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Not Lamb of God but Old Scape Goat: Job as Gospel Parody in Shemot Rabbah

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Abstract

This article argues that the Job scapegoat parable preserved in ySotah and Bereshit Rabbah, develops into subtle parody of Christian supersessionism that reaches its zenith in the medieval Shemot Rabbah. Shemot Rabbah transforms a terse allusion into an expansive narrative in which God offers Job, as a sacrificial goat to divert Samael's accusations of idolatry to enable the parting of the Sea. By foregrounding a righteous Job's own protest that God "hands me over to the evildoer" and makes him "a target for (the sake) of His people," Shemot Rabbah reconfigures patristic reception of Christian typology: Job becomes not a prefiguration of a Christ-like universal redeemer but a scapegoat whose suffering benefits Jews alone. The Midrash thereby inverts the Gospel motifs of the Agnus Dei in John and the roles of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25. Read against the Christian exegetic and visual environments of late antique and early medieval Palestine (e.g., Phillip the Presbyter), the rabbinic parable emerges as a parodic reorientation of Jewish-Christian imagery that asserts Jewish particularism while paralleling growing Christian particularism.

Keywords: Job, Parody and polemic, Midrash, Agnus Dei, Interreligious storytelling, Matthew 25, Jewish-Christian relations in Late Antiquity

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1. Introduction

An unusual rabbinic parable appears in three late antique and early medieval midrashic corpora. In each version, God offers the “goat” Job to a predatory wolf to safeguard His flock of Israel.¹ The shepherding motif and the Exodus Jews as a lamb are not distinct in midrash.² The goat sheep contrast is. Consequently, the versions differ in detail with the latest *Shemot Rabbah* manifestation containing numerous additions. Those additions are better understood in a Christian context.

Gabrielle Oberhänsli Widmer already recognized the unique flourishes of Job’s suffering in *Shemot Rabbah* as model of *vicarious suffering* (“stellvertretendes Leiden”; e.g., Is 53) that rabbinic Judaism suppressed later due to its Christian appropriation.³ Hence, she implied a broadly Christian context. However, I will show that the unique details engage with Christianity much further than she suggested.

Jeffrey Rubenstein’s work on rabbinic narrative encourages attention to such diachronic differences. Later redactors often reshaped inherited traditions to express new concerns.⁴ Similar processes appear in other rabbinic parodies. Faint motifs in

¹ I wrote this paper as part of my work for the FWF project, *Job in Jewish Literature of the Early Middle Ages* (Grant DOI 10.55776/PAT5867124t), Institute for Medieval Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences – Institute of Jewish Studies, University of Vienna. I thank Prof. Cordoni and Prof. Polliack for their early feedback, as well as Prof. Herman. I thank the two anonymous reviewers for asking for more early Christian context and for the clearer development model.

² Neither the image of God as shepherd nor Israel as his flock is especially interesting in talmudic literature; what requires explanation is the presence of Job as a scapegoat-figure. For the biblical shepherd motif, see Gen 48:15; 49:24; Deut 26:5–8; Jer 13:17; Mic 7:14; and especially Ezek 34:16, 20, 23–24. On God as shepherd-judge, see Jack Vancil, “Shepherd,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:1189–91; and C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 310. For the rabbinic parable in which Israel is a lamb pulled between Pharaoh (the wolf) and Moses (the shepherd), see *Shemot Rabbah* 5:21 // *Tanchuma* Va’Era 6 (attrib. R. Yehuda b. Shalom). On God seeking the lost lamb, see *Midrash Tehillim* 119:3. For Israel as God’s firstborn lamb saved by sacrificing the ass (= Egypt), see *Tanchuma* Bamidbar 20; for Isaac as a lamb, *Tanchuma* Shemot 1; and for God’s singular love for Israel as a lone lamb among many, *Tanchuma* Buber, Beshalach 15. These might be other late midrash uses of the lamb motif but not parodies of it.

³ Gabrielle Oberhänsli-Widmer, “Hiob in Midrasch und Talmud,” in *Hiob in jüdischer Antike und Moderne*, vol. 3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 146–48. This kind of Isaiah reading is also possible in the other less extensive versions and thus not specific enough. Even the more so considering v.7 sees the servant as a lamb. Moreover, she describes *Shemot Rabbah* 21:7 as growing out of the combination of the two shouts in the inyan-verse and the petiḥa-verse: Exodus 14:15 (‘Then the Lord said to Moses: Why do you cry out to me?’) and Job 36:19 (‘Is your cry for help ready before distress comes?’).

⁴ Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). See also Michael L. Satlow, “Beyond Influence: Toward a New Historiographic Paradigm,” in *Jewish Literatures and Cultures: Context and Intertext*, ed. Anita Norich and Yaron Z. Eliav (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008), 37–53.

Palestinian Amoraic texts grow more pointed in the Bavli, before reaching fuller expression in medieval works, such as Alpha Beta de Ben Sira.⁵

The second section of this paper (2) will show that what starts as a parable in the Yerushalmi that may suppress a postbiblical demonic obstacle to the Exodus, turns into polemic with precedents for the Gentile church in Bereshit Rabbah before coalescing into a full-blown parody of Gospel reception in Shemot Rabbah.⁶

I will demonstrate (2.3) that Shemot Rabbah's unique contents constitutes what Holger Zellentin would define as an *external parody*: a rabbinic text that: 1. imitates to overturn a text outside of rabbinic literature (// gospel reception). 2. Mostly targets supersessionist readings (the words of Samuel unique to Shemot Rabbah).⁷ 3. Shows an element of self-criticism and ambiguity (// Job's survival and righteousness unique to Shemot Rabbah).

This parodic reading aligns with a broader scholarly view that post Constantinian rabbis developed older narratives into subtle polemical ones. These narratives rarely mention Christianity directly, yet they engage its theological claims and cultural presence.⁸ Furthermore, while it is untenable that large sections in midrash are meant as anti-Christian polemic, scholars have recognized enough cases to necessitate a contemplating comparative reading. Such readings can further our understanding of seemingly inexplicit changes in rabbinic versions of various periods.

⁵ Holger M. Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 226–30.

⁶ For the rabbinic parable in which Israel is a lamb pulled between Pharaoh (the wolf) and Moses (the shepherd), see ShemR 5:21 // Tan Va'era 6 (attrib. R. Yehuda b. Shalom). On God seeking the lost lamb, see MidTeh 119:3. For Israel as God's firstborn lamb saved by sacrificing the ass (// Egypt), see *Tanchuma* Bamidbar 20; for Isaac as a lamb, Tan Shemot 1; and for God's singular love for Israel as a lone lamb among many, TanB, Beshalach 15. These are other late midrash uses of the lamb but not parodies of it.

