

Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice

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43. Previous studies that have used the concept of "passing" to decode the logics of late Roman texts also suggest this. See Judith Perkins, "An Ancient 'Passing' Novel: Heliodorus' *Aithiopika*," *Arethusa* 32 (1999): 197–214, on the *Aithiopika*; Virginia Burrus, "Mimicking Virgins: Colonial Ambivalence and the Ancient Romance," *Arethusa* 38 (2005): 49–88, at 82–83; and Rebecca Lyman, "The Politics of Passing: Justin Martyr's Conversion as a Problem of 'Hellenization,'" in *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing*, edited by Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton, Studies in Comparative History (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 36–60.

44. Ginsberg, "Introduction: The Politics of Passing," 2.

45. See the thoughtful overview of Roman sacrifice in Jörg Rüpke, *Religion of the Romans*, translated by Richard Gordon (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 137–53, as well as the many chapters in this volume.

46. Ambrose, *Ep.* 78.2 (PL 16:1268).

47. Augustine, *Ep.* 82.18 (PL 33:283).

48. On Augustine's perhaps idiosyncratic (but nonetheless influential) view of Judaism and Jewish practice, see Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008).

49. See, for example, his discussion in Augustine, *Ep.* 23.4 (PL 33:97). The context is a discussion of baptism in response to Donatist purists; interestingly, Augustine notes that, just as after Jesus' first coming the *sacramentum* of circumcision was "set aside," so too will baptism be "set aside" after his second coming.

50. See Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

51. James J. O'Donnell describes original sin as Augustine's "most original and nearly single-handed creation": *Augustine: A New Biography* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005), 296.

52. Marion Rust, "The Subaltern as Imperialist: Speaking of Olaudah Equiano," in Ginsberg, *Passing*, 21–36, at 35.

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Confounding Blood

JEWISH NARRATIVES OF SACRIFICE AND VIOLENCE IN LATE ANTIQUITY

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Late antiquity saw a profound transformation in the organization of religious life as societies throughout the ancient Mediterranean world ceased, albeit only gradually, to engage in animal sacrifice. As Peter Brown and Jonathan Z. Smith have famously argued, the far-reaching process whereby a mobile class of exceptional persons eclipsed the traditional Temple cults as the locus of the holy played an instrumental role in the emergence of new forms of religious community and identity in the Hellenistic and especially Roman periods.¹ It would be misleading, however, to characterize the so-called end of sacrifice as the progressive spiritualization of religion.² Indeed, sacrificial cult continued to serve throughout late antiquity as the dominant paradigm for ritual action and religious piety, even in the "post-sacrificial" forms of Judaism, Christianity, and indeed paganism that emerged in this period.³ If anything, sacrifice—and specifically, the symbolic function of sacrificial blood—provided an increasingly charged domain of contact and competition across the full spectrum of religious groups in the Mediterranean world.⁴ More specifically, the language of sacrifice was reinvigorated within both Jewish and Christian discourses of martyrdom, which figured the executions of privileged human beings as purificatory or atoning sacrifice.⁵

Animal sacrifice represented a vexed ideological and religious problem for Jewish communities in the Roman empire in the wake of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and its cult in 70 CE, which Roman and early Christian writers framed (albeit in different ways) as a sign of the Jews' loss of divine favor.⁶ Indeed, Jewish sources from late antiquity attest the gradual internalization of this view of the calamitous end of the Jewish cult.⁷ Yet, as Jonathan Klawans has argued, we need not adopt the modern scholarly predilection for reading the negative views of the Jerusalem Temple in the ancient sources—Roman, Christian, and indeed Jewish—as evidence that the cult had become moribund or even corrupt well before its destruction.⁸ Klawans instead advises scholars to focus attention on how Jewish (and Christian) authors "channeled the sanctity of the temple" into novel forms of religious practice and discourse.⁹

This chapter contributes to the renewed interest in the “resignification” of sacrificial language and concepts within post-Temple Judaism by comparing two contemporaneous narratives from late antiquity that explore the complex relationship between animal sacrifice and human violence.¹⁰ The first is the widely disseminated martyrology known as *The Story of the Ten Martyrs*, which gathers together within a single narrative framework various earlier traditions regarding the rabbinic martyrs executed by the Romans during the Jewish revolts of the first and second centuries.¹¹ I contrast this martyrological cycle with the rabbinic retelling of the cryptic biblical account of the murder of Zechariah ben Yehoyada (2 Chr 24:17–22), which appears in multiple forms in both Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic compilations.¹² In their narrative expansion of this biblical episode, the rabbinic authors trace a causal link between Zechariah’s unrequited blood and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Babylonians 250 years later. I argue that the radically distinct approaches to sacrifice in these two narratives demonstrate that the late-antique Jewish discourse of sacrifice was far from univocal; rather, biblical sacrifice and the narratives associated with it emerged as a charged site of contestation, both among Jews and between Jews and Christians.

