.

Just as Philo's interpretation of Ἰσραήλ is an illustration in how the term "Israel" was used to build identity, so Paul's work aids in demonstrating the range of interpretive possibilities for Christians who come after him. Paul linked Ἰσραήλ to "the people of God" in a manner that allowed Gentiles to be a part. Once this became a possibility, those who followed Paul had little difficulty linking their view that "the Jews" had rejected Jesus, and therefore God, with the new usage of Ἰσραήλ. The rejection of

³²⁶ Mol, *Identity and the Sacred*, 174.

Jesus by “the Jews” caused them to lose their right to be counted among “the people of God,” thus they could no longer be part of Ἰσραήλ. Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, and the author of *1 Clement* are all able to assert that Ἰσραήλ is solely made up of Christians and not even entertain the thought of Jews being a part of Ἰσραήλ because of the basic framework that Paul had already established.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Chapter one presented a rather broad history of research. The nature of this project necessitates that the breadth of background materials be vast and diverse. Though many of the texts are not referenced directly in the body of the paper, they were all foundational in constructing a broad and faithful conception of the literary, cultural, and social milieu of late Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity. To be sure, though background works are extremely helpful in establishing this understanding, the most valuable sources in this endeavor are the primary sources themselves. For the primary texts force us away from unfounded preconceived notions and toward an historical account that is accurate, faithful, and lucid. This has been the goal of this paper and should be the goal of any historical work.

As was previously mentioned, no work has been devoted to understanding Paul's use of Ἰσραήλ from a sociological perspective, but instead only from the perspective of supersessionism. Certainly no shortage exists of works that question whether Paul was supersessionist or not, no matter how anachronistic the claim actually is. To be sure, supersessionism is an important question to be discussed, for it has significant implications not only in understanding some of the characteristics of the early church, but also for contemporary Jews and Christians who have reasoned interest in their

relationship with each other and in Jewish-Christian dialogue. However, too much of the focus in Pauline studies has been the question of the salvation of “Israel.”³²⁷ If, however, as this paper suggests, Pauline studies can begin to understand the psychological and sociological driving forces and implications of Paul’s activity and how that activity bears itself out in his writings, then other questions that consume so much time in scholarly circles, such as Paul’s views on the salvation of Israel, will find their discussions on much more solid ground. That is, applying social science to the study of the New Testament in general, and Paul in particular, will result in research that is based less on contemporary trends and that is less prone to mutability.

Graham Harvey’s work was invaluable throughout this project, having already compiled many instances of the term “Israel” being used throughout various Jewish and Christian works. This project differs from Harvey’s in that it offers explanation for the method that Paul employed when developing and utilizing a specific understanding of Ἰσραήλ, albeit a difficult process for him. This paper goes beyond Harvey’s work by not merely listing where Paul used Ἰσραήλ, but also asserting that his use of the term was premeditated and done with a particular agenda – to build an identity that would resonate with individuals and groups alike and that they could claim as their own.

Jewish uses of ישראל were examined in an effort to give adequate background to Paul’s usage. Offering the numerous examples from some post-exilic Hebrew Bible

³²⁷ It should also be noted that while this author is not a proponent of supersessionism, or replacement theology, I am aware that the methodology employed in reaching a supersessionist view is the same methodology that Paul uses to end up at his view of “Israel.” With that said, modern discussions of supersessionism may benefit from being examined from psychological and sociological perspectives.

books, Dead Sea Scrolls, and Philo's writings show the wide usage of the term and offers examples of how the term was used within Jewish circles and the range of possibilities of interpreting "Israel." This aspect of the paper is particularly important because, though Paul was certainly Hellenized, he was Jewish and seemed to have wanted to make sure that many of those whom he encountered knew of his heritage as well as his present position. Moreover, examining the term "Israel" without significant attention to how it was used in wholly Jewish settings results in only a satisfactory attempt to understand the term. This examination showed that **יִשְׂרָאֵל** bore many meanings throughout the Jewish literature analyzed in this paper. One aspect that shined brightly was how certain Qumran texts and Philo used the term to refer to specific communities or groups of people. These observations give credence to the hypothesis with which this paper began, that Paul was part of an intra-Jewish debate over the identity of "Israel" that is only later picked up and appropriated by Christians.

That this intra-Jewish debate was in fact taking place is seen in Paul's own accounts of his opposition, contained especially in Galatians. His opponents, or "Judaizers" as they are often called, were Jewish followers of Jesus that thought Gentile followers in Jesus should become Jewish to be in right standing with God. An obvious implication of this view is that Gentiles could not be a part of "Israel" without first becoming Jewish. Paul's Galatian opponents were heavily involved in the "who is Israel" debate, even if with no other party than Paul.