⁷ Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 139.

⁸ See for instance, Burton L. Visotzky, "Goys 'R'n't Us: Rabbinic Anti-Gentile Polemic in Yerushalmi Berakhot 9:1," in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 299–313; Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Mark G. Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996); and E. P. Sanders, ed., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).

I will chart a parallel medieval move from Yerushalmi/Bereshit Rabbah to Shemot Rabbah. This move parallels the wildly held view that as it is in the later redacted Bavli rather than Palestinian sources one finds direct confrontation with Christianity. Hence, it is logical that equally later redacted Palestinian midrash, such as Shemot Rabbah, might also be more explicit and elaborate.⁹

As the rabbis do not overtly cite Christian texts, this study (part 3) follows Zellentin's methodological approach that uses Patristic interpretations as proxies for the Christian exegetical environment that surrounded the rabbis.¹⁰ I will first discuss such commentaries that establish Job as a prefiguration of Jesus and as later ones that like Shemot Rabbah, argue for an identification with the Lamb of God as well, especially Gregory the Great, whose ever popular "Moralia in Iob" and a lesser-known Commentary of Phillip the Presbyter that uses the same Joban verses as the Midrash as anti-Jewish polemic. I then will reread both John (3.1) and Matthew (3.2) to illustrate the inversion of their interpreted theologies in Shemot Rabbah. An inversion that suggests familiarity with older perhaps Jewish Christian views.

Before I begin, however, I must raise an important methodological note. This parody does not require even an indirect rabbinic engagement with Patristic writings. Jewish Christian texts (e.g., Epistle of Barnabas), Christian liturgy, visual culture, and public recitation of Gospel passages made the Lamb symbol widely accessible. Early Christian art, including in Palestine, frequently depicted the "Good Shepherd", and early medieval representations of John holding a lamb publicized the Agnus Dei motif.¹¹ The Agnus Dei prayer in Christian liturgy, the presence of monastic flocks of sheep rather than goats as living fulfillment of the typology,¹² and the growing medieval interest in Job through the Office of the Dead further contributed to a shared symbolic environment.¹³

⁹ See Daniel Boyarin, "Hellenism in Jewish Babylonia," in Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 358.

¹⁰ Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 141–42.

¹¹ S. J. Nortjé, "Lamb of God (John 1:29): An Explanation from Ancient Christian Art," *Neotestamentica* 30, no. 1 (1996): 143, 148.

¹² Matilda Holmes, "The 'Lamb of God' in the Early Middle Ages: A Zooarchaeological Perspective," *Journal of Medieval History* 49, no. 5 (2023): 701–10.

¹³ Lawrence L. Besserman, *The Legend of Job in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 57–58.

Figure 1: Throne of Maximian (early Sixth Century, John is in the middle panel holding a lamb medallion):¹⁴



The argument advanced here remains speculative, since early medieval Palestinian rabbinic culture survives only in fragments. Nevertheless, the contextual reading of the Job goat parable and its elaboration in *Shemot Rabbah* produces a more coherent interpretive framework that enriches our understanding of both Jewish and Christian sources and communities.¹⁵ The paper will argue that most of *Shemot Rabbah*'s details, such as Job's survival and confession, would be senseless without a comparative reading.

2. Analysis of the Rabbinic Versions

A close examination of the three extant rabbinic versions: *ySotah* 5:6, *Bereshit Rabbah* 57:4, and *Shemot Rabbah* 21:7, reveals a diachronic progression from terse allusion, to polemic, and to expansive parodic narrative. What starts as implied chronological considerations ('what is the connection between Job and the Exodus?') in the *Yerushalmi*, turns into polemic in *Bereshit Rabbah* ('who cares if Job suffers?'), and into a full parody in *Shemot Rabbah* ('Job as Jesus as Scapegoat just for Jews'). The following translations are my updates of Joseph Leibowitz.¹⁶

2.1 *The Yerushalmi*: Repression of Satan and Moral Anxiety

R. Yose b. Halaftah says: He (Job) lived when they (Israel) went down into Egypt and died when they came out.

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throne_of_Maximian#/media/File:Catedra_de_Maximiano.jpg

Uploaded: 4 February 2018.

¹⁵ Contrast Peter Schäfer's introduction in *Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed. Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 1–23.

¹⁶ See Joseph Leibowitz, "The Image of Job in Rabbinic Literature," PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1987, 263–267.

It is like a shepherd when a wolf came and attacked his sheep. What did he do? He took one goat and placed it before him, as it is written “God hands me over to the evildoer and through the hands of the wicked He wrings me out” (Job 16:11).

R. Ishmael said in a Baraita: Job was of Pharaoh's slaves and of the grandees of his entourage was he, as it is written “He that feared the word of the Lord” (among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses) (Exod 9:20) and it is written of him “and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). (ySot 25b [5:6])

The Yerushalmi, or Palestinian Talmud, is a rabbinic compilation produced in late fourth to early fifth-century Roman Palestine. This a period marked by Constantine’s conversion, Julian’s failed temple project, the decline of Jewish institutions such as the Patriarchate, and the Christianization of Palestine. The Yerushalmi thus reflects the first prominence of a rabbinic community, one who responded to profound shifts in power and identity. Because it is possibly the first major rabbinic work shaped within a fully Christian imperial context, the Yerushalmi usually provides a fitting point of departure for examining early Jewish responses to Christianity.¹⁷ However, the context of the parable seems lacking in this account.

In the above, R. Yose b. Halaftah states that Job lived during Israel’s descent into Egypt and died when they left. The parable that follows describes a shepherd who confronts a wolf that attacks his sheep. The shepherd places a goat before the wolf, and the wolf turns toward the goat. The text cites Job 16:11 to support this image. R. Ishmael then identifies Job as part of Pharaoh’s inner circle, based on a linguistic analogy.¹⁸

The Yerushalmi opens with an implied chronological question of when Job lived. It then proves the asserted Exodus context using a parable whose details are unclear. There are no lesson and no mention of the wolf’s identity. The account then moves

¹⁷ See for instance, Catherine Heszer, “The Creation of the Talmud Yerushalmi and Apophthegmata Patrum as Monuments to the Rabbinic and Monastic Movements in Early Byzantine Times,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2018): 368–93. Stylistically, it favors concise halakhic rulings, limits debate, avoids speculative reasoning, and often harmonizes disagreements features could be interpreted as a deliberate strategy to assert coherence and authority in a Christianizing environment. See David C. Kraemer, “The First Talmud: The Yerushalmi,” in *A History of the Talmud*, 100–25 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

¹⁸ Job is identified using an undisclosed deduction that someone in Pharaoh’s vicinity was also “God fearing” as told of Job (1:1) and had much cattle like Job’s many possessions.

into the realm of apologetics to tie both parable and setting. Job deserved to die and suffer in his namesake book because he was one of Pharaoh's councilors.¹⁹

However, the parable raises further difficulties when it cites Job's complaint (16:11). The Yerushalmi has already stated that Job died at the time of the Exodus. If v.11 occurred at that time when God gave Job to Satan as a distraction, then Job outlived this compliant verse and the Exodus for decades based on his longevity (Job 42:16).²⁰ Were these complaints spoken at the time of his death or before his restoration?