Specifically, I show that, while the two narratives at the heart of this chapter were both produced in Roman-Byzantine Palestine in the late fourth to sixth centuries, they differ fundamentally in their application of the language of biblical sacrifice to contemporary Jewish piety and practice. *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* puts forward an elaborate theology of vicarious atonement in which the suffering and death of the righteous martyrs serve as sacrificial expiation for the ancestral sin of the Jewish people and are seen to guarantee their ultimate redemption from the wicked powers of this world, namely, the Roman empire. By contrast, the rabbinic renarration of Zechariah’s murder refuses the application of sacrificial logic to the ancestral act of collective violence that it situates at the heart of biblical history. The creators of this narrative tradition left no place in this history of violence for martyrdom, understood as a ritually efficacious offering that purifies the cultic shrine, atones for sin, or ensures redemption. Rather, the murder of Zechariah represents a dramatic breach of cultic protocol, and no subsequent sacrificial bloodletting—either animal or human—can mitigate the consequences of this defiling act. This narrative thus insists on a sharp distinction between illicit violence and proper animal sacrifice.

The significant differences between the approaches to sacrifice and martyrdom present in these two works, while emphasizing the diversity of late-ancient Jewish thought, also call into question recent attempts to formulate a universal theory of sacrifice. Most notably, René Girard’s writings on sacrifice, which posit that all sacrificial practice has its origins in the common human impulse to murderous violence (more on this below), could find support in *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* even as the Zechariah story would resist a Girardian point of view. Like Girard, *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* presents the institution of (one specific type of) blood sacrifice as the product of internecine murder and as the provisional resolution to the crisis this murder engenders. That is, the martyrology builds upon an etiological explanation

rooted in Second Temple Judaism for the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), which according to this tradition commemorates the day that Jacob’s sons mislead their father concerning the “apparent death” of Joseph their brother (Gen 37:29–35). The sacrificial practices of Yom Kippur are thus directly linked to the competition among the progenitors of the tribes of Israel for the affections of their father. Finally, as Girard himself might postulate, this explicitly sacrificial narrative both constructs martyrdom as an act of sacrifice and presents it as the sole means for resolving the cycle of violence that forms the inner scaffolding of human history.

By contrast, a Girardian reading of the Zechariah story, as retold in the fourth-century Palestinian Talmud and the fifth- to sixth-century midrashic collection known as *Lamentations Rabbati*, would significantly distort its message. Girard’s interpretation of the “murder of the prophets” motif in the New Testament might suggest that this narrative seeks to demystify blood sacrifice as a “sacred cult of violence,” thereby offering a blueprint for a more advanced and indeed universal form of religious piety that would transcend the sacrificial complex and the mythic and magical thinking upon which it depends.¹³ In my view, however, this rabbinic tale provides a graphic accounting—tallied in the monstrosity and futilely spilled blood of the people of Jerusalem and their leaders—of the ethical and ritual failings of ancient Israel that lead to the destruction of their Temple. The events leading to the destruction do not disclose the awful “truth” about the violent nature of the sacrificial system: both Zechariah and those who are later killed in the temple precincts to expiate his blood are precisely not “sacrificial victims”—their deaths are murders and not sacrifices, in the sense that they serve no ritual or redemptive function. As such, especially within the context of *Lamentations Rabbati*, the Zechariah narrative reflects the larger hesitation, even discomfort, about the theology of martyrdom being formulated in other contemporary Jewish sources from Palestine, as evidenced by *The Story of the Ten Martyrs*.

