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JEWS, CHRISTIANS, *and the* ROMAN EMPIRE

The Poetics of Power in Late Antiquity

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Jewish-Aramaic one. Finally, in Romanos's *kontakia*, as in the Hebrew poem that opened this part of the essay, we find a direct connection between renarration and salvific petition in the concluding strophe of the composition:

> Do not reject our prayers as vain,
> Do not slay in thy anger those for whom thou wast crucified.
> Be our intercessor, Father, to bring us to a good end,
> Thou, the Giver of all good, and Savior of our souls.[51]

The connection between the biblical sacrifice of Isaac and the verbal sacrifice offered by the congregation is clear. The entire narrative of this lengthy poem and the verbal reenactment of the biblical myth all come down to this petition; and, as in the past, God is entreated to forgive and reward the believers.[52]

Conclusion

For late ancient liturgists, recitation of biblical verses and narratives was a potent religious doing. I have tried to demonstrate how the *Seder ʿavodah*, the anaphora, and poems about the binding of Isaac operate in this context: they are an oral reenactment of a mythical sacrifice that is brought back to life in the liturgical present—a verbal sacrifice. The great importance of these liturgical compositions is that they reflect Christian and Jewish "ritual theories" that draw differing degrees of contrast and continuity between sacrifice and prayer, blood and word, ritual and story. It is striking that the Christian materials analyzed here do not follow the anti-Jewish tropes common in patristic literature of dismissing sacrifice as emblematizing those Jewish traditions that were rejected, superseded, or spiritualized.

The similarities between the compositions also show the importance of the comparative study of Jewish and Christian liturgical poetry from Late Antiquity. Elsewhere I have shown how similar these corpora are, in terms of their poetic, prosodic, and thematic features;[53] from the present discussion, we learn that these poems also share ritual, cultic, and sacrificial elements. This understanding, along with the fact that liturgy offers us a unique gateway to some of the central places where the identities of many people were molded, promises that the comparative study of Jewish and Christian liturgy in Late Antiquity will continue to shed new light on these ancient phenomena.

CHAPTER 9

Israelite Kingship, Christian Rome, and the Jewish Imperial Imagination: Midrashic Precursors to the Medieval "Throne of Solomon"

RAʿANAN BOUSTAN

In front of the emperor's throne there stood a certain tree of gilt bronze, whose branches, similarly gilt bronze, were filled with birds of different sizes, which emitted the songs of the different birds corresponding to their species. The throne of the emperor was built with skill in such a way that at one instant it was low, then higher, and quickly it appeared most lofty; and lions of immense size (though it was unclear if they were of wood or brass, they certainly were coated with gold) seemed to guard him, and, striking the ground with their tails, they emitted a roar with mouths open and tongues flickering. Leaning on the shoulders of two eunuchs, I was led into this space before the emperor's presence. And when, upon my entry, the lions emitted their roar and the birds called out, each according to its species, I was not filled with special fear or admiration, since I had been told about all of these things by one of those who knew them well. Thus, prostrated for a third time in adoration before the emperor, I lifted my head, and the person whom earlier I had seen sitting elevated to a modest degree above the ground, I suddenly spied wearing different clothes and sitting almost level

> with the ceiling of the mansion. I could not understand how he did this, unless perchance he was lifted up there by a pulley of the kind by which tree trunks are lifted.[1]

In his astonishing description of the throne of Solomon in the imperial palace at Constantinople, the Ottonian ambassador Liudprand of Cremona (ca. 922–972 CE) bears witness to the transformation of this "scriptural object" into an actual physical manifestation of the Byzantine emperor's claim to universal rule. Court ceremonial—and the objects and technologies through which it was enacted—had long played a crucial role in sustaining imperial power in the Roman world.[2] The deployment of the throne of Solomon in imperial discourse, however, encapsulates the striking rise of the figure of King Solomon to prominence in Byzantine political ideology toward the end of Late Antiquity.[3] In particular, the Macedonian dynasty (867–1056) saw an intensification of interest in "relics" from biblical Israel, the possession of which were seen to lend weight to the claims of the emperor in Constantinople to participation in the sacral authority of Israelite kingship.[4] But the "biblicization" of imperial ideology in medieval Byzantium already had a history reaching back hundreds of years, into the sixth and early seventh century.

The Jewish population of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity participated in the creation of Christian imperial "public culture."[5] Like others in the empire, they were caught up in the dense semiotic web that enveloped symbolically potent memorabilia from the distant past—whether Roman or biblical—through which power was authorized and enacted.[6] Byzantine Jews were especially conscious of the fact that "their" Solomon had been pressed into service on behalf of Roman-Christian claims on the biblical past.[7] As Alexei Sivertsev has recently argued, "Jewish religious culture in the Christian Roman Empire was characterized by the same combination of participation in and alienation from the dominant imperial culture as were the religious cultures of other members of the Byzantine Commonwealth(s)."[8] Like the various competing groups of Christians in the Byzantine world, Jews also looked to biblical kingship—especially to the figures of David and Solomon—as the archetype for legitimate earthly rule.

The present chapter explores one facet of the Jewish engagement with this transimperial discourse of royal ceremonial: tracing the changing significance of the throne of Solomon in Jewish sources from the fifth to the tenth century, I argue that the image of the throne indexes the wider Jewish response to the rise of Christianized notions of kingship. An actual material throne

of Solomon did not come into use at the court at Constantinople prior to approximately the ninth or tenth century, and this icon of biblical kingship seems not to have been central to Byzantine imperial ideology or ceremonial before then. By contrast, late antique and early medieval Jewish writers produced elaborate depictions of the throne of Solomon as a mechanical device decorated with a menagerie of animated animals. These passages, found in a variety of midrashic, targumic, and narrative sources from Palestine, and later, most likely from the environs of Constantinople itself, show particular interest in the protocols of the enthronement ceremony in which the throne itself was an active participant.

It is important to note that Jewish sources do not present a uniform approach to the throne of Solomon. Instead, as we will see, this scriptural image could be used to give expression to various alternative approaches to kingship. One strand in the Jewish "throne of Solomon" literature from Late Antiquity thematizes the scrupulous restraints to be placed on kings; these texts follow the dominant view of kingship in early rabbinic literature of the third and fourth centuries, itself a reflex of the restrictive "torah of the king" (Deut 17.14–20). By contrast, the other strand explores the modalities of royal participation in divine kingship. These two literary-exegetical approaches to the throne of Solomon map closely onto the difference between "subordinated" and "sacral" conceptions of monarchy identified by Yair Lorberbaum in the biblical and rabbinic canons.[9] Following Lorberbaum's systematic assessment of the development of the Jewish discourse of kingship over the course of Late Antiquity, I argue that sources from the sixth century forward increasingly emphasize the sacral and cosmic aspect of the throne of Solomon. While numerous tributaries flow into the language of Christian kingship, this facet of Jewish reflection on monarchy seems to have preceded and, in important respects, prefigured the subsequent usage of the throne of Solomon in medieval Byzantine imperial ideology. But with time, the Jewish discourse of kingship increasingly echoed Byzantine-Christian idioms of royal power, especially as these were condensed in the spectacle of court ceremonial. I would suggest that this Jewish discourse about the throne shares a genealogy with the "theological-economic" paradigm that characterized late antique and medieval Christian political practice, in which liturgical acclamation and ceremonial symbol were deemed essential for the effective operation of what Giorgio Agamben calls "executive power" (*gubernatio*).[10]

To trace the historical trajectory of the Solomon's throne as a discursive and material object within the Roman-Byzantine sphere, I investigate three

related but independent bodies of text: first, Hebrew and Aramaic sources compiled in the Byzantine cultural sphere during the ninth and tenth centuries; second, Byzantine-Christian writings composed or compiled at the court in Constantinople between the sixth and tenth centuries; and, finally, classical rabbinic midrashic literature produced from the fifth century to the seventh. Rather than beginning with the chronologically earliest materials, I start my investigation with the later medieval sources, both Jewish and Christian. This reverse-chronological approach will, I hope, enable my reader to see how the concerns and motifs of the medieval materials are constructed from the building blocks of the earlier midrashic traditions, while also departing from them in significant ways. It is impossible to fix with precision the dating of the compilations discussed in this chapter, as well as of the specific tradition units that are embedded in them; but when taken together, a powerful pattern emerges from these sources, disclosing the evolution of Jewish conceptions of royal power and empire as they interacted with developments in Christian politico-religious ideology.