Overall, the Yerushalmi version uses the parable to allude to a narrative it does not spell out. Bereshit Rabba and Shemot Rabbah, as we shall see, identify the wolf as Satanic resistance to the Exodus. The same idea is to be found in, for instance, Jubilees 48. God binds Mastêmâ to prevent him from accusing the Israelites and delaying the Exodus:

15 And on the fourteenth day and on the fifteenth and on the sixteenth and on the seventeenth and on the eighteenth the prince of the Mastêmâ was bound and imprisoned behind the children of Israel that he might not accuse them. 16. And on the nineteenth we let them loose that they might help the Egyptians and pursue the children of Israel... 18. And on the fourteenth we bound him that he might not accuse the children of Israel on the day when they asked the Egyptians for vessels and garments, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of bronze, in order to despoil the Egyptians in return for the bondage in which they had forced them to serve. (Charles, 1913)

Consequently, the Yerushalmi parable presupposes and resolves a narrative akin to this Jubilees one, through the sacrifice of Job. God distracted Satan with the Job narrative. The Yerushalmi thus emerges as another rabbinic repression of older

¹⁹ Judith Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition* (Chicago: Brown Judaic Studies, 1983), 23–24.

²⁰ Leibowitz, "Image of Job", 264.

traditions implying limited dualism, which a later midrash, restates openly. Better not say Satan is that autonomous and Job had it coming.²¹

2.2 *Bereshit Rabbah*: Triumph Over Prefiguration of the Church

R. Yose b. Halaftah says: He was born when they went down into Egypt and died when they came out.

You find that essentially Job's years were 210 and Israel stayed in Egypt for 210 years.

And Satan came to bring charges against them and He let him loose on Job.

R. Hanninah b. Aha and R. Hama bar Haninnah (differ): R. Haninah b. Aha says: (It is) as a shepherd *who would stand and watch his flock*. A wolf came and attacked it (lit. wanted to become attached to it). He said: give it one *he-goat that he might let loose upon it*.

R. Hama b. Haninah says: (it is) as a king who is sitting at a meal and a dog comes and attacks him. He says give him a bone that he *might let loose upon it*.

As it is said “God hands me over to the evildoer²² and through the hands of the wicked He wrings me out” (Job 16:11) *O that it was righteous men! But wicked men?! (BerR 27:4; emphasis mine)*²³

Bereshit Rabbah, the earliest rabbinic commentary on Genesis (Roman Palestine 5th century CE), offers a distinctly rabbinic interpretation of Genesis that also counters Gnostic and other esoteric readings of the text.²⁴ Compatibly, *Bereshit Rabbah* shows signs of Rabbinic acculturation to the Christianized Empire through its “polyphony” or the expressions of multiple views that counteract crystalizing Christian dogmatism.²⁵

²¹ See Adelman, *Return of the Repressed*, introduction. For other such struggles with Satan in midrash, including ShemR, see Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, 3rd printing (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975), 140–44 [in Heb.].

²² Satan is implied to be “the evil doer” singular capitalized, a known evil doer

²³ The second parable attributed to R. Hama b. Haninah describes God as a king sitting and eating, implying the scene of the first Passover, attacked by a dog. The fact that Satan’s ill intent towards the Jews is interpreted as directed at the King himself heightens the divine intimacy.

²⁴ Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 303. See extensively in for example, *Genesis Rabbah in Text and Context*, Peter Schäfer, Martha Himmelfarb, Sarit Kattan Gribetz and David M. Grossberg. Eds., (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

²⁵ On topics such as Creation, the Destruction of the Temple, Eden, the Patriarchs, and more. See Maren R. Niehoff, “Creatio Ex Nihilo Theology in Genesis Rabbah in Light of Christian Exegesis,” *Harvard Theological Review* 99, no. 1 (2006): 37–64; Hanan Mazeh, “Built, Destroyed, and Built Again: Temple and History in Genesis Rabbah in Light of Christian Sources,” *The Jewish Quarterly*

Bereshit Rabbah 27:4 is easier to parse than the Yerushalmi and has clear polemical overtones. It introduces Satan as the wolf (“and Satan came) and replaces the Yerushalmi’s moral discomfort with triumphalism (“As it is said”). Bereshit Rabbah presents two parables that share a lesson. R. Haninah b. Aha describes a shepherd who watches his flock. A wolf approaches, and the shepherd offers a single he-goat to divert it. R. Hama b. Haninah offers a second image. A king sits at a meal when a dog attacks him. The king orders that a bone be given to the dog so that it will turn away. Both parables share the same formulation that trivializes the sacrifice of Job, notably only “one” goat or bone compared to a whole flock or meal offered to “let loose over it.” Job is not important to God.

Bereshit Rabbah differs significantly than the Yerushalmi in its triumphant tone. Judith Baskin suggested that Amoraic texts, like Bereshit Rabbah, argued for the primacy of the Jews over even righteous Christians through the sacrifice of Job. In this way, the rabbis could unravel the polemical views that saw in such righteous figures the precedent for the Gentile Church replacing then contemporary Jews.²⁶

Compatibly, the most significant difference between the Yerushalmi and Bereshit Rabbah is that Job’s moral indignation is embraced rather than explained away as his punishment: “O that it was righteous men! But wicked men?!” Hence, Bereshit Rabbah leaves Job’s indignation with no answer. It does not need one. Consequently, Bereshit Rabbah is the rabbis generic answer to Job’s appropriation by various Church fathers (3 below).

In terms of literary development, it is very difficult to ascertain whether the Yerushalmi is more primal than Bereshit Rabbah or whether these are parallel versions contending with the same Second Temple dualism, whereupon the Yerushalmi is laconic where Bereshit Rabbah is extant. At most, one can argue for *Lectio difficilior potior* in favor of the Yerushalmi.