When taken together, these narratives undermine Girard’s homogenizing view of sacrifice, with its transhistorical and transcultural sweep. A single, overarching theory of sacrificial practice and, more importantly, of sacrificial narrative produces a set of reading practices that occlude rather than explain the varied and contested conceptions of sacrifice operative in late antiquity among both Jews and their neighbors. Indeed, Girard’s impulse to create a universally valid theory has its genealogy in the totalizing Christian theologies of sacrificial killing to which the two Jewish narratives that I analyze are themselves responding, albeit in distinct ways. We shall see that in the contemporary Euro-American context—no less than the ancient Mediterranean one—the discourse of sacrifice can serve as a strategy of religious or ideological contestation.

In addition to these theoretical considerations, the specific narratives analyzed in this chapter suggest a corrective to the dominant scholarly account of the history of the Jewish acclimatization to a post-Temple reality. According to this historical narrative, the rabbis and liturgists of late antiquity self-consciously crafted novel forms of piety, such as Torah study and prayer, to serve as direct replacements for the less

ethically and spiritually nourishing sacrificial cult of the Temple.¹⁴ Thus, in a recent analysis of rabbinic tales concerning the destruction of the Temple, Paul Mandel has argued that the “chronological and geographic distance from the Temple caused the centrality of the Temple, and the memories of the rituals of sacrifice so central in its day, to recede, so to be replaced by the more immediate concerns of the populace and its leaders.”¹⁵ As such, the sacred center gave way to rabbinic narrative and exegesis, which “sustained the Jewish people through generations of retold tales.”¹⁶ This familiar narrative of the transformation of Judaism from a “cultic” into a “textual” community may well fit some trajectories within late-antique Judaism, such as those reflected in the sources analyzed by Mandel. But time and distance from the Jerusalem Temple did not work in a uniform or linear way. Jews did not conceptualize the Temple cult in any one way, nor was the “problem of sacrifice” (if it was a problem at all) ever finally and definitively resolved.

Indeed, the rise of Christianity to dominance in the fourth to sixth century and, in particular, the hegemony of Christian claims to the legacy of biblical sacrifice provoked Jews to invest renewed energy in grappling with the loss of their cultic center. The application of sacrificial logic to rabbinic martyrdom and the liturgical recitation of *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* on Yom Kippur demonstrate that the model of the sacrificial cult was not only salient within Jewish culture long after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, but in fact enjoyed conspicuous revitalization in fifth- and sixth-century Palestine, with a lasting impact on medieval Jewish conceptions of martyrdom.¹⁷

René Girard on Sacrificial Practice and Sacrificial Narrative

This section reviews and assesses Girard’s bold account of the historical origins of sacrificial practice in a primordial act of collective violence. In the process, I consider the charge lodged by Jonathan Z. Smith, Ivan Strenski, and others that Girard has in fact produced a culturally specific, even polemical view of sacrifice masquerading as an academic theory with universal validity. While I share this critical assessment of Girard’s project, I nevertheless find his theory helpful in classifying the specific strategies deployed in ancient Jewish sources to contest the meaning of the biblical sacrificial cult and thus to assert control over its legacy. The question of whether or not blood sacrifice is a substitute for violence—Girard’s central problematic—is indeed a recurrent theme in Jewish narratives from late antiquity that address the loss of the Temple cult. How a given text answered this question had direct implications for its particular conception of Judaism in the post-Temple order.

Girard’s theory of sacrifice stands at the heart of his voluminous writings on the place of religion in human history and society.¹⁸ Girard marshals countless narratives—from ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern myths to the narratives of so-called primitive societies and the modern novel—in order to show that animal

sacrifice arises from and brings at least provisional resolution to the murderous dynamics of social conflict and cohesion that characterize all human collectivities. This generative process binds together violence, sacrifice, and the act of narration into a single, mutually constituting sacrificial complex. Girard’s universalizing move has been widely criticized. Nevertheless, his engagement with sacrificial atonement theology, though provoked by his own historically situated context, is rooted in the very Christian theological conceptions first developed in late antiquity that were also engaged by Jewish writers in that formative period of Jewish–Christian relations.