It is not my aim to cordon off the world of late antique and medieval Byzantium from its neighboring empires to the east, whether Sasanian-Persian or, subsequently, Arab-Islamic. As Matthew Canepa has convincingly argued, the movement of ideas, practices, and objects across the boundaries of the Roman and Sasanian empires produced a shared late antique culture of court art and ceremonial; Rome and Persia were thus bound together in what Canepa terms an "agonistic exchange" of idioms of imperial power.[11] This circulation of goods and symbols at the hands of myriad ambassadors, travelers, and captives persisted beyond the seventh century, remaining a permanent feature of the performance and regulation of diplomatic relationships among the Latin, Byzantine, and Islamic courts.[12] Indeed, the throne of Solomon appears as a symbol of divinely sanctioned kingship in the public art and literature of the early Islamic world.[13] Still, I believe that Jewish-Christian competition over the biblical past before the seventh century already forged some essential symbols that would come to characterize the language of political power and legitimacy that was broadly shared across the Christian and Islamic worlds of the Middle Ages.

Medieval "Throne of Solomon" Literature

I begin at the end of the story, with the medieval Jewish throne of Solomon literature. This varied, but closely interrelated, constellation of texts is constructed from earlier rabbinic sources, yet it also responds to novel developments within Byzantine-Christian political discourse.

Versions of the throne of Solomon materials are preserved in numerous recensions in Hebrew and Aramaic and are found throughout targumic and midrashic corpora.[14] These midrashim and targumim are often, but not always, commentaries on or translations of the biblical book of Esther.[15] Some versions found their way into the medieval manuscript tradition; others have been recovered from among the fragments of the Cairo Genizah.[16] This throne literature has not been studied in a comprehensive fashion since the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, when it was primarily approached from within a pan-Babylonianist framework as a reflex of Oriental traditions of kingship.[17] No evidence exists before the seventh century for the fully elaborated form of the throne of Solomon tradition that flourished in the medieval period. *Targum sheni* to Esther—if its most recent editor is correct in assigning it a provenance in seventh- to early eighth-century Palestine—may preserve the earliest extant form of the medieval throne tradition.[18]

The most comprehensive collection of throne materials is preserved in an unadorned sixteenth-century manuscript in Spanish semicursive hand, presently housed in Munich. This manuscript, which was first identified and published by J. Perles in the nineteenth century, contains an elaborate composition that the scribe titled "The Throne and Hippodrome of King Solomon" (*Kise' ve-ipodromin shel Shelomo ha-melekh*).[19] This composition combines a number of discrete sources into an unusual amalgamation of literary traditions; some of these units are drawn directly from earlier midrashic and targumic texts, often in embellished form; other portions of the text are wholly unparalleled. Most notably, the scribe set overlapping versions of the throne materials in both Hebrew and Aramaic alongside a unique textual unit that models the proceedings and rituals of the Hippodrome of Solomon's Jerusalem on those of medieval Constantinople, with its intertwined political and cosmological symbolism.[20]

Fifty years ago, Evelyne Ville-Patlagean argued that the "Hippodrome of Solomon" was produced in tenth-century Byzantium, perhaps specifically in the sphere of the imperial court at Constantinople.[21] Ville-Patlagean

emphasized the direct linguistic affinities that this composition has with the language used in descriptions of the court protocols contained in *The Book of Ceremonies* compiled under Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos (r. 913–959).[22] Even more than the throne traditions, the Hippodrome of Solomon attests the ongoing engagement of Jewish writers with Greek literary culture well into the medieval period.

While Ville-Patlagean's dating is valid for the final redaction of the Hebrew "Throne and Hippodrome" materials in the Munich manuscript, I believe her approach has led her to contextualize the Jewish Solomon traditions too narrowly. Her synchronic analysis does not sufficiently appreciate the degree to which this Hebrew composition and its Greek analogues in *The Book of Ceremonies* preserve older strata. Recent work by a number of Byzantine historians has emphasized the self-consciously antiquarian nature of *The Book of Ceremonies* as well as Constantine's literary project more generally.[23] A dialectical tension between traditionalism and innovation characterizes these tenth-century sources; their composer-redactors reworked older materials to render them timeless, and thus authoritative, repositories of imperial practice. This process of redeployment did not produce uniform texts but rather multilayered compositions requiring careful sifting. *The Book of Ceremonies*, therefore, does not provide a secure metric against which the language of the Hebrew and Aramaic throne literature can reliably be dated.

More important, just like this Byzantine-Greek court literature, the Hebrew "Throne and Hippodrome of Solomon" found in the Munich manuscript (designated "Text B" by Ville-Patlagean) incorporates and embellishes extensive passages already found in earlier midrashic literature from the late fifth century to the early seventh. In this regard, Ville-Patlagean's approach to this composition as unified work and her emphasis on its medieval context do not accurately describe its gradual textual formation. The medieval throne literature builds upon well-established rabbinic interpretation of the various biblical descriptions of the throne of Solomon (1 Kgs 10.18–20; 2 Chron 9.17–19; also 1 Chron 28.5, 29.23), especially as these traditions developed over the course of Late Antiquity. Novel units that thematize the sacral nature of royal authority and the ritual power of the enthronement ceremony are set alongside and, indeed, used to reframe older traditions in which the throne functions as a check on who might possess *imperium*.

The Magnaura between the Sixth and Tenth Centuries

A brief survey of Byzantine Christian sources from the sixth century to the tenth indicates that the throne of Solomon entered Byzantine imperial ideology and practice only late in this period. The belated adoption of the throne as a ceremonial image of power in Christian discourse contrasts sharply with the prevalence of this potent symbol in the Jewish literary and artistic culture of late Roman Palestine.

The existence of an actual throne of Solomon at the Byzantine court is first attested in the tenth-century *Book of Ceremonies* as well as in the contemporaneous eyewitness account of the Ottonian diplomat Liudprand of Cremona.[24] These sources locate the throne of Solomon in the Great Triklinos of the Magnaura Palace, the hall where imperial receptions of foreign embassies took place. Like the thrones from which late antique emperors—Roman or Persian—had earlier greeted foreign visitors, the throne of Solomon in the Magnaura stood as a material projection of the universal claims of Byzantine imperial power over all the peoples of the *oikoumene*.[25]

Despite continuities in the symbolic function of the Magnaura from the sixth century to the tenth, this audience hall—along with the imperial palace more generally—experienced continuous changes in its topographic arrangement and interior design throughout this period.[26] Significantly, one description of the throne of Solomon found in *The Book of Ceremonies* characterizes it as "newly constructed" (*tōi neokataskeuastōi senzōi*).[27] This phrase strongly suggests that the throne had existed for, at most, a couple of generations at that point and quite likely dates to no earlier than the reign of Leo VI (r. 887–912).[28]

A comparison of the description of the throne of Solomon in the tenth-century sources with earlier sixth-century descriptions of the imperial throne in the Magnaura confirms its relatively late construction. According to the most elaborate description of the throne in *The Book of Ceremonies*, after the "foreigner" is ushered into the Magnaura and while a court official has begun formally questioning him regarding his origins and mission,

> the lions begin to roar and the birds, those on the throne as well as those in the trees, begin to sing harmoniously; and the animals on the throne rise from their places on the steps. Whilst this is happening, the foreigner's gift is brought in by the Protonotarios of

> the Course. And again after a short time the organs cease, and the lions are silent, the birds stop singing and the animals on the throne resume their usual places. After the gift has been presented, the foreigner . . . prostrates himself and withdraws; and as he goes out the organs sound, and the lions and the birds all utter their own voices, and all the animals rise from their places on the steps. And when the foreigner goes out through the curtain, the organs and the birds cease, and the animals resume their usual places.[29]