In terms of polemics, however, Bereshit Rabbah with its two parables and Joban complaint is a clear development of anti-righteous Gentile sentiments. Nonetheless, it

Review 110, no. 4 (2020): 652–78; *The Exegetical Encounter Between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*, ed. Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

²⁶ Baskin, *Pharaoh’s Councilors*, 19–21.

is to Shemot Rabbah's elaborations I will turn for a more direct parody of Christian typologies and claims.

2.3 *Shemot Rabbah*: Narrative Parody

R. Hama bar Haninah said, at the hour when Israel came out of Egypt, Samael the angel stood to bring charges against them.

R. Hama bar Haninah explained it in the name of his father: A parable of a shepherd *who was taking sheep across the river*. A wolf came to attack the sheep. The shepherd *who was an expert*, what did he do? He took a *large goat* and gave it to him. *He said let him fight with this (goat) until we cross the river and afterwards, I will bring him (the goat) over.*

So too when Israel left Egypt, Samael the angel stood to condemn them. *He said to the Holy One, blessed be he, Master of the Universe, until now these people were worshipping Idols and now you are splitting the Sea for them?*

What did the Holy One, blessed be he, do? He gave over to him *one of the advisors to Pharaoh*, as it is written "a wholehearted and upright man" (Job 1:1).²⁷ He said to him (Samael): He is in your hands. The Holy One, blessed be he, said, *while he is busy with Job Israel will go to the Sea and go into it and afterwards, I will save Job.*

This is what Job said: "I was at ease and He smashed me, he seized me by the neck and crushed me (Job 16:12a)" in order to make me a target for (the sake) of His people, as it is said "He sat me up as his target" (Job 16:12b) and it is written "God hand me over to the evil doer" (Job 16:11) and in order that Israel should not come out evil in the judgment, He wrings me out in his hands. This is what is meant by "and through the hands of the wicked he wrings me out.(Job 16:11)"

At the same time the Holy One, blessed be he, said to Moses, Moses behold I have given Job to Satan. What should you do? "Speak to the People of Israel that they should travel (Exod 14:15)." (ShemR 21:7; emphasis mine)

This section of Shemot Rabbah is part of the older and larger homiletic Tanchuma section (chapters 16ff), a collection of thematic sermons, which belongs to the "middle" Tanchuma literature, so named after one of its common sages R. Tanchuma. This literature constitutes the major aggadic contribution of the early middle ages. Thus, this account was redacted in fifth to the latest eighth century (Palestine?). I view it as secondary compared to the Amoraic ones above in light of its massively

²⁷ See Leibowitz, "Image of Job," 267.

expanded version of the parable and the anonymity of the speakers.²⁸ I cannot guarantee whether Shemot Rabbah is adapting an account like the Yerushalmi or like Bereshit Rabbah, though the latter seems likelier through the only named sage.²⁹

R. Hama bar Haninah teaches that when Israel left Egypt and were standing before the Sea, Samael stood ready to accuse them of idolatry. He explains this through a parable. A shepherd leads his sheep across a river. A wolf approaches, and the shepherd, who is an expert, places a large goat before the wolf. The wolf turns toward the goat, and the shepherd brings the sheep across. He then returns for the goat that survives. Shemot Rabbah applies this image to the Exodus. Samael challenges Israel's worthiness, and God responds by handing Job to him. Job appears as one of Pharaoh's advisors but only described just as "wholehearted and upright."³⁰ God instructs Moses to lead Israel forward while Samael remains occupied with Job.

Given that Shemot Rabbah is replete with details, I will divide these into internal literary developments and polemical ones. I shall first briefly go over the literary changes. First, the Midrash enhances the prestige of the characters. God is extolled as an "expert" shepherd. Job is now a "large goat," implying his importance and merit. Second, literary adaptations to tighten the connection between parable and lesson-narrative. The narrative is relocated to the Sea crossing to better fit with the river detail in the parable as bodies of water.³¹ Job quotes 16:12a in a fuller manner, which is a verse section that fits a wolf attack better (seizing by the neck). Lastly, apologetics. God promises to return for Job and save him, thus eliminating the

²⁸ The most extensive analysis is still Zohara Pardess-Feinstein, "The Pentateuchal Portions Concerning the Tabernacle (Terumah-Tetzavveh, Vayyaqhel-Pequdei) in Midrash Exodus Rabbah II – Text, Content, Structure and Goals," PhD diss., (Jerusalem, 2010), 267–84. Her dating is based on its sages and uses of Greek and Latin. Our text is mostly anonymous.

²⁹ The parable is attributed to Hama bar Haninah in the name of his father, contrast with him being the one telling the other parable in Bereshit Rabbah. Perhaps this faulty attribution further shows secondary nature. The anonymous authors misremembered.

³⁰ Overall, The presentation of Job in Shemot Rabbah is ambivalent. Job was as compared to a drunk who wanted to confront God until he saw that God showed equal disfavor to those closer to him (ShemR 30:11). Job could not argue against God as he did not know from which of Adam's organ's he descended from (ShemR 40:3). Compared to these sources, Job in 21:7 also seems uniquely positive.

³¹ Compare the overall genre of aiding something to cross a river by distracting a predator the famous combinatorics problem of sheep, wolf, and cabbage, Alcuin first recorded in the eighth century CE and possessing parallels in many cultures. See Marcia Ascher, "A River-Crossing Problem in Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Mathematics Magazine*, 63, No. 1 (1990): 26–29. Through such a comparative reading, the Midrash solution is not math or cunning but God and sacrifice. A different theology.

problem of chronology seen in the Yerushalmi and the possible immorality of his suffering in Bereshit Rabbah.³²

Three other expansions are theologically significant. They argue innovatively that even an innocent Job is unimportant to God compared to an even guilty Judaism and that accusing the present Jews of ungratefulness during the Exodus is irrelevant.

1) Samel echoes supersessionist claims.³³ Jews being ungrateful even though they were allowed to cross the Sea during the Exodus, unlike the martyred Gentile Christian converts the devil persecutes (// Job?), are found, for instance, as early as in Justin Martyr's (d. 165 CE) *Dialogus* with Trypho (131): "How much more faithful to God the Gentiles are who are converted to Christ than the Jews:"

... And you yourselves, if you will confess the truth, must acknowledge that we, who have been called by God through the despised and shameful mystery of the cross (for the confession of which, and obedience to which, and for our piety, punishments even to death have been inflicted on us by demons, and by the host of the devil, through the aid ministered to them by you), and endure all torments rather than deny Christ even by word, through whom we are called to the salvation prepared beforehand by the Father, *are more faithful to God than you, who were redeemed from Egypt with a high hand and a visitation of great glory, when the sea was parted for you, and a passage left dry, in which [God] slew those who pursued you with a very great equipment, and splendid chariots ...* (ANF01:265).