The centrality that Girard’s theory accords sacrifice in social and historical processes might suggest to students of ancient Mediterranean religions avenues for understanding why shifts in sacrificial practice had such profound and far-reaching consequences for social organization and religious life in antiquity. Yet, many historians of religion would argue, instead, that the analytical tools Girard uses are so compromised by his patently theological insistence on the uniqueness and even superiority of the biblical tradition as refracted by Christian lenses that we are better off sidestepping his project entirely. Many have been particularly critical of Girard for his “reductive” and “evolutionist” account of animal sacrifice, which fails to situate the practice properly within its specific social, historical, and discursive contexts.¹⁹

Perhaps most potent among these critiques is Jonathan Z. Smith’s contention that sacrifice is not an act of transmuted and barely contained violence rooted in so-called primitive societies, but rather is distinctive to stratified agrarian or pastoralist societies in which, he suggests, sacrifice might serve as a sustained and ritualized form of meditation on the process of “domestication.”²⁰ Likewise, Smith’s thoroughgoing historiographic critique of the Protestant roots of the study of late-antique religions should be enough to call into question Girard’s Christian exceptionalism—his apparent insistence on the uniqueness of the Christ-event.²¹ Indeed, Girard’s blanket rejection of sacrificial understandings of Jesus’ death—often articulated in conjunction with a powerful distaste for mimetic conceptions of Eucharistic practice—has also failed to persuade most scholars of early Christianity on either internal literary or historical-contextual grounds.²²

Ivan Strenski’s study of Girard’s thought within its specific intellectual and cultural context adds an important historical dimension to these theoretical and methodological criticisms.²³ According to Strenski, Girard should be read as a Christian theologian and moralist, rather than as a historian of religion. As a historian or ethnographer, he is merely wrong—though wrong in a particularly pernicious way. But, as a contributor to modern theological or ethical debates about religious practice and its relationship to political agency, Girard is significant in his own right. According to Strenski, “Girard’s theory of sacrifice should be seen as a rejection of a view of sacrifice originally developed in the seventeenth-century eucharistic theology of the Roman Catholic reaction to the Reformation in France.”²⁴ Girard’s theory is thus heir to the legacy of post-Reformation French debates regarding the notion of sacrifice and its political and religious meanings.

Moreover, Strenski points to the ironic, if predictable, similarities between Girard's theory and the "conservative" and "authoritarian" French Catholic tradition in which he was raised and against which he reacts so vehemently. Most notable is his understanding of sacrifice as an act of foundational violence that both delineates and fosters human community. In addition, in line with his religious upbringing, Girard likewise accords centrality to the Christ-event in the teleological unfolding of human history. At the same time, there are significant differences. For Girard, the Eucharist is not a mimetic reenactment of the violent self-sacrifice of Jesus, but an act of remembrance that marks a revolutionary advance over the pre-Calvary human condition. In the post-Calvary world, wherever sacrificial thought or practice have not been fully purged, Girard diagnoses the lingering and destructive hold of the primitive dynamics of the scapegoat mechanism—the very mechanism that he believes set in motion the violent institution of sacrifice in the first place. Seen from this perspective, Girardian thought advocates a reformist tradition centered upon the ideal of an individually oriented religious conscience, which he believes has superseded the collectivist ethos and politics of clerically oriented sacramental theology—be it Catholic, Jewish, or otherwise. For Strenski, this is all well and good, provided that we strenuously resist Girard's attempt to formulate a universalizing theory of religion and human culture in the historically contingent—not to say parochial—terms of modern theological debates regarding Christian "sacrifice."

As problematic as Girard's project has been shown to be, his provocative equation of sacrifice and violence nevertheless echoes narrative traditions from late antiquity. Indeed, Girard was hardly the first to explore the complex relationship between these concepts; many Christians and Jews in late antiquity shared Girard's interpretation of sacrifice as a substitute for murderous violence and, in turn, the deaths of the innocent righteous as a means for transcending the sacrificial process. Even more, it would seem that they likewise invested great energy in exploring just how the liturgical reenactment and narrative recitation of the sacrificial drama relates to the actual act of sacrifice. The impressive thematic correlations between Girard's theory of sacrifice and the representation of sacrifice in the literature of late antiquity, both Jewish and Christian, suggests that, rather than explaining sacrifice, Girard's theory has replicated and naturalized a highly particular conception of sacrifice with a specifically late-antique genealogy.