This description dovetails nicely with Liudprand's report cited at the beginning of this essay. Although the throne is here not said to elevate the emperor to the ceiling when the visitor prostrates before him, both passages specifically mention the presence of lions and birds and highlight the sounds and movements of these animal automata. In addition, the birds appear to be placed on the throne as well as on the branches of a tree that formed a portion of the hydraulic system that powered the apparatus.[30]

If by the tenth century, the throne of Solomon had come to dominate the imperial protocol of the Magnaura, this space had been radically transformed from its sixth-century origins. In his poems of praise for Emperor Justin II (r. 565–578), the panegyrist Corripus provides compelling evidence that the throne set up in the Magnaura in its earliest phase of construction in the sixth century is not to be identified with the later throne of Solomon. In the course of his account of Justin II's reception of an Avar embassy, Corippus offers a detailed *ekphrasis* of the emperor enthroned in the Magnaura:

> A lofty hall stands in the huge building gleaming with a sun of metal, wondrous in its appearance, and more wondrous in the aspect of the place and proud of its splendour. The imperial throne ennobles the inmost sanctum, girded with four marvelous columns over which in the middle a canopy shining with liquid gold, like the vault of the curving sky, shades over the immortal head and throne of the emperor as he sits there—the throne adorned with jewels and proud with purple and gold. It had curved four bending arches into itself. A similar Victory held the right side and the left side, hanging high into the air on extended wings, stretching out in her shining right hand a crown of laurel. (*In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* 3.191–204)[31]

Corippus's description of the throne in the Magnaura offers no indication that this throne bears iconographic or technological affinities to the later throne of Solomon. And, while Corripus may admittedly make little use of Old Testament allusions, he elsewhere invokes the widespread comparison between the Hagia Sophia and Solomon's Temple (*iam Salomoniaci sileat descriptio templi*).[32] It is likely that he would have used Solomonic imagery in his description of the throne in the Magnaura if it had carried such potent associations.

We know that the function of the Magnaura remained relatively stable from the sixth century to the tenth, primarily functioning as the reception hall for foreign envoys. References in *The Book of Ceremonies* to thrones other than the throne of Solomon occupying this space suggest that these older imperial seats remained in use long after their initial construction.[33] Despite significant continuities from the sixth century to the tenth in the function of the Magnaura, it would seem that the Byzantines did not yet capitalize upon—or even perceive—the ideological potential of this powerful scriptural icon until the medieval period.

The Throne of Solomon as Midrashic Icon: Between Limited and Cosmic Kingship

Rabbinic approaches to the biblical throne of Solomon shifted significantly over the course of Late Antiquity. The earlier rabbinic sources that elaborate on this biblical image use descriptions of the throne's design and operation to highlight the severe limitations that should be placed on royal power. By contrast, midrashic and targumic sources from the sixth and seventh centuries increasingly downplay this "disciplinary-pedagogical" function of the throne in favor of an emphasis on the throne's heavenly resonances; this cosmic or sacral dimension of the throne imbues its royal occupant with quasi-divine powers. This shift can best be explained as a Jewish reaction to the gradual "biblicization" of Roman imperial ideology in the sixth century. Significantly, however, in asserting their claim to biblical kingship, the Jewish authors who crafted these pointed depictions of Solomon's throne and its rightful royal occupant also produced novel symbols of divine legitimacy that would later become central elements of medieval Byzantine court ceremonial.

Any study of the "reception" of the throne of Solomon in postbiblical Jewish, Christian, or Islamic cultures must contend with the scriptural origins of

this object. The Hebrew Bible describes the throne in considerable detail. Nevertheless, late antique depictions of the throne diverge in consistent and significant ways from the biblical source text. In this late antique context, the image of the throne came to carry two distinct valences: on the one hand, it could serve as an icon of the cosmic and universal power of the king or emperor; on the other, it could index the sharply limited nature of human kingship, governed as it was by Deuteronomic restrictions on royal privilege and perquisite.[34]

The books of 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles make repeated mention of the throne, integrating it into their articulation of Israelite royal ideology. The Chronicler, in particular, is deeply invested in the notion that the human king of Israel embodies the kingship of God.[35] This aspect of the political ideology of Chronicles is most fully captured in the explicit identification of Solomon's throne with the throne of God: "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord" (1 Chron 29.23; cf. 2 Chron 9.8, 13.8). Unsurprisingly, the description of the throne emphasizes the incomparable nature of Solomon's dominion: "The king also made a great ivory throne, and overlaid it with pure gold. The throne had six steps and a footstool of gold, which were attached to the throne, and on each side of the seat were arm rests and two lions standing beside the arm rests, [19] while twelve lions stood there, one on each end of a step on the six steps. The like of it was never made in any kingdom" (2 Chron 9.17–19, RSV; cf. 1 Kgs 10.18–20). Although Solomon is not unique among the kings of Israel, his throne stands within the text as a verbal icon of the Chronicler's royal theology.

Rabbinic interpreters in the late Roman period wrestled mightily with the image of Solomon and the significance of his opulent spending and numerous marriages for formulating their conception of monarchical—or, perhaps better, imperial—power. From the earliest stratum of rabbinic writings and throughout Late Antiquity, we find repeated criticism of Solomon. A particularly provocative teaching, attributed to the late third-century Palestinian sage R. Levi, synchronizes the founding of the city of Rome with Solomon's exogamous marriage to the daughter of Pharaoh Neco:

A. R. Levi said: On the day that Solomon married [into the family] of Pharaoh Neco King of Egypt, Michael descended and stuck a reed into the sea, which drew up mud, and it created a big hut, and this is the great city that is in Rome.
B. On the day that Jeroboam set up the two golden calves, Romus and Romilus came and built two huts in Rome.

C. On the day that Elijah was taken away, a king was established in Rome—[for it says], *There was no king in Edom; a deputy was king* (1 Kgs 22.48). (y'AZ 1.2, 39c)[36]

This tradition, formulated more than half a millennium after the myth of Romulus and Remus had crystallized, combines elements of Roman mythography with long-standing Jewish exegetical and polemical traditions.[37] At the same time, the rabbinic tradition situates these motifs within the chronological framework of the biblical narrative, drawing a causal relationship between the dynamics of sin and punishment in Jewish history and Rome's divinely sanctioned rise to power.

Just as Solomon's marriage to a foreign woman is presented as triggering a disruption in "Jewish" political power, other rabbinic sources likewise represent his excessive accumulations of wealth and horses as the ultimate causes behind the fracturing of Israelite kingship and kingdom.[38] This censure of Solomon's conduct also lies behind rabbinic teachings found in the Babylonian Talmud regarding the reversal of fortune that befell the king in his lifetime. Building on a dictum attributed to the third-century Palestinian amora Resh Lakish that "at first Solomon reigned over the upper realms . . . but in the end reigned over the lower realms," these traditions assert that Solomon lost his initial seat in heaven on God's own throne and had the scope of his power diminished step by step until he was left to wander the world in disgrace.[39] As Lorberbaum notes, these midrashic homilies "may be read not only as a criticism of Solomon's personality but also, primarily, as a criticism of the theological-political outlook underlying his monarchy, marked by the seal of royal theology."[40]

Late antique rabbis reinterpreted the symbolic resonances invested in the throne of Solomon by the biblical text. Rather than using the throne to highlight the sacral dimension of kinship articulated by the Chronicler, rabbinic literature up through the fifth century uses it as a vehicle for articulating what the rabbis deemed proper limitations on royal privilege and thus the necessary conditions for legitimate rule. In the fifth-century Pesikta de-Rav Kahana (PRK), we find one of the earliest examples of what might best be described as a midrashic "ritual of enthronement." Because of the richness and complexity of this passage, I cite it here in full:

And [the princes] brought their offerings before the Lord, six wagons, etc. (Num 7.3), corresponding to the six days of creation; six,