The assigning of the accusations in the passage to a satanic figure is comparable to the ways in which Shemot Rabbah addresses the role of Satan and patristic anti-Judaism in the Golden Calf episode as well (ShemR 41:7; 43:1). If Samael says such things, their veracity and relevance voiced by patristic lips might be suspect.³⁴

2) God does not answer Samaels' accusation "Master of the Universe, until now these people were worshipping Idols and now you are splitting the Sea for them" but rather

³² Leibowitz, "Image of Job," 265–66. It may be significant that Shemot Rabbah expands only the sheep and goat parable not the dog one from Bereshit Rabbah but that could also be adaptive to the Exodus setting of flock // people, if ShemR knows BerR.

³³ See more arguments against the Jews of the Exodus in *John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*, Homily 17 on Acts 7:39ff, in PG 60:129–38; Jerome, *Commentariorum in Ezechielem* (CCSL 75); Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on Ezekiel*, on Ezekiel 20, in PG 81:813–904.

³⁴ See counter-polemics using Satan thus as a "Church Father" in Moshe Aberbach and Leivy Smolar, "The Golden Calf Episode in Postbiblical Literature," *HUCA* 39 (1968): 91–116 and Devorah Schoenfeld, *Isaac on Jewish and Christian Altars: Polemic and Exegesis in Rashi and the Glossa Ordinaria* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 42, 45, 51–52.

sacrifices Job to him. This implies silent agreement. Job himself acknowledges the inverted Jewish superiority. He was sacrificed “for (the sake) of *His* (God’s) people”, and so “that Israel should not come out evil in the judgment.” Israel, even guilty, matter more to God than Job. Job’s phrasing evokes Balaam’s depiction of “He is just going to give the Torah to his (God’s) people and his friends (Mek. R. Yishm. Amalek 3 [Lauterbach]).” Job like Balaam and the nations is self-excluded.³⁵

3) Job is implied to be innocent. While ShemR recognizes Job like in the Yerushalmi, as one of Pharaoh’s councilors, the shorter version makes the impression that Job is just a dignitary (= *large* goat). This is how Jason Kalman understands ShemR following the Zoahr’s later reinterpretation of this very account: “In order to be chosen as a scapegoat, one needs to be righteous.”³⁶

Taken together, Job’s newfound *innocence* and the Israelite’s established *guilt* charge the sheep and goat imagery with the necessary parody inversion of Christian typology rather than restatement of it. They thus also answer Samel (// Christianity)’s claims of ungrateful idolatry.

Linda Hutcheon’s description of parody as “repetition with ironic critical distance” will help clarify how this works.³⁷ In my suggested reading, repeating the symbols of sheep and goat implies Job// Jesus is not the immaculate lamb the saves all mankind (John 1) but a scapegoat meant only for the Jews. Job is not the divine shepherd that separates sinful (Jewish?) goat from righteous (Christian?) sheep (Matthew 25) but one of the goats.

Furthermore, Zellentin describes such *external parody* as ShemR aa always containing an element of self-criticism. Such self-criticism is seen in Job’s

³⁵ See at length in Sivan Nir, *Characterization in Midrash and Medieval Jewish Bible Commentaries*, (Atlanta: SBL Press, December 2024), 34–37.

³⁶ That blamelessness is how the Zohar reads our passage. In order to be chosen as a scapegoat, one needs to be righteous: “Here is a strong and powerful ram [Job], I will throw it to him [Satan], and while he is busy with it my sons shall cross and not be attacked.” (Zohar III:101b). Note the again added superlatives for Job as goat. See Jason Kalman, “6: Karaites, Mystics, and Anthologizers on Job,” *The Many Faces of Job: The Premodern Period*, ed. Choon-Leong Seow, Handbooks of the Bible and its Reception 5.1 (Berlin/ Boston: De Gruyter, 2023): 121–22. Contrast with the other Zohar retelling of this narrative that eliminates ShemR details in favor of Job 1–2 (Zohar II:32b–34a).

³⁷ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), xi.

emphasized salvation compared to Bereshit Rabbah. Shemot Rabbah implies uneasiness with the Job dying for the guilty.³⁸

Before I establish the quoting of Christian imagery and its reception, I must establish the Job as Jesus reading as a widespread typology in the assumed period.

3. Job as Jesus: A Common Late Antique and Medieval Typology

Patristic and medieval exegesis consistently identified Job with Jesus.³⁹ Jerome, Zeno, and others cast Job as a prefiguration of Jesus.⁴⁰ That is one probable explanation to the antipathy to Job in Bereshit Rabbah.

Zellentin suggests that the Palestinian rabbis parodied the Gospel along with its Byzantine interpretation.⁴¹ Compatibly, the equation of Job// Jesus// lamb is not only extant but characteristic of later and more medieval sources like Shemot Rabbah and Byzantine and medieval Christian receptions. For example, in the figural exegesis of an Arian or Homoian commentary for Lent (Pseudo-Origen, PG 17, 371–522; North Africa, second or third decade of the sixth century CE?): Job outside the city evokes Christ's suffering "outside the city gate" (Heb 13:12; In Iob, II, 32–33); his perseverance makes him a "type and figure" of the lamb (In Iob, II, 10.23–25); his sacrifice for his children (1:5) prefigures Christ, the Lamb of God (In Iob, I, 31.3–10); and his innocent suffering anticipates Christ's passion (In Iob, II, 20.1–7).

Furthermore, the Jesus// lamb // Job typology does not require esoteric commentaries. Even Gregory the Great's *Moralia* (595 CE), the best known and most authoritative

³⁸ Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 26. This ambiguity to Job may be part of the Bakhtinian but uniquely medieval "sacral parody" nature of late midrash that delineates borders while undermining them (contrast "the grotesque"). I thank Prof. Meira Polliack for this suggestion that I will explore at greater depth elsewhere.

³⁹ Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors*, 32–43. Early proponents of the typological identification of Job with Jesus include Jerome, *Commentariorum in Iob*, in *PL* 26:801–2; and Zeno of Verona, *Tractatus* 15, in *PL* 11:439–43; see further in Hans Datz, *Hiob in der patristischen Exegese* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), 150–53. The association of Job and Jesus gained additional support from frequent patristic contrasts between each of them and Adam; for details, see Barbara K. Lewalski, *Milton's Brief Epic: The Genre, Meaning, and Art of Paradise Regained* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1966), 178–79; and Joseph Siger, *Adam et Job: Étude sur la typologie patristique* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1972), 11–12. Contrast Job being born circumcised as another form of rabbinic polemic against this equation (ARN B 2:5) and possibly also ShemR 40:3.