The Story of the Ten Martyrs and Girard's Christian Exceptionalism

The rabbinic martyrological cycle known as *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* is perhaps the most striking example of Jewish narrative from late antiquity that thematizes the relationship between ancestral murder and the power of human sacrifice.²⁵ This martyrology, in its poetic forms, has been an integral part of the Yom Kippur liturgy since late antiquity.²⁶ Although set during the "Hadrianic persecutions" of the

second century CE, the martyrology developed as a literary composition in Palestine between the fifth and early seventh centuries.²⁷ The martyrology relates in gruesome detail the sequential executions of ten rabbinic sages at the hands of the Romans. According to the narrative's overarching conceptual framework, the deaths of the ten martyred sages are not caused by the immediate political circumstances, but rather are the direct consequence of the crime committed by Joseph's twelve brothers when they sold him into slavery (Gen 37:18–28). The scriptural logic works in the following fashion: based on the authority of Exodus 21:16 ("He who kidnaps a man—whether he has sold him or is still holding him—shall be put to death"), the narrative considers the sale of Joseph to be a capital crime. The deaths of these rabbinic martyrs are thus vicarious atonement for the original national sin committed by the progenitors of the tribes of Israel.

As Solomon Zeitlin suggested more than fifty years ago, the association between the sin of Joseph's brothers and Israel's need for communal atonement on Yom Kippur entered rabbinic martyrology from early Jewish sources of the Second Temple period.²⁸ The clearest statement of this etiology for the holiday is found in the second-century text *Jubilees* (34:12–19).²⁹ Although this passage does not explicitly refer to Yom Kippur, the date indicated for the commemorative mourning of Joseph's "apparent death"—the tenth day of the seventh month—unequivocally denotes this holiday. Zeitlin rightly explains that the authors of *Jubilees* "held that the sin of the ten sons of Jacob, who sold Joseph into slavery, had not been atoned, and that hence the Jews must afflict themselves annually on the day on which Joseph was sold, in order to attain atonement for this sin which their forefathers committed."³⁰

The association of the sale of Joseph into slavery with Yom Kippur is well attested in rabbinic literature. This etiological motif always appears in conjunction with rabbinic traditions concerning the expiatory function of the special vestments worn by the high priest when officiating over the sacrifices prescribed for the Day of Atonement.³¹ It should be noted that the emphasis in this case is explicitly on the blood sacrifices for the Day of Atonement and not on the famous scapegoat ritual, which does not involve blood sacrifice at all (a distinction wholly lost on Girard in his writings).³² These traditions were subsequently embellished in the Yom Kippur liturgy that developed in the late fourth and fifth centuries.³³ And, once embedded in the synagogue liturgy, the motif played a generative role in the production of novel literary compositions that were associated with the Day of Atonement, including *The Story of the Ten Martyrs*.

The ideology of vicarious atonement through martyrological self-sacrifice that is at the heart of *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* centers on the image of the heavenly altar upon which the angelic high priest Metatron (or Michael) sacrifices the souls of the righteous martyrs who offer their lives on behalf of the Jewish people (*Ten Martyrs*, 1–IX.20.1–5). We learn about this awful truth when the central martyr in the story, Rabbi Ishmael ben Elisha, ascends to heaven in order to learn whether it is in fact the will of God that the group of ten sages should embrace their deaths as martyrs. There, Rabbi Ishmael, who is himself of high priestly lineage, is met by the

angelic high priest Metatron.³³ It is from his angelic guide that Rabbi Ishmael learns that Israel's ultimate redemption depends on the willingness of the martyrs to lay down their lives in order to atone for the nation's ancestral sin.

The narrative makes absolutely clear that the spilling of the martyrs' blood will affect atonement for the blood-guilt of the Jewish people. After having learned from the angelic high priest Metatron that it is the sin of Joseph's brothers that has set in motion the cruel fate he and his colleagues now face, Rabbi Ishmael asks the angel in despair:

"Has the Holy One, blessed be He, not found someone to redeem the blood of Joseph from the days of Jacob until now throughout all those generations?" He answered: "The Holy One, blessed be He, has not found ten like the sons of Jacob except you."³⁵

The atoning function of the martyrs' blood is a leitmotif running through the remainder of the narrative. Following this awful revelation, Rabbi Ishmael is given a guided tour through heaven by Metatron. As they are moving about, the sage and future martyr comes across an object he does not immediately recognize, and he asks the angel,

"What is this in front of you?" He replied: "An altar." He asked him: "Is there an altar above [in heaven]?" He answered him: "Yes, everything that exists above also exists below, as it is written I have now built for You a stately house [1 Kgs 8:13]." He asked him: "And what do you sacrifice upon it? Do you have bulls, rams, and lambs?" He answered him: "We sacrifice the souls of the righteous upon it." He declared: "Now I have heard something that I have never before heard!"³⁶

As this dialogue between martyr and angel makes clear, martyrdom on earth is paralleled in heaven by the sacrifice of the souls of the righteous martyrs, presided over by the angelic high priest Metatron.