> corresponding to the six orders of the Mishnah; six, corresponding to the six matriarchs. . . . According to R. Yoḥanan, the six corresponds to the six commandments which a king is bound to obey: *He shall not multiply wives to himself* (Deut 17.17); *he shall not multiply horses to himself* (Deut 17.16); *neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold* (Deut 17.17); *you shall not wrest judgment; you shall not respect persons; neither shall you take a gift* (Deut 16.19). In further comment, the six correspond to the six steps of the king's throne (cf. 1 Kgs 10.19). What significance did each step have? When the king set foot on the first step as he was going up to his seat, a herald came forth and cried: *He shall not multiply wives to himself.* When the king set foot on the second step as he was going up to his seat, a herald came forth and cried: *He shall not multiply horses to himself.* When the king set foot on the third step, a herald came forth and cried: *Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.* When he set foot on the fourth step, a herald came forth and cried: *You shall not wrest judgment.* When he set foot on the fifth step, a herald came forth and cried: *You shall not respect persons.* When he set foot on the sixth step, a herald came forth and cried: *Neither shall you take a gift.* And when he was about to sit down, after having set foot on the seventh step, he was told: Know before whom you are about to sit down. *And the top of the throne was round behind* (1 Kgs 10.19) means, according to R. Aḥa, that the throne resembled the seat of Moses. *And there were arms on either side of the throne by the place of the seat* (1 Kgs 10.19). How was the throne decorated? A golden scepter was suspended behind it, and on top of the scepter was a dove. In the dove's mouth there was a crown of gold, and when the king sat under it on the seat of the throne, the crown all but touched his head. (PRK 1)[41]

The description of the king's throne and its protocols culminates a series of lists of six items—people, texts, or objects—that are said to correspond to the six wagons that the "princes of Israel" offered for use in the Tabernacle after its completion (Num 7.3). The six steps of the throne, in turn, correspond to the composite list of six commandments drawn from Deuteronomy 16 and 17. The PRK passage represents one dominant strand in the throne of Solomon literature, in which the throne participates in a ritual enactment of the king's subordination to divine authority. By ascending each step, the king assents

to the strictures imposed on kingship, not only regarding wives, horses, and wealth, but also in his capacity as judge. This same scene is replayed, in countless variations, in the subsequent late antique and early medieval versions of the throne literature.[42]

Yet the regulatory function of the throne was not always used to raise critical concerns about unchecked power. In other cases, the throne of Solomon was instead harnessed for the purposes of competitive historiography, as a symbol of the Israelite origins of universal rule, and, by extension, as an indication of the belated nature of those more recent empires that may lay claim to it. A passage in Esther Rabbah (1.12), the earliest sustained midrashic commentary on the book, traces the historical vagaries of the throne of Solomon as it is transferred from one hegemonic power to the next, from Egypt to Ethiopia to Babylonia to Persia to Greece and, finally, to Rome.[43] Yet, despite its wanderings, the throne is an active agent in its own fate: the animal figures carved upon it, such as lions and eagles, quite literally participate in the elevation of Solomon to the throne, while barring and, in some reflexes of the tradition, even maiming illegitimate claimants (EsthR 1.12).[44] The text reports that, although Kings Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus were able to sit on the throne, Ahasuerus was not permitted to do so because "no king who is not ruler over the whole world (*kosmokrator*) can sit on it"[45]—Ahasuerus must instead arrange to have a paltry copy of the throne constructed for his personal use.[46] Significantly, the throne does not operate here as a pedagogical mechanism, nor does it subordinate the king to God, nor, finally, does it differentiate between "Israelite" and "foreign" rulers. Rather, the throne serves as a winnowing tool to separate mere kings from those who can legitimately claim to be the sole universal ruler of their age.

The discourse of competitive historiography in this passage is further heightened by the cosmic symbolism that it builds into the design of the throne. The description of the throne in Esther Rabbah goes well beyond the version in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana discussed above. Here the six steps leading up to the throne do not just correspond to the six days of creation, the six matriarchs, and the six orders of the Mishnah, but also to the six heavens and the six earths.[47] Moreover, Esther Rabbah explicitly claims that Solomon's throne was modeled on the divine chariot-throne from Ezekiel's vision of the *merkavah* (Ezekiel 1 and 10). In the context of a passage that traces the subordination of Israel to a succession of world empires, this cosmic imagery has a powerful political thrust. In Sivertsev's apt formulation: "The midrash portrays Solomon as more than just Israel's greatest king. He is also the archetypal

world ruler, the *cosmocrator*, modeled after Roman and Byzantine emperors but introduced as their forerunner."[48]

This cosmic symbolism, found in some fifth- and especially sixth-century midrashic texts, became more pronounced in the later medieval versions of the enthronement scene. Most striking is the elaboration on this theme in the "Throne and Hippodrome of Solomon," which, I have argued above, was produced in ninth- or tenth-century Constantinople.[49]

> The sages said: "King Solomon ruled over the heavenly and earthly realms, as it is said: *Then Solomon sat upon the throne of Yahweh*" (1 Chron 29.23). R. Yoḥanan said: "Is it the case that [Solomon] sat upon the throne of Yahweh? Rather, the Holy One, blessed be he, enthroned and empowered him over the heavenly and earthly realms. And he made him a throne in the earthly realms in the form of the throne of glory (*demut kise' ha-kavod*) that is in the heavenly realms: just as the throne in the heavenly realms is in the form of the four *ḥayot*—human, lion, bull, and eagle—so, too, is the throne of Solomon in the form of human, lion, bull, and eagle." R. Ḥiyya taught: "[It was] in the form of the throne of glory (*demut kise' ha-kavod*) that Solomon made his throne with the holy spirit: the form of the wheel and the *keruvim* behind the throne; and he set up the form of the *ḥayot* and the *ofanim* before the throne. And sixty warriors [cf. Song 3.7] were affixed there and upon its forehead were the sixty letters of the *yevarekhekha*" (= Num 6.24–26).[50]

This unit consists of a series of midrashic expansions—pseudepigraphically attributed to early rabbinic authorities—of the Chronicler's articulation of the ideology of sacral kingship discussed above. This passage represents the earthly throne of Israelite kingship as a replica or icon (*demut*) of the *merkavah*, its heavenly prototype.[51] I would suggest that the medieval "Throne and Hippodrome of Solomon" seeks to neutralize earlier rabbinic critiques of kingship. Against that narrative of Solomon's decline, this text insists on eternal parity between the heavenly and earthly thrones.

To my knowledge, the most striking parallel to this feature of the "Throne and Hippodrome of Solomon" is found in another relatively late text, Exodus Rabbah.[52] Here, in a passage that presents an extended comparison between the rise and decline of the Israelite monarchy and the cycles of the moon, the midrash likens the scope of Solomon's royal power to God's and his throne

to the divine chariot (*merkavah*). The portion of this lengthy and otherwise unparalleled text most relevant for our purposes reads:

> Is it possible for a man to sit upon the throne of the Holy One, blessed be he, of whom it is said, *his throne was fiery flame* (Dan 7.9)? Rather, just as the Holy One, blessed be he, rules from one end of the world to the other and rules over all the kings, as it is said, *all the kings of the world shall praise you, O Lord* (Ps 138.4), so, too, did Solomon's [rule extend] from one end of the earth to the other, as it is said, *All the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon* (2 Chron 9.23). . . . Concerning the throne of the Holy One, blessed be he, it is written, *As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man, the face of a lion* (Ezek 1.10), and regarding Solomon it is written, *And on the panels that were set in the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim* (1 Kgs 7.29), and another verse says, *they were made like the wheels of the chariot-throne* (1 Kgs 7.33). . . . The Holy One, blessed be he, made six heavens and he dwells in the seventh, even as concerning the throne of Solomon, it is written, *six steps to the throne* (1 Kgs 10.19) and he sits upon the seventh step. (ExodR 15.26)[53]

The series of equivalences established in this passage between divine and human kingship culminates with a detailed juxtaposition of the language of the *merkavah* of Ezekiel and what the text implicitly presents as a description of the throne of Solomon. Of course, the verses from 1 Kings 7 cited in the midrash do not refer to the king's throne (described in 1 Kings 10) but to the bases and wheels of the ten lavers that he had constructed. Still, the text presses into service these evocative parallels between God's chariot/throne and the cultic vessels placed in the courtyard of the temple built by Solomon, in order to drive home the principle of sacral kingship. Midrashic passages like this one, along with the "Throne and Hippodrome of Solomon," suggest that that rabbinic (or, perhaps better, post-rabbinic) authors from the sixth century on began to free the image of Solomon's throne from the disciplinary-pedagogical role with which it had been associated in earlier rabbinic sources. It would appear that this trend intensified in the midrashic literature of the early Middle Ages.