⁴⁰ Choon-Leong Seow, "10 :Job in an Age of Controversy in the Church: Latin Interpreters," in *The Many Faces of Job: The Premodern Period*, ed. Choon-Leong Seow, *Handbooks of the Bible and its Reception* 5.1 (Berlin/ Boston: De Gruyter, 2023): 234–38.

⁴¹ Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 167.

commentary on the Book of Job in Western Christendom for nearly a thousand years, makes the Christ// Job// Lamb typology canonical and widespread.⁴² Gregory not only mentions that Job is a prefiguration (Preface 14; 16) but that he prophesied that Jesus as the *Lamb of God* will purify mankind (Book VIII:56). Moreover, Job like Jesus was a sacrifice:

Job does not cease ‘to offer sacrifice continually,’ in that our Redeemer offers a holocaust for us without ceasing, Who without intermission exhibits to the Father His Incarnation in our behalf. For His very Incarnation is itself the offering for our purification, and while He shews Himself as Man, He is the Intercession that washes out man's misdeeds, and in the mystery of His Humanity He offers a perpetual Sacrifice, even because those things too are eternal which He purifies. (*Moralia*, Book I: 32).

Gregory explicitly interprets Job's ritualistic sacrifices as a prefiguration of Jesus's personal and perpetual sacrifice that purifies humanity of sin “washes out man's misdeeds”. This is precisely the role assigned to Jesus as Lamb of God; Precisely the role *Shemot Rabbah* alone assigned to the Goat sacrificed to Samel in favor of redeeming its uniquely sinful Jews. Yet, this is the theological construction *Shemot Rabbah* subverts when Job declares he suffers only “for His people.”, for God's people, rather than for all mankind (“man's”).

Gregory need not serve as evidence of direct rabbinic engagement. Instead, he illustrates a broader prolonged medieval Christian exegetical environment in which Job carried these typological associations through the age's most popular commentary. Such associations circulated widely through comparable homiletic practices, liturgy, and visual culture (see 1).

However, indirect evidence for rabbinic familiarity with this triple typology exists. In the commentary on Job by Philipp the Presbyter (d. 456 CE, fl. in the East), Jerome's greatest pupil, not only does he repeat the lamb typology about Job: “Despite his losses, Job ‘did not sin with his lips ‘which makes him a veritable ‘immaculate lamb,’ thus foreshadowing Christ as the immaculate lamb sacrificed for the sins of the world (1:21),” He also uses the very same protest verse (Job 16:11) utilized by Bereshit Rabbah and Shemot Rabbah as a site of anti-Jewish polemic. Philipp relates the very same verse to Jesus being delivered into the hand of the devil and his ministers and

⁴² Besserman, *The Legend of Job in the Middle Ages*, 51–56

into the hand of the Jews and v. 14 with “the blasphemies of the Jews”.⁴³ Marie Frey Rébeillé-Borgella even hypothesizes that Phillip had “a certain degree of knowledge of Jewish biblical commentaries,” strengthening the undisclosed dialogue between these readings of the verses.⁴⁴

Scholarship has established the possible but problematic connections between various comments of Jerome about Jewish interpretations and his anti-Jewish rhetoric following his stay in Palestine and concurrent rabbinic views.⁴⁵ The same cultural context seems to fit the polemical overtones of the goat parable vis-a-vi Philip’s commentary. The existence of such a reading of Job 16 in the fifth century shows the polemical overtones behind the rabbinic readings I am establishing. Phillip argues that Jesus// Job was handed over to the Jews. The Jews (Shmeot Rabbah) agree but say it was for their sake alone.

Having established the banality of reading Job as Jesus *and* lamb in an interreligious reading of Shemot Rabbah, I now turn to the theology that it parodies, the Gospels.

3.1 Shemot Rabbah and John: Jesus is Just a Scapegoat

John’s Gospel presents Jesus as the *paschal* Lamb of God whose sacrifice will purify humanity (1:29, 36): “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world [...] And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!”.⁴⁶ It also places a large

⁴³ Seow, “Job in the Age of Controversy: Latin Interpreters,” 255.

⁴⁴ Marie Frey Rébeillé-Borgella, “Philippus Presbyter’s Commentary on Job,” paper presented at the *Twelfth Birmingham Colloquium on the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, Birmingham, UK, Jan 2021.

⁴⁵ In the preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms*, Jerome further remarks that debates between Jews and Christians were frequent in his day, making him a valuable witness to Jewish claims. On the complexities of Jerome’s engagement with Jewish midrash, see Alison Salvesen, “‘Tradunt Hebraei’: The Problem of the Function and Reception of Jewish Midrash in Jerome,” in *Midrash Unbound: Transformations and Innovations*, ed. Michael Fishbane and Joanna Weinberg (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013), 59–67. As Salvesen notes, Jerome’s citations are not always reliable, since they may reflect the view of a single informant or derive from Greek intermediaries. Jerome himself refers to a Jewish teacher for his Hebrew, “bar Haninah,” could this teacher be related to *R. Hama bar Haninah* (d. third century CE) of our parable and his descendants in the time of Phillip? Later midrashim, such as *Qoheleth Rabbah*, and ostensibly *Shemot Rabbah* II, acknowledge interreligious disputations more openly than the older sources they anthologize. See Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius*, 10, 81; cf. Salvesen, “Tradunt Hebraei,” 65. Thus, the evolution of the parable is another case study. For Jerome’s Jewish interlocutors and the problem of his “Judaizers,” see Hillel I. Newman, “Jerome’s Judaizers,” *JECS* 9 (2001): 436 n. 57; 441 n. 72; 452.

⁴⁶ While there is no consensus amongst scholars, the paschal reading is more popular and contextual in John. See references in L. N. Meyer, “Ancient Art, Rhetoric, and the Lamb of God Metaphor in John

emphasis on opposing Satan as the “Prince of the world” (6:70; 8:44; 12:31; 13:2, 27; 14:30; 16:11).

I suggest that in *Shemot Rabbah*, the scene of John declaring Jesus near the baptismal Jordan becomes the Sea of Reeds; Jesus as a sacrifice that triumphs over the Prince of the World (= Satan) through his sacrifice on the Cross (John 12:30–33),⁴⁷ becomes Job, an established Jesus’ analogue (as argued above), given as a scapegoat for the sake of the Israelites.