Moreover, this sacrifice is essential to the proper maintenance of Israel's relationship with God and, ultimately, to the redemption of Israel from the yoke of Rome. Thus, immediately following Rabbi Ishmael's return to earth to inform his colleagues what he has learned, Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel declares that they should rejoice because "God will receive our souls as a sacrifice so that He may exact vengeance through them from wicked Rome."³⁷ The message is quite clear: the human sacrifice entailed in the martyr's death replaces the animal offerings of the earthly Temple. Moreover, the blood of the martyrs is the sole guarantee of ultimate salvation for the Jewish people.³⁸

The Story of the Ten Martyrs betrays deep affinities with early Christian conceptions of the heavenly cult of Christ and its role in salvation history, especially as formulated in such texts as the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews.³⁹ At the same time, it offers a damning critique of the coercive power of the Roman (or, perhaps better, Roman-Christian) state. The creators of the martyrology painted a graphic

portrait of the bleak experience of late-antique Jews under Roman domination. But they did so by deploying a set of highly charged literary motifs that were seemingly at odds with the more conventional scholastic orientation of their rabbinic source material—and seemingly far closer to the religious imagery and attitudes of their Christian neighbors.

Like *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* and the narrative tradition on which it draws, Girard reads the Joseph story in Genesis as a meditation on the origins of sacrifice in fratricidal conflict provoked by jealousy and competition. In his most sustained discussion of the figure of Joseph, Girard argues that the biblical authors self-consciously reject what he calls the "older" or "pre-biblical" mythic tradition (e.g., the Oedipus legend) by "inverting the relationship between the victim and the persecuting community."⁴⁰ On this account, classical myth sanctions communal violence against the hero-turned-scapegoat by insisting on his guilt, while Genesis instead stresses Joseph's innocence in each chapter of the narrative, from his conflict with his brothers to the false accusation of adultery he faces in Egypt. For Girard, this inversion has, in turn, significant implications for the biblical conception of sacrifice: "The kid that provided the blood in which Joseph's tunic was dipped in order to prove to his father that he was really dead would have played a directly sacrificial role in the pre-biblical account."⁴¹ The biblical story thus demystifies and desacralizes—in short, humanizes—Joseph; the linkage in the narrative between violence and sacrifice paradoxically aims to break the cycle of killing that fuels and is fueled by the sacrificial complex.

But it is precisely with this final step that Girard parts ways with the interpretation of the story offered in *The Story of the Ten Martyrs*. In sharp contrast to Girard's reading of the "apparent murder" of Joseph as exemplifying the antisacrificial perspective of the biblical authors, the martyrology presents this act as the inauguration of a specific set of sacrificial practices. This sacrificial complex would, in turn, find its ultimate expression in the ritual-liturgical performance of a martyrology in which the foundational act of violence committed by Joseph's brothers is linked through the blood of the sacrifices, first animal and then human, to the eschatological violence to be inflicted by God on Rome. From a Girardian perspective, the creators of the martyrology replicated the sacrificial complex rather than unmaking it; they thus failed to grasp what Girard holds to be the "true" significance of the Joseph narrative in the biblical tradition.

Thus, despite his explicit aim to offer a formal, academic theory of sacrifice, Girard's reading practices do not provide him with the tools he (and we) might need to make historical sense of specific theological formulations or the contestations that surround them, but rather cast him as arbiter of their correctness. We can thus place Girard side by side with the martyrology: both are polemical and totalizing accounts of the biblical message and its place in human history and culture.

Moreover, *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* raises significant problems for Girard's Christian exceptionalism, which bypasses postbiblical sources entirely and traces a linear progression from the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible to the New

Testament gospels.⁴² In his insistence on the uniqueness of the New Testament in unmasking the violence at the heart of the sacrificial process, Girard fails to consider the complex interaction between Jews and Christians as both groups grappled with the problem of the “end of biblical sacrifice.” But, in fact, the creators of the rabbinic martyrology—and presumably also those who participated in its liturgical performance on Yom Kippur—shared a sacrificial understanding of martyrdom with their Christian neighbors. There was no stable core of essential differences between late-antique Jews and Christians in matters of religious ideology and practice, even in such highly sensitive issues as collective, vicarious atonement through self-sacrifice. Rather, the martyrology attests the degree to which Jews and Christians continued to occupy a common discursive space, in matters of sacrifice as in many other domains, well after the fourth century.