Conclusion

Late antique Jews cultivated literary and ideological resources with which to reflect on the political power and legitimacy of the empires in which they lived. In the case of Solomon's throne, we have seen that these idioms were subsequently given fuller expression in the official imperial ideology of the Byzantine court at Constantinople. This process attests the parallel and mutual development of political and thus cultural identity that characterized the late Roman and Byzantine world more broadly. Artifacts and ideologies were acquired, appropriated, and mediated—in short, circulated—across ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities that made up Byzantine society. Despite important differences, the various post-Roman polities that were heirs to the late antique world constituted a broad semiotic community whose shared idioms of political legitimacy and power were mutually intelligible.[54]

But mutual intelligibility came with a cost. For late Roman and Byzantine Christians, Jews and Jewish culture occupied an especially fraught place in this economy of signs. The long-standing associations of the Old Testament with contemporaneous living Jewish communities made the increasing biblicization of Roman imperial ideology a fraught and ambivalent process; insofar as Christians understood the biblical and the Jewish pasts to be inextricably intertwined, the Jew came to occupy a (dis)privileged position within Christian discourses of self-definition.[55] Nevertheless, the ceremonial, liturgical, and acclamatory practices that performatively authorized the exercise of Christian rule, in the medieval period and afterward, share a genealogy with the discourse of kingship that was cultivated by Jews within the domain their own imperial imagination.

PART III

Continuity and Rupture

Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac (Cambridge, 2004); Wout van Bekkum, "The Aqedah and Its Interpretation in Midrash and Piyyut," in *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and Its Interpretations*, ed. E. Noort and E. J. Tigchelaar (Leiden, 2002), 86–95; and Sebastian Brock, "Genesis 22 in Syriac Tradition," in *Mélanges Dominique Barthélemy: Études bibliques offertes à l'occasion de son 60e anniversaire*, ed. P. Casetti, O. Keel, and A. Schenker (Göttingen, 1981), 2–30.

33. This is true for the kind of poems discussed in this article. In others, we find precise quotations from Scripture; on this last feature in Hebrew liturgical poetry of the period, see Shulamit Elizur, "The Use of Biblical Verse in Hebrew Liturgical Poetry," in *Prayers That Cite Scripture*, ed. J. L. Kugel (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), 83–100.

34. The idea that the deeds of the patriarchs can affect the present is known elsewhere from rabbinic literature as the "merits of the fathers" (*zekhut avot*). See Uri Ehrlich, "Between 'Ancestral Merit' and 'Ancestral Responsibility': A Chapter in Early Rabbinic Prayer Thought" (Hebrew), in *By the Well: Studies in Jewish Philosophy and Halakhic Thought Presented to Gerald J. Blidstein*, ed. U. Ehrlich, H. Kreisel, and D. J. Lasker (Beersheva, 2008), 13–23.

35. Hebrew text in Bernard Septimus, *"Ḥananto le-Meah peri*: From Early *Piyyut* to the Babylonian Talmud," *Leshonenu* 71.1–2 (2009): 79–95; English translation by T. Carmi, *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York, 1981), 201–2.

36. Michael D. Swartz, *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism: An Analysis of Ma'aseh Merkavah* (Tübingen, 1992), 171–210.

37. Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice* (New York, 1969), 38–44; and G. Stroumsa, "Christ's Laughter."

38. Michael Sokoloff and Joseph Yahalom, *Jewish Palestinian Aramaic Poetry from Late Antiquity: Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1999), 124–31. English translation from van Bekkum, "The Aqedah and Its Interpretation," 94–95. For a short English introduction to the Jewish Aramaic poems, see Michael Sokoloff and Joseph Yahalom, "Aramaic Piyyutim from the Byzantine Period," *JQR* 75.3 (1985): 309–21.

39. The description of Isaac as a willing victim (here and in the other poems) relates to ancient Mediterranean sacrificial rituals that were designed to elicit a sign of consent from the victim. See Stanley Stowers, "On the Comparison of Blood in Greek and Israelite Ritual," in *Ḥesed Ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs*, ed. J. Magness and S. Gitin (Atlanta, 1998), 179–94.

40. On the reworking of this biblical narrative in rabbinic literature, see Yaakov Elbaum, "From Sermon to Story: The Transformation of the Akedah," *Prooftexts* 6.2 (1986): 97–116; and Maren Niehoff, "The Return of Myth in Genesis Rabbah on the Akeda," *JJS* 46.1/2 (1995): 69–87.

41. Isaac seems to be quoting a poem that features an acrostic and allocates three words per hemistich (*av la ḥas / breyh la 'kiv*). In a fifth-century *Seder 'avodah* by Yose ben Yose, we find a strikingly similar verse: "The father had no pity / and the son did not hesitate" (*av lo' ḥamal / ben lo' yiḥar*). For Yose's poem, see Swartz and Yahalom, *Avodah*, 244–45.

42. Sebastian Brock, "Two Syriac Verse Homilies on the Binding of Isaac," *Le Muséon* 99.1/2 (1986): 61–129.

43. Syriac text and English translation in ibid., 119, 124.

44. Ibid., 111.

45. See Spiegel, *The Last Trial*; and Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, Calif., 1999), 117–18. In Christian literature, a similar role is played by Jephtah's daughter, who, in contrast to the biblical Isaac, was sacrificed. On her image in Syriac poetry and its relation to Isaac, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey and Ophir Münz-Manor, *Jacob of Serug's Homily on Jephtah's Daughter* (Piscataway, N.J., 2010).

46. The classical study on Romanos's life and work is José Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos Le Mélode et les origines de la poésie religieuse à Byzance* (Paris, 1977). See also Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia, 2004), 159–88; and Lucas van Rompay, "Romanos le Mélode: Un poète syrien à Constantinople," in *Early Christian Poetry: A Collection of Essays*, ed. J. den Boeft and A. Hilhorst (Leiden, 1993), 283–96. Some scholars believe that Romanos was of Jewish descent (see the studies above), but this assertion has little, if any, bearing on the intersection of Romanos's poetry and Jewish sources.

47. Marjorie Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist*, vol. 2: *On Christian Life* (Columbia, Mo., 1973), 67–68.

48. From Derek Krueger's response to an earlier version of this essay that was presented at the fourteenth Gruss Colloquium in Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania (April 30, 2008). I am grateful to Derek Krueger, who kindly shared with me the text of his response.

49. Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos*, 68.

50. Brock, "Two Syriac Verse Homilies," 91–96.

51. Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos*, 70.

52. The same picture emerges from other late ancient poems on the subject; see Ephrem Lash, "Sermon on Abraham and Isaac" (http://www.anastasis.org.uk/AbrIsaac.htm); Lash, "Metrical Texts of Greek Ephrem," *StPatr* 35 (2001): 433–48; Ton Hilhorst, "The Bodmer Poem on the Sacrifice of Abraham," in *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, ed. Noort and Tigchelaar, 96–108; Pieter van der Horst, "A New Early Christian Poem on the Sacrifice of Isaac (Pap. Bodmer 30)," in van der Horst, *Jews and Christians in Their Graeco-Roman Context: Selected Essays on Early Judaism, Samaritanism, Hellenism, and Christianity* (Tübingen, 2006), 190–205; and Kevin J. Kalish, "Greek Christian Poetry in Classical Forms: The Codex of Visions from the Bodmer Papyri and the Melding of Literary Traditions" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2009).

53. See Ophir Münz-Manor, "Liturgical Poetry in the Late Antique Near East: A Comparative Approach," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 1.3 (2010): 336–61.

CHAPTER 9

I would like to thank Micha Perry for sharing with me his preliminary research into the medieval throne of Solomon traditions. I am also grateful to Leah Boustan and Brad King for their valuable editorial interventions.

1. Liudprand of Cremona, *Retribution* (or *Antapodosis*) 6.5 (written 958–962); Paolo Squatriti, trans., *The Complete Works of Liudprand of Cremona* (Washington, D.C., 2007), 196–97. See also the description of the court in A. Vasilev, "Harun-Ibn-Yahya and His Description of Constantinople," *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 5 (1932): 149–63.