My suggested reading of *Shemot Rabbah* also reads the lamb imagery solely through the lens of the scapegoat. As Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra notes, the portrayal of a positive scapegoat such as Job rather than a demonic one, reflects a marginal Christian tradition associated with Jewish Christians. It also fits *ShemR*’s innocent Job alone.

Early Christian writers, such as the author of the Epistle of Barnabas 7 (late first century?) 6–11, identify the Passion with both the scapegoat and the sin-offering goat, and even with the Eucharist (4a). Similarly, Hippolytus of Rome (d. 235), commenting on Proverbs 30:31b “the goat leading the flock”, interprets this figure simultaneously as the sacrificial goat and the scapegoat. Later Christian writers increasingly contested this scapegoat interpretation, especially in connection with the Yom Kippur fast, yet the motif may have remained popular among diverse audiences because of its pagan resonances.⁴⁸ For instance, Anslem opposed this vehemently.⁴⁹ Following Zellentin’s analysis of other external parodies, this familiarity with Christian sources suggests targeting the more liminal Christian elements within rabbinic Judaism or the memory of Jewish followers of Jesus as inner Jewish heresies.⁵⁰ This is a feature in other rabbinic parodies of Christianity.

1:29 and 1:36,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 71, no. 1 (2015): Article 2889, 8 pages. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i1.2889>.

⁴⁷ André van Oudtshoorn, “Where Have All the Demons Gone?” *Neotestamentica* 51, no. 1 (2017): 65–82.

⁴⁸ Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century* (WUNT 163; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 116–117, 138n330, 150, 158, 330–332, 336. *Shemot Rabbah* 15:12, a different later Provençal section, provides a medieval Jewish testimony to the survival of such views. The paschal lamb is also atonement for the Jews. This is only talmudic source that argues this connection clearly.

⁴⁹ Daniel Deme, *The Christology of Anslem of Canterbury* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), “The suffering and humiliation of God in Man.”

⁵⁰ Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 165–66, 172.

The rabbinic reading of Jesus as scapegoat then affirms a logic presented in John as *wicked*. *Shemot Rabbah* thinks like Caiaphas: “It is expedient that one man die rather than that the whole nation perish” (John 11:50 and 18:14) rather than “He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one (11:51-52).⁵¹ It is preferable that Job like Jesus in this verse, suffers for the redemption of the Jews alone, says *Shemot Rabbah*. The high Priests’ condemnation of Jesus was implicitly right, says the Midrash.

Furthermore, Palestinian rabbis were aware of the Lamb typology thereby increasing the odds of familiarity in *Shemot Rabbah*. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Leviticus 9:3, where Isaac is described as a lamb rather than a ram, may allude to the “Lamb of God.” This familiarity is comparable to the depiction of the ram as *a scapegoat* in the Binding of Isaac scenes in the synagogue mosaics of Beit Alfa and Sepphoris.⁵²

Shemot Rabbah thus articulates that the Lamb of God through Job is, indeed, merely the scapegoat of the Jews. This parody becomes harsher when considering the separation of lamb from goat vis-a-vis Matthew, as Christian from Jew.

3.2 *Shemot Rabbah* and Matthew 25: Jesus-Job is a Goat not a Lamb

The judgment of the sheep (Matthew 25:31–46) is a universalist eschatology that hinges on enacted compassion. Jesus is modeling the universal judgment of Daniel 7:13–14, while reworking the imagery of Ezekiel 34:17, and possibly 1 Eno 89.⁵³ At the end times, “the Son of Man” on his throne will divide mankind into sheep and

⁵¹ Sandra M. Schneiders, “The Lamb of God and the Forgiveness of Sin(s) in the Fourth Gospel,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (2011): 1–29, at 4, 5, 14, 17.

⁵² Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 129.

⁵³ See John Paul Heil, “Ezekiel 34 and the Narrative Strategy of the Shepherd and Sheep Metaphor in Matthew,” *CBQ* 55 (1993): 698–708, at 698–99, 705; Ulrich Luz, “The Son of Man in Matthew: Heavenly Judge or Human Christ?” in *Studies in Matthew*, trans. Rosemary Selle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 97–112, at 97, 101; John R. Donahue, “The ‘Parable’ of the Sheep and Goats (Matt 25:31–46),” *TS* 47 (1986): 3–31, at 10; and Jonathan M. Lunde, “The Salvation-Historical Implications of Matthew 24–25 in Light of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature” (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1996). Although the Animal Apocalypse (1 En. 89–90) shares with Ezekiel 34 a common visual repertoire, namely sheep, rams, goats, shepherds, and predatory beasts, the two works diverge sharply in theological message. Ezekiel’s judgment falls upon Israel’s own rams and goats, that is, its oppressive leaders, whereas 1 Enoch deploys the same imagery in a far more nationalistic direction: the nations are cast as predatory animals destined for destruction, and Israel is transformed into a newly constituted, purified flock. The Enochic vision is thus scene-wise parallel to Ezekiel but message-wise distinct, culminating in the creation of a new eschatological nation rather than a moral reform.

goats *as a shepherd does*. Following Katheleen Weber, goats are not inherently worse than sheep prior to this judgment.⁵⁴ According to David A. Croteau, sheep are those who showed Jesus mercy through caring for the weak “the least of these”. Implicitly, Goats are those who failed to do so, even though they upheld the Law:⁵⁵

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, accompanied by all the angels, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be assembled before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. 33 The ‘sheep’ he will place at his right hand and the ‘goats’ at his left.

34 “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you made me your guest, 36 I needed clothes and you provided them, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ 37 Then the people who have done what God wants will reply, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and make you our guest, or needing clothes and provide them? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison, and visit you?’ 40 The King will say to them, ‘Yes! I tell you that whenever you did these things for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did them for me!’

41 “Then he will also speak to those on his left, saying, ‘Get away from me, you who are cursed! Go off into the fire prepared for the Adversary and his angels! 42 For I was hungry and you gave me no food, thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 a stranger and you did not welcome me, needing clothes and you did not give them to me, sick and in prison and you did not

⁵⁴ See Kathleen Weber, “The Image of Sheep and Goats in Matthew 25:31–46,” *CBQ* 59 (1997): 657–78; and O. L. Cope, “Matthew XXV.31–46,” *JTS* 9 (1958): 32–44, esp. 33.

See Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 375; for ethnographic associations of goats with illicit sexual behavior in certain Bantu groups and in Greek Sarakatsani folklore, see the anthropological discussions summarized therein. On the relative economic value of sheep’s wool over goat’s wool, see there as well. For early Christian valuation of sheep over goats and the limited patristic interest in the parable, see Kevin J. Ball, “The Parables of Matthew in Early Christian Tradition” (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1991), 104–6, 203–6. For a comprehensive survey of modern interpretive issues, see David A. Croteau, “Looking for the Least: An Analysis and Evaluation of Interpretive Issues Which Have Influenced the Interpretation of the Judgment of the Sheep and Goats (Matthew 25:31–46)” (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006), 160–61; see also 317 (appendix) on the medieval post-750 CE trend toward exclusionist readings in which “the least” are identified as Christians alone, see below.

⁵⁵ See David A. Croteau, “Looking for the Least,” 216–24. On Matthew’s recurring separation motif, note the sequence of judgmental divisions already established in the Gospel: wheat and chaff (3:12), wheat and weeds (13:24–30), and good and useless fish (13:47–50). The sheep-and-goats scene thus continues Matthew’s established narrative logic of eschatological sorting, reinforced by its placement within the Olivet Discourse and by the inheritance language of Matt 25:34, which presupposes Torah-abiding covenant membership. For the notion that Israel’s identity as sheep involves obedience in Matthew (“obeying them in every word”) see the traditional Jewish motif of the flock whose status is defined by faithful following.

visit me.’ 44 Then they too will reply, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, thirsty, a stranger, needing clothes, sick or in prison, and not take care of you?’ 45 And he will answer them, ‘Yes! I tell you that whenever you refused to do it for the least important of these people, you refused to do it for me!’ 46 They will go off to eternal punishment, but those who have done what God wants will go to eternal life.” (NRSV)

Shemot Rabbah inverts the universalist aspects Matthew expanded from Daniel 7. Job, renowned for hospitality in midrash as well, is cast as the sinful goat, the Matthen inhospitable person.⁵⁶ Moreover, Job is not even sacrificed for observant Jews! Matthew’s destabilization of ethnic privilege is reversed: Israel is saved despite guilt, while Job suffers despite his virtue. Furthermore, this reading also inverts the role Jesus assigns to Son of Man. The electing Shepherd becomes God alone; Jesus’ analogue Job becomes a rejected goat.

While it is difficult to prove familiarity with Matthew in *Shemot Rabbah*, the liminal Jewish Christian context seen in the scapegoat reading persists (3.1). There have been conjectures that Matthew emerged from a Jewish-Christian milieu. The well-known testimony attributed to Papias by Eusebius that Matthew composed or compiled his Gospel “in the Hebrew language” (i.e., Aramaic). Moreover, Bavli Shabbat 116a–b (‘Imma Shalom, Rabban Gamliel, and the Corrupt judge’) contains allusions to Matthew 5:13–17.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, A later text like *Shemot Rabbah* could even be familiar with Matthew 25 directly. Aaron Amit has argued that the Bavli parodies judgment of the sheep and goats (Pesachim 57a–b), unlike its Pesikta de Rav Kahana parallel.⁵⁸ In this light, the implied *Shemot Rabbah* reading of Matthew 25:31–46, may preserve an earlier stage of Gospel reception and more mixed communities.

Shmeot Rabbah’s reading of Matthew that God’s mercy is for Jews alone, also aligns with internal Christian developments. Many Church Fathers, especially Augustine and Chrysostom, insist that “the least” are *only* the Christian poor, the sheep are always

⁵⁶ Contrast ARN 7:1, for instance.

⁵⁷ See the sources cited in Aaron Amit, “A Rabbinic Satire on the Last Judgment.” JBL 129 no.4 (2010): 679.

⁵⁸ Amit, “A Rabbinic Satire,” 681, 688. I thank Prof. Geoffrey Herman for this reference.

the faithful believers, and the goats are pagans, Jews, and Christians who fail to do the will of God.⁵⁹ The rabbis and the Church fathers read Matthew as a “parting of ways”.

4. Conclusion: Particularism Growing in Late Antiquity

The Job as the scapegoat of the Exodus parable does not begin as a focused response to Christian typology. The Yerushalmi suppresses dualism, Bereshit Rabbah displays it but also undermines the existence of righteous Gentiles such as Job as a prefiguration. Only through Shemot Rabbah’s expansions, such as Satanic accusation (// anti-Jewish polemics) and an innocent Job’s confession of guilty Jewish superiority, does the parable acquire a message that invites more direct comparison.

Shemot Rabbah emerges as a parody of the reception of Job as Jesus and as Lamb of God as one. In an inversion, the sacrifice of Job (~Jesus) saved only the sinful Jews. God not Jesus is the shepherd that separates sheep from goats. Job (~Jesus) is a scapegoat not Lamb of God. While Christianity emphasized the paschal lamb Christology of John, the rabbis reshaped the lamb motif into a Jewish-Christian scapegoat image. Medieval Christian writers such as Gregory the Great, working with the views of their predecessors, presented Job as a figure who anticipates Christ and the Church. The rabbis, working within the same symbolic field, approved the redemption implied by this typology but assigned Job and Jesus a limited scapegoat role. Shemot Rabbah thus is implicitly part of “the blasphemies of the Jews” that Phillip the Presbyter read into those same Job 16 verses.

Shemot Rabbah also emerges as a possible case study for the more direct entanglement of early medieval midrash with Christianity and memory of Jewish Christianity that parallels the redaction of the Bavli. This is an aspect that more

⁵⁹ As Brändle has shown, Matthew 25:31–46 is the single most important ethical text in Chrysostom’s corpus, appearing roughly sixty times; Only in five of these instances Chrysostom insists that almsgiving must extend to unbelievers. See Rudolf Brändle, “Jean Chrysostome: L’Importance de Matth. 25:31–46 pour son éthique,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 31 (1977): 47–52. On Matthew’s Jewish-Christian setting, see Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 35–56; idem, “Matthew’s Gospel: Jewish Christianity?” in *Matthew and Empire* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 143–60. For Papias’s testimony, see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16. On the later rabbinic reception of Matthew and the chronological fit of Shemot Rabbah, see Chad Venters, “The Historical Jesus and Christian Response,” in *Sheep and the Goats: A Matthean Teaching in Historical Context* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), 115–34; 193–206. For the patristic development of particularist readings in which “the least” are the Christian poor, see John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matt.* 79.2–3; and Augustine, *Serm.* 389.4–5. Chrysostom identifies the goats especially with wealthy Christians who do not support poor believers, whereas Augustine, limits aid to Christians.

classical Palestinian sources lack. Such an entanglement may lessen the still held views that Palestinian rabbis were ignorant of or uninterested in Christianity and submissive to older rabbinic tradition.⁶⁰ What other elaborate parodies may hide in the less explored late midrash texts?

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⁶⁰ See the objections to this contextual approach summarized in Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 19–21.

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