Reading the Blood of Zechariah with and against Girard

Like *The Story of the Ten Martyrs*, rabbinic retellings of the biblical story concerning the murder of the prophet and priest Zechariah ben Yehoyada (2 Chr 24:17–22) provocatively explore the interrelationship among social conflict, murder, animal sacrifice, and the expiatory value of human blood. The rabbinic versions of the Zechariah story draw a causal link between the murder and the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple 250 years later by the Babylonian general Nebuzaradan, the head of Nebuchadnezzar’s army (2 Kings 25; cf. 2 Chr 36). Both the martyrology and the Zechariah tradition grapple with how the biblical discourse of sacrifice might best be understood and resignified in the wake of the destruction of the Temple cult. But I argue that the Zechariah story, especially as it was deployed within the fifth- or sixth-century midrashic collection known as *Lamentations Rabbati*, does not support the Girardian equation of sacrifice with violence, however tempting such a reading might be. Indeed, the narrative should not be read as a theological statement regarding the replacement of the cult by more ethically and spiritually “advanced” forms of religious piety. Rather, the narrative stresses that Israel’s murderous crime is precisely out-of-the-ordinary, an extreme violation of the standard sacrificial system. As a consequence of its insistence on the fundamental difference between sacrifice and violence, the text also rejects a sacrificial conception of martyrdom as a crucial means for effecting atonement or guaranteeing redemption.

Postbiblical Jewish and Christian retellings of the murder of Zechariah and its bloody aftermath build upon the brief report in 2 Chronicles in which King Joash orders the execution of the son of the righteous high priest Jehoiada for his prophecy of doom:

Then the spirit of God took possession of Zechariah son of the priest Jehoiada; he stood above the people and said to them, “Thus says God: Why

do you transgress the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, he has also forsaken you.” But they conspired, and by command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the Lord. King Joash did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah’s father, had shown him, but killed his son. As he [Zechariah] was dying, he said: “May the Lord see and avenge!” (2 Chr 24:20–22 NRSV)

Jewish and Christian sources from late antiquity reflect the common reorientation that this narrative underwent in the course of the Second Temple period as the episode increasingly became a narrative backdrop for in-depth exploration of the curious nature and power of the blood itself. Especially instrumental in this process of narrative expansion were the allusions in the base-text to the precise location of the murder in the Temple and the emphasis on the visible remains of the murder that Zechariah prays will ensure divine retribution (“may the Lord see and avenge”). Already in the biblical base-text, the themes of location, divine witness, and future retribution are yoked together, even if only in incipient form.⁴³

Scholars of Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism have dedicated a great deal of energy to tracing the literary history of this narrative within Jewish sources.⁴⁴ More recently, however, scholars have begun to explore the dynamic interaction between Jewish and Christian versions of this narrative.⁴⁵ Most well-known, of course, are the allusion to the blood of Zechariah in the gospels of Matthew and Luke as part of Jesus’ final woe to the Pharisees, upon whom will come “all the innocent blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.”⁴⁶ The story seems to have enjoyed such wide currency across a range of genres that numerous ritual artifacts and incantation texts attest the active use of this narrative as a historiola for curing uncontrolled bleeding.⁴⁷ And it would seem that this process of interreligious contestation spilled beyond the confines of narrative, assuming a concrete spatial dimension through local traditions of pilgrimage centered on Jerusalem. As Galit Hasan-Rokem has stressed, just as the pilgrim of the *Itinerarium Burdigalense* reports seeing the bloody traces of Zechariah’s murder, so, too, *Lamentations Rabbati* anchors its retelling of the story to the apparent status of the locale as a site of healing: “The blind, what would they say? Who will show us Zechariah’s blood? And the lame, what would they say? Who will show us the place where Zechariah was killed, and we’ll embrace it and kiss it?”⁴⁸ In light of this evidence, I fully endorse Jean-Daniel Dubois’ persuasive claim that the blood of Zechariah represented one particularly potent site in Jewish-Christian competition over the memory and meaning of the biblical past.⁴⁹

The story concerning the murder of Zechariah and especially the fate of his unjustly shed blood appears in various forms in both Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic literature and in a range of literary and exegetical contexts.⁵⁰ In what follows, I present and analyze the earliest full version of the narrative, found in the Palestinian

Talmud.⁵¹ In addition, I consider how the narrative was subsequently used in later centuries by the creators of *Lamentations Rabbati*, a verse-by-verse exegetical commentary on the book of Lamentations from fifth- or perhaps sixth-century Palestine. While the Zechariah story is by no means unique to *Lamentations Rabbati*, this midrashic collection does repeat the story four separate times and places it within a structured and perhaps even systematic literary framework. It, therefore, provides a broader context for assessing the meaning that this narrative held in this period, at least for some Jews.