2. On the historical development and ideological functions of imperial ceremonial, see, esp., Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986); McCormick, "Analyzing Imperial Ceremonies," *JÖByz* 35 (1985): 1–20; and Sabine G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1981).

3. See, esp., Shaun F. Tougher, "The Wisdom of Leo VI," in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium*, ed. P. Magdalino (Aldershot, 1994), 171–79. On the figure of Solomon the builder in sixth-century Byzantine sources, see Jonathan Bardill, "A New Temple for Byzantium: Anicia Juliana, King Solomon, and the Gilded Ceiling in the Church of St. Polyeuktos in Constantinople," in *Social and Political Life in Late Antiquity*, ed. W. Bowden et al. (Leiden, 2006),

339–70; Martin Harrison, "From Jerusalem and Back Again: The Fate of the Treasures of Solomon," in *Churches Built in Ancient Times* (London, 1994), 239–48; Harrison, *A Temple for Byzantium: The Discovery and Excavation of Anicia Juliana's Palace-Church in Istanbul* (London, 1989). See, however, the reservations expressed in Robert Ousterhout, "New Temples and New Solomons: The Rhetoric of Byzantine Architecture," in *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, ed. Paul Magdalino and Robert Nelson (Washington, D.C., 2010), 223–53.

4. See Magdalino and Nelson, introduction to *Old Testament in Byzantium*, 11–13 and 21–25; Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge, 2003), 84–124; Bernard Flusin, "Construire une nouvelle Jérusalem: Constantinople et les reliques," in *Orient dans l'histoire religieuse de l'Europe: L'invention des origins*, ed. M. A. Amir-Moezzi and J. Scheid (Turnhout, 2000), 51–70; and Otto Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im Höfischen Zeremoniell* (2nd ed.; Darmstadt, 1956), 129–35.

5. The phrase is taken from Peter Brown, "The Problem of Christianization," *PBA* 82 (1993): 96.

6. Ra'anan S. Boustan, "The Spoils of the Jerusalem Temple at Rome and Constantinople: Jewish Counter-Geography in a Christianizing Empire," in *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. G. Gardner and K. Osterloh (Tübingen, 2008), 327–72.

7. Benjamin Klar, ed., *Megilat ahima'ats* (Jerusalem, 1974), 18, line 7, where the chronicler's own ancestor R. Shefatya travels to Constantinople to debate the ninth-century founder of the Macedonian dynasty Basil I (867–886 CE) concerning the comparative glory of the Hagia Sophia and the Temple of Solomon.

8. Alexei M. Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology in Late Antiquity* (New York, 2011), 217.

9. Yair Lorberbaum, *Disempowered King: Monarchy in Classical Jewish Literature* (London, 2011).

10. Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. L. Chiesa (Stanford, Calif., 2011), esp. 167–259.

11. Matthew P. Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship between Rome and Sasanian Iran* (Berkeley, Calif., 2009), esp. 7–33.

12. Oleg Grabar, "The Shared Culture of Objects," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington, D.C., 1997), 115–29. On the presence of foreigners in medieval Constantinople, see, esp., Claudia Rapp, "A Medieval Cosmopolis: Constantinople and Its Foreign Inhabitants," in *Alexander's Revenge: Hellenistic Culture through the Centuries*, ed. J. M. Ásgeirsson and N. van Deusen (Reykjavík, 2002), 153–71; see also the contributions to Ruth Macrides, ed., *Travel in the Byzantine World* (Aldershot, 2002).

13. The earliest evidence of court-sponsored monumental art depicting the throne would seem to be in the bath hall of the Umayyad palace complex known as Khirbat al-Majfar; see Priscilla P. Soucek, "Solomon's Throne / Solomon's Bath: Model or Metaphor," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 109–34. For a collection of later Arabic literary sources on the throne of Solomon, see Georg Salzberger, *Die Salomosage in der semitischen Literatur: Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Sagenkunden* (Berlin, 1907), 43–63.

14. For a complete catalog of these sources, see Beate Ego, *Targum Scheni zu Ester: Übersetzung, Kommentar und theologische Deutung* (Tübingen, 1996), 159–68; and Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia, 2003), 2:970 n. 69.

15. For important treatment of the historical development of these midrashim, see Myron B. Lerner, "The Works of Aggadic Midrash and the Esther Midrashim," in *The Literature of the Sages*, ed. S. Safrai et al. (Minneapolis, Minn., 1987), 2:133–230. I have not yet been able to consult the recently completed thesis of Binyamin Elbaum, "Midrash Abba Gurion on Esther: The Version and Its Redactions" (Ph.D. diss., Bar-Ilan University, 2011).

16. See, most recently, the fragment published in Alon Tenami, "A Genizah Fragment of the Legend of King Solomon's Throne" (Hebrew), *Ginzei Qedem* 6 (2010): 197–210. See also Rimon Kasher and Michael L. Klein, "New Fragments of Targum to Esther from the Cairo Genizah," *HUCA* 61 (1990): 89–129.

17. The last comprehensive studies were Georg Salzberger, *Salomos Tempelbau und Thron in der semitischen Sagenliteratur* (Berlin, 1912); and August Wünsche, *Salomos Thron und Hippodrom, Abbilder des babylonischen Himmelsbildes* (Leipzig, 1906).

18. For linguistic reasons, Bernard Grossfeld dates the targum prior to late seventh-century Palestine; see Bernard Grossfeld, trans., *The Two Targums of Esther* (Collegeville, Minn., 1991), 7–8, 19–21, 23–24; and Bernard Grossfeld, ed., *The Targum Sheni to the Book of Esther: A Critical Edition Based on MS. Sassoon 282 with Critical Apparatus* (New York, 1994), ix–x. Grossfeld's dating is supported by Ego, *Targum Scheni*, 21–25. The "throne" passage is found at Grossfeld, *Targum Sheni*, 29–30, and is translated in Grossfeld, *The Two Targums*, 111–13. For analysis of this passage in the context of *Targum Sheni*, see Beate Ego, "All Kingdoms and Kings Trembled before Him: The Image of King Solomon in *Targum Sheni on Megillat Esther*," *Journal for the Aramaic Bible* 3.1/2 (2001): 65–66; and Ego, *Targum Scheni*, 159–68.

19. MS München-Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 222, 50a–56b. This text was first edited in J. Perles, "Thron und Circus des Königs Salomo," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 21 (1872): 122–35. Perles's *editio princeps* was republished with slight modifications and without its opening Aramaic segment (drawn from or sharing a common source with *Targum Sheni to Esther*), in Adolf Jellinek, ed., *Bet ha-midrash*, 6 vols. (Jerusalem, 1967 [1853–78]), 5:34–39. The Jellinek version was itself reprinted in J. D. Eisenstein, ed., *Otsar midrashim* (New York, 1915), 2:527–30, though Eisenstein's version introduces a number of misreadings.

20. See, esp., Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions: Blues and Greens at Rome and Byzantium* (Oxford, 1976), 149–53. See also Pieter W. van der Horst, "Jews and Blues in Late Antiquity," in van der Horst, *Jews and Christians in Their Graeco-Roman Context* (Tübingen, 2006), 53–58.

21. Evelyne Ville-Patlagean, "Une image de Salomon en Basileus Byzantin," *REJ* 71 (1962): 9–33.

22. In particular, Ville-Patlagean, "Une image de Salomon," 19–20, points to the Hebrew word *diksomin* used in the text, which she believes renders the Greek word *deximon*, i.e., "official reception" (passage 2). Patlagean points out that earlier rabbinic sources know the Greek loanword *deksomini*, meaning "cistern," which is what Perles and Wünsche in his wake took it to mean. Patlagean, by contrast, notes that the Hebrew *diksomin* better renders the neuter *deximon* and not the feminine *dexamine* and that this neuter form is very particular to the *Book of Ceremonies*. In addition, Patlagean argues that there are strong similarities between what is described in the "Hippodrome of Solomon" and the court rituals described in the *Book of Ceremonies* that took place in the *phialae* (courtyards) of the factions—and especially the Phiale of the Trikonch—where the factions would receive the emperor with acclamations and dance, while fountains poured out spiced wine called *konditon*.