Examining non-Pauline and deuterio-Pauline Christian uses of Ἰσραήλ helps to determine the context within which Paul would have been writing. It is most likely that Paul wrote earlier than any of the other Christian texts examined, but they are still an active part of the context and offer insight into shifts in how Ἰσραήλ was used. For instance, in Ephesians Ἰσραήλ includes both Jews and Gentiles as “fellow heirs, members of the same body” (Eph 3:6), whereas in Mark the term is used in direct opposition to Gentiles. Further, in Luke-Acts, Ἰσραήλ is mixed with those who support Jesus and those who reject Jesus, while *1 Clement*, Justin Martyr, and Melito of Sardis hold that only Christians have the right to bear the name Ἰσραήλ. There were different understandings in Christian circles of just what “Israel” referred to, as in Jewish groups. This is likely due to the different influences of each community. Mark’s and Matthew’s communities were likely influenced by a more Jewish strand of Jesus followers and Ephesians, *1 Clement*, Justin Martyr, and Melito of Sardis were probably influenced by Pauline Christianity.³²⁸ Whatever their various influences were, lines that have traditionally been drawn when early Christian communities are in question are supported by how these various texts, which represent these particular communities, make use of Ἰσραήλ. Paul and those who followed him used Ἰσραήλ as a means to build identity for a set of believers in Jesus that believed the designation “the people of God” to be open to everyone, Jew and Gentile.

³²⁸ This part of the argument is based on the view that there was a real division within the early Church as is evidenced in Galatians and Acts that resulted in a more Jewish, or “conservative,” strand of early Christianity and a more Hellenized strand, led by Paul.

Traditional and contemporary understandings within the field of sociology with regards to identity, both on a personal and a corporate level, were also examined. The connection of Ἰσραήλ with “the people of God” gave the term a sacred status that other terms lacked. Because of this, if Paul was to offer solace and support to those who accepted the gospel he preached, then he had to find (or create) an interpretation of Ἰσραήλ that retained the sacred status as meaning “the people of God,” but that also allowed the inclusion of Gentiles. This was quite a difficult task for Paul because, while he did not believe that ethnic “Israel” had fully rejected God or that God had rejected them, he could not deny that many Jews had not accepted his message about Jesus. Jennifer Glancy states it this way, “The problem confronting Paul is that he cannot deny either God’s ancient election of the people Israel or the present call of the Gospel.”³²⁹ Both truths were equally real and valid for Paul, thus his understanding of Ἰσραήλ had to be inclusive of both Jews and Gentiles. Ἰσραήλ, in Paul’s thought, was more than large enough to accommodate any who desired to be a member.

Paul’s understanding of Ἰσραήλ, however, posited the existence of both a “true” and a “false” Ἰσραήλ. Undoubtedly, the phrase Ἰσραήλ τοῦ θεοῦ, the “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16) implies that there is an “Israel” that is not “of God.” Paul desired that everyone, that is, all Jews and Gentiles, would be a part of Ἰσραήλ. Nevertheless, his Ἰσραήλ, if it was to offer an identity that was worth claiming, must be meaningful and clear. That is, Paul had to establish boundaries that were unambiguous. As reluctant as he seemed to

³²⁹ Jennifer Glancy, “Israel vs. Israel in Romans 11:25-32,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 45 (1991): 191.

do this,³³⁰ he did establish boundaries in his treatises in Galatians and Romans, for he understood the necessity of such boundaries. Ἰσραήλ was a sacred identity that one had to be sure about and one that must be defended.

The work of this paper has implications in both the fields of early Christianity and New Testament. A full discussion of the Jewish background of and influence on the New Testament should include a sociological aspect to aid in understanding characteristics of texts that were previously only minimally discussed or understood. As mentioned earlier, many works that speak to the Jewish background of the New Testament or that work to understand Paul in his Jewish context deal mainly with his relation to the law and justification. This paper allows for a discussion of Paul's literature that includes significant references both to Jewish and Christian contexts, yet which does not pit Paul against one or the other. Moreover, much work has been done with the presence of "Israel" in Paul's works, but this work has largely centered on the question of salvation. That is, the question is often asked whether Paul thought that Jews could experience salvation or not. The question of whether Christians replace Jews as God's chosen people, also known as supersessionism, is anachronistically placed upon Paul and his writings. It is my hope that this paper moves Pauline studies forward in understanding Paul contextually and sociologically, resulting in less anachronistic discussions about his view of Jews and their salvation.

Finally, this paper offers an understanding of Paul's writings that is post-new perspective on Paul. The new perspective on Paul, with all of its additions to the field,

³³⁰ See Romans 9-11, for instance.

has maintained as its focus Paul's relation to the law and justification. It is the new perspective, though, that has allowed for new questions to be asked about Paul's relationship with Judaism. This paper was birthed largely out of insight gained from various new perspective authors as well as critiques of their works.³³¹ Thus, this paper proposes understanding the manner in which Paul interprets and uses the term Ἰσραήλ as being solidly part of an intra-Jewish debate that is co-opted by later Christians. The new perspective on Paul offers the foundation for viewing Paul from such a Jewish viewpoint, but lacks in portraying the sociological driving forces behind Paul's use of Ἰσραήλ and the resulting consequences.

The most immediate resulting consequence of Paul's use of Ἰσραήλ is that he effectively created a new identity. This new identity had meaningful implications for himself as well as for those who heard and accepted his gospel, whether Jew or Gentile. The breadth of the potential acceptance and application of this identity was a result of Paul walking a very fine line when interpreting Ἰσραήλ. Paul struggled to interpret Ἰσραήλ so that any who had faith in the work that God had done through Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, man or woman (Gal 3:28), would be able to rightfully and proudly bear the name Ἰσραήλ.

³³¹ Some of these works include John M. G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: Paul's Ethics in Galatians* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 2005); James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005); J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997); Mark D. Nanos, ed. *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002); and Krister Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *The Harvard Theological Review* 56 no. 3 (July 1963): 199-215.

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