23. On *The Book of Ceremonies* as a multilayered and unevenly redacted work, see the brief but very helpful entry by Michael McCormick, "De Ceremoniis," in *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. P. Kazhdan (Oxford, 1991), 595–97. On the literary construction in *The Book of Ceremonies*, see, esp., McCormick, "Analyzing Imperial Ceremonies," 1–20; Averil Cameron, "The Construction of Court Ritual: The Byzantine Book of Ceremonies," in *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, ed. D. Cannadine and S. Price (Cambridge, 1987), 106–36; and Ann Moffatt, "The Master of Ceremonies' Bottom Drawer: The Unfinished State of the *De Ceremoniis* of Constantine Porphyrogennetos," *Byzantinoslavica* 56 (1995): 377–88. Emphasis on the text's project of crafting a timeless and unchanging image of court ceremonial from earlier sources goes back to J. B. Bury, "The Ceremonial Book of Constantine Porphyrogennetos," *EHR* 22 (1907): 417–39.

24. The Byzantine sources for the throne of Solomon are most usefully collected in Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee*, 134–35. See also András Alföldi, "Die Geschichte des Throntabernakels," *Nouvelle Clio* 1/2 (1949–50): 537–66.

25. Gilbert Dagron, "Trônes pour un empereur," in *Byzantium: State and Society, in Memory of Nikos Oikonomides*, ed. A. Avramea et al. (Athens, 2003), 188–89. On the symbolic meaning of the imperial thrones used in receptions of foreign ambassadors, see Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth*, 141–48.

26. On the history of the Magnaura, see Jan Kostenec, "Studies on the Great Palace in Constantinople II: The Magnaura," *Byzantinoslavica* 60 (1999): 161–82. On the evolution of the palace more generally and the challenge of reconstructing its changing spatial arrangement over time, see Jonathan Bardill, "Visualizing the Great Palace of the Byzantine Emperors at Constantinople: Archaeology, Text, and Topography," in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft: Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen—Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, ed. F. A. Bauer (Istanbul, 2006), 5–45.

27. *De Ceremoniis* I, 33, 24: *anelthontes ekathisan en tōi neokataskeuastōi senzōi tōi histamenōi en tōi tēs Manauras triklinōi*. For the text, see J. J. Reiske, ed., *Constantini Pophyrogeniti imperatoris de ceremoniis byzantini, libri duo*, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1879), 1:137, line 24, to 138, line 1. All citations of the *De Ceremoniis* refer to this edition.

28. On the dating of the construction of the throne, see Dagron, "Trônes pour un empereur," 188–89 n. 47. Cf. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee*, 134–35 n. 21, and Leslie Brubaker, *Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm* (London, 2012), 100, which place its construction a half-century earlier under Emperor Theophilos (r. 829–842). The evidence for the earlier dating is circumstantial: while Leo the Grammarian (Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* [Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972], 160–61) does associate Theophilos's reign with the production of court automata and other such mechanical devices, he does not explicitly mention the throne of Solomon, an odd omission had the emperor, in fact, commissioned this item.

29. See Jeffrey Michael Featherstone, "ΔΙ' ΕΝΔΕΙΞΙΝ: Display in Court Ceremonial (*De Ceremoniis* II, 15)," in *The Material and the Ideal: Essays in Medieval Art and Archaeology in Honor of Jean-Michel Spieser*, ed. A. Cutler and A. Papaconstantinou (Leiden, 2007), 83–84. Cf. *De Ceremoniis* I, 24, 137.

30. On the hydraulic technology used in the operation of the throne of Solomon's throne, see the still-fundamental discussion in Gerard Brett, "The Automata in the Byzantine 'Throne of Solomon,'" *Speculum* 29.3 (1954): 477–87. On the use of organs and automata in Byzantine imperial ceremonial more generally, see Albrecht Berger, "Die akustische Dimension des Kaiserzeremoniells: Gesang, Orgelspiel und Automaten," in *Visualisierungen von Herrschaft*, ed. Bauer, 47–61.

31. Averil Cameron, ed. and trans., *Flavius Cresconius Corippus: In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris* (London, 1976), 106.

32. Corippus, *In laudem Iustini Augusti minoris*, 4.283, and Cameron's commentary ad loc.

33. See Kostenec, "Studies on the Great Palace," 168–69; and the entry "Thrones," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kazhdan (Oxford, 1990), 3:2082–83.

34. For discussion of the Deuteronomic restrictions and their later transformations, see Bernard M. Levinson, "The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History's Transformation of Torah," *VT* 61 (2001): 511–34; and Steven D. Fraade, "The Torah of the King (Deut 17:14–20) in the Temple Scroll and Early Rabbinic Law," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. J. R. Davila (Leiden, 2003), 25–60.

35. See Lorberbaum, *Disempowered King*, 16–18, which builds upon Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), esp. 396–99.

36. The translation is by me and Oded Irshai. Cf. the early parallel in SifreDt §52 (ed. Finkelstein, 119), esp. the version in MS British Museum Add 16406 and the Venice printed edition, which reads: "Likewise Scripture says, *Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, besides the daughter of Pharaoh* (1 Kgs 11.1). Now if the daughter of Pharaoh was one of them, why then was she specified? To show that he loved her more than all the others, yet she caused him to sin more than all the rest of them. They reported that on the day that Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, Gabriel descended and stuck a reed into the sea; (a thicket of?) thorn grew there and upon it the great city of Rome. On the day that Jeroboam set up the two golden calves, Rhomis and Rhmilos arose and built two huts in Rome." Versions are also found at SongR 1.6.4; bShab 56b; and bSan 21b. The literature on this passage is extensive, but see, esp., the recent analyses in Joseph Geiger, "The Tombs of Remus and Romulus: An Overlooked Source and Its Implications," *Athenaeum* 92.1 (2004): 245–54; Peri Terbuyken, "Rom in der rabbinischen Hermeneutik: Die Kompositionstechnik von *j'Abodah Zarah* 1,2 und *Cant. Rabbah* 1,35/42," *JAC* 39 (1996): 116–27; and Louis H. Feldman, "Abba Kolon and the Founding of Rome," *JQR* 81.3/4 (1991): 239–66, and the earlier literature cited there.

37. For comprehensive treatment of the sources, in Greek as well as Latin, for the story of Romulus and Remus, see, esp., T. P. Wiseman, *Remus: A Roman Myth* (Cambridge, 1995).

38. See discussion in Lorberbaum, *Disempowered King*, 66–72.

39. See bSan 20b; bGit 68b; bMeg 11a; and also the related traditions in ySan 2.6, 20c.

40. Lorberbaum, *Disempowered King*, 141.

41. I slightly amend the translation in Braude and Kapstein, trans., *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* (Philadelphia, 1975), 16–17.

42. Cf. DeutR 5.6; Midrash Shir ha-Shirim 3:11; NumR 12.17. See also, e.g., the expanded version of this passage in the medieval text published in Perles, "Thron und Circus," 132 (= MS München-Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 222, 51b). This passage is not published in Jellinek's excerpted version of Perles's text.

43. The first part of Esther Rabbah (sections 1–6) may date as early as the sixth century (H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. and ed. M. Bockmuehl [Minneapolis, 1996], 318–19). See my earlier discussion of this passage in "The Spoils of the Jerusalem Temple," 363.

44. Cf. LevR 20; EcclR 9.2.1.

45. Translation follows Maurice Simon, *Midrash Rabbah: Esther and Song of Songs* (London, 1983), 28.

46. The tradition that Ahasuerus constructed a copy of Solomon's throne may already be reflected in the third-century panels of the Dura Europos synagogue, which depict Solomon and Ahasuerus on identical thrones. This idea was first proposed in Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue (Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report 8, Pt. 1)* (New York, 1979), 89–90 (Solomon's throne) and 158–59 (Ahasuerus's throne); Kraeling's view is affirmed in Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert L. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art* (Washington, D.C., 1990), 102–4, 114–19.

47. On the development of the seven-level cosmology, see Peter Schäfer, "In Heaven as It Is in Hell: The Cosmology of *Seder Rabbah di-Bereshit*," in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions*, ed. R. S. Boustan and A. Y. Reed (New York, 2004), 233–74.

48. Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology*, 23.

49. For the date and provenance, see Ville-Patlagean, "Une image de Salomon," 19–20.

50. Jellinek, *Bet ha-midrash*, 5:34; Perles, "Thron und Circus," 132; and MS München-Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 222, 51a–b. The translation is mine. For the date and provenance of this text, see Ville-Patlagean, "Une image de Salomon," 19–20.

51. Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology*, 184–86.

52. ExRab II (chaps. 15–52) is of uncertain dating but is closely related to the genre of midrash

Tanḥuma-Yelamdenu. On the late redaction of the work as a whole, see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction*, 308–9.

53. I slightly amend the translation in Lorberbaum, *Disempowered King*, 163–64.

54. On the notion of "semiotic community" and its application to Late Antiquity broadly conceived, see Thomas Sizgorich, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam* (Philadelphia, 2008), 27–36, 147–49, and 275–78.

55. Andrew S. Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, Calif., 2004). See also Averil Cameron, "Byzantines and Jews: Some Recent Work on Early Byzantium," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 26 (1996): 249–74; Averil Cameron, "Disputations, Polemical Literature, and the Formation of Opinion in Early Byzantine Literature," in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Medieval Near East*, ed. G. J. Reinink and H. J. L. Vanstiphout (Leuven, 1991), 91–108; and Gilbert Dagron and Vincent Déroche, "Juifs et chrétiens dans l'Orient du VIIe siècle," *T&MByz* 11 (1991): 17–46.

CHAPTER 10

I wish to thank the participants of the 2008 Gruss Colloquim, especailly Derek Krueger, Ophir Münz-Manor, and the editors of this volume, as well as Kristina Sessa for their advice and suggestions.

1. There appear to be two conclusions to this chain in mAvot, the first extending from Hillel and Shammai through the patriarchs (1.16–2.7) and the second ending with the disciples of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai (2.8–16). Different versions of the chain also appear in the recensions of *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* (in *Avot de-Rabbi Natan Mahadurat Sh. Z. Schechter*, ed. M. Kister [New York, 1997]). On these variations, see Anthony Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism: A Literary Study of the Fathers according to Rabbi Nathan* (Chico, Calif., 1982); Saldarini, "The End of the Rabbinic Chain of Tradition," *JBL* 93.1 (1974): 97–106; Judah Goldin, *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* (New Haven, Conn., 1983), xix–xx; Jacob N. Epstein, *Mevo'ot le-sifrut ha-tana'im* (Jerusalem, 1957), 232–33; Myron B. Lerner, "The Tractate Avot," in *The Literature of the Sages*, ed. S. Safrai (Minneapolis, 1987), 1:263–81; Lerner, "The External Tractates," in *The Literature of the Sages*, ed. Safrai, 1:367–409; Amram Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman Near East* (Oxford, 2004); and Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia, 2004), 77–86.

2. On the implications of this motif, see Solomon Schechter's notes in *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, xxiv; Moshe David Herr, "Ha-retsef she-be-salshelet mesirat ha-Torah: Le-verur ha-historiographiah ha-mikra'it be-hagutam shel ḥazal," *Zion* 44 (1979): 43–56; Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbinism*; Jacob Neusner, *Torah: From Scroll to Symbol in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia, 1985), 56; Steven D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany, 1991), 69–71 and references there; Jonathan Wyn Schofer, *The Making of a Sage: A Study in Rabbinic Ethics* (Madison, Wisc., 2005), 45–46, 206–7; and Michael Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, N.J., 1996), 176–78.

3. On this motif, see Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, 173–205.

4. See, e.g., Peter Schäfer, ed., *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen, 1981), §80, where the passage appears to be an appendix to 3 Enoch; §734, where it is associated with *Shi'ur komah* traditions; and §675, where the pattern is employed as part of a hymn in *Sar-Torah* traditions. On these passages, see Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, 178–90.

5. See Mordecai Margaliot, *Sefer ha-razim: Hu' sefer keshafim mi-tekufat ha-Talmud* (Jerusalem, 1966), 65–66 (the introductory chapter of the text).

6. On the *Book of Asaph*, see Elinor Lieber, "An Ongoing Mystery: The So-Called 'Book of Medicines' Attributed to Asaf the Sage," *Bulletin of Judaeo-Greek Studies* 9 (1991): 18–25; and Lieber, "Asaf's *Book of Medicines*: A Hebrew Encyclopedia of Greek and Jewish Medicine, Possibly Compiled in Byzantium on an Indian Model," *DOP* 38 (1984): 233–49. Cf. Ludwig Venetianer, *Asaf Judaeus: Der aelteste medizinische Schriftsteller in hebraeischer Sprache* (Strassburg, 1916); Suessman Muntner, *Mavo le-Sefer Asaf ha-Rofe* (Jerusalem, 1967); and Aviv Melzer, "Asaph the Physician—The Man and His Book: A Historical-Philological Study of the Medical Treatise *The Book of Drugs*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1972). Melzer published much of a major manuscript of the text; a full edition, however, is still a desideratum. This introduction was published in Adolf Jellinek, ed., *Bet ha-midrash* (Jerusalem, 1967 [1853–1878], 1:155–56, as *Sefer Noaḥ*; see the translation and notes of James C. Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees: A Critical Text* (Leuven, 1989), 59–60. On the parallels to this introduction, see also Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden, 1980), 227.

7. On the function of such narratives in magical literature in general, see David Frankfurter, "Narrating Power: The Theory and Practice of the Magical *Historiola* in Ritual Spells," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. M. W. Meyer and P. Mirecki (Leiden, 1995), 457–76.

8. This essay expands on arguments that I have advanced in a previous volume in this series; see Michael D. Swartz, "Judaism and the Idea of Ancient Ritual Theory," in *Tradition, Diaspora, and Authority*, ed. R. S. Boustan, O. Kosansky, and M. Rustow (Philadelphia, 2011), 294–317. See also Swartz, "Sage, Priest, and Poet: Typologies of Leadership in the Ancient Synagogue," in *Jews, Christians and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. S. Fine (London, 1999), 101–17; and Swartz, "Liturgy, Poetry, and the Persistence of Sacrifice," in *Was 70 C.E. a Watershed in Jewish History?*, ed. D. R. Schwartz and Z. Weiss (Leiden, 2011), 392–414.

9. Henry A. Fischel, "The Uses of Sorites (*Climax, Gradatio*) in the Tannaitic Period," *HUCA* 44 (1973): 119–51; Elias Bickerman, "La chaîne de la tradition pharisienne," *RevB* 59 (1952): 44–54; and Saldarini, *Scholastic Rabbanism*, 19–21.

10. See Yitzḥak Heinemann, *Darkhe ha-agadah* (Jerusalem, 1970), 30; Fischel, "The Uses of Sorites," 124–26; and Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, 197–98.

11. Fischel, "The Uses of Sorites," 126, citing Eusebius, *HE* 2.1.4.

12. Fischel, "The Uses of Sorites," 126.

13. Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography*.

14. Ibid., 154–56, also traces the relative silence of rabbinic literature on the fourth- and fifth-century patriarchs to the decline of the Second Sophistic.

15. Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 84–86.

16. Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography*, 208–40.

17. On the function of portrayals of succession for polemics among early Christian communities, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, "'Jewish Christianity' as Counter-History? The Apostolic Past in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and the Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*," in *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. G. Gardner and K. L. Osterloh (Tübingen, 2008), 173–216.

18. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, 70–71, 232; Herr, "Ha-retsef she-be-salshelet mesirat ha-Torah," 43–56; and Louis Finkelstein, *Mavo' le-masekhtot Avot ve-Avot de-Rabbi Natan* (New York, 1950), xxix.

19. Michael E. Stone, "The Axis of History at Qumran," in *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. E. G. Chazon and M. Stone (Leiden, 1999), 133–49. Thus, according to Stone, in the Qumran fragments of *Testament of Kahat*, this knowledge is in the form of books as well as other cultic traditions.

20. See Thomas R. Lee, *Studies in the Form of Sirach 44–50* (Atlanta, 1986); Otto Mulder, *Simon*