The Palestinian Talmud presents a series of semi-independent traditions concerning the murder of Zechariah; this loose, but thematically coherent, collection will culminate in the story of Nebuzaradan's encounter with the blood of Zechariah and his attempt to solve its riddle. But, first, the text begins with briefer discussions of the story.

The passage opens with a statement in the name of R. Yoḥanan that "eighty thousand young priests were slain on account of the blood of Zechariah." This tradition is followed by a dialogue between two rabbis concerning the precise location of the murder: "R. Yudan asked R. Aḥa: 'Where was Zechariah murdered, in the Women's Court or in the Court of the Israelites?' He answered him: 'Neither in the Women's Court nor in the Court of the Israelites, but in the Court of the Priests.'" These statements frame the narrative in such a way that we expect the Temple priesthood, rather than the nation as a whole, to have played a particularly central role in the crime. This expectation is partly realized in the subsequent narrative and partly frustrated: the murder is especially noteworthy because it generates pollution within the Temple, but there is no attempt to limit the culpability for the murder to the priests or to absolve either the king or the people of their responsibility. Moreover, as both priest and prophet, the figure of Zechariah defies facile attempts to pit a supposedly wicked priesthood against the tradition of righteous prophecy.

The talmudic text then presents an exegetical unit intended to emphasize the enormity of the crime. This unit juxtaposes the regulation in Leviticus 17:13, which instructs the Israelite or stranger to cover with earth the blood of a kosher wild animal, with Ezekiel 24:6–8, which chastises the "bloody city" of Jerusalem for placing the blood that it shed "on a bare rock; she did not pour it out on the ground, to cover it with earth" (Ezek 24:7 NRSV). These verses, when taken together, demonstrate that Zechariah's murderers treated his blood differently from the blood of animals: rather than covering his blood with earth, they left it visible and thus ensured that it would provoke God's "fury to take vengeance" (Ezek 24:8 NRSV). I will return to this detail below.

This unit is followed by a tradition that enumerates the seven concurrent sins that were committed at the time of the murder: "Israel committed seven transgressions [*aveirot*] on the same day: They killed a priest, a prophet, and a judge; they spilled innocent blood; they polluted the Temple Court [*ve-tim'u ha-azarah*]; and it was both Sabbath and the Day of Atonement."⁵² Interestingly, like *The Story of the*

Ten Martyrs, the Zechariah text links the murder that stands as the fountainhead of Israel's guilt to Yom Kippur, though the detail is here primarily intended to emphasize the enormity of the crime.

It is only following this series of preliminary apodictic and exegetical traditions that the Talmud presents the story proper. The narrative moves from the time of King Joash and Zechariah to the conquest of Judea by the Babylonians in the sixth century BCE. The conquering Babylonian general, Nebuzaradan, upon entering the Jerusalem Temple, notices a bizarre phenomenon: a pool of blood in the courtyard of the priests, perhaps near the altar itself, seething restlessly. When he inquires concerning the origins of this blood, the residents of Jerusalem assure him that it is the blood of animal sacrifices.

When Nebuzaradan ascended here [to the Temple Court], he saw blood seething. He said to them, what is the nature [of this blood]? They said to him, "The blood of bulls, lambs, and rams⁵³ that we sacrificed upon the altar." He immediately brought bulls, rams, and lambs and slaughtered them upon the blood, but it continued to seethe.

Just as in *The Story of the Martyrs*, the Zechariah narrative here raises the question of whether animal blood and human blood are of the same nature. Indeed, both texts employ an almost identical phrase when formulating the comparison: can the slaughter of the righteous serve the same—or, at least, a ritually comparable—function as the sacrifice of "bulls, rams, and sheep" (*parim 'eilim u-khevasim*).⁵⁴ As we have seen, the answer in the martyrology is a resounding "yes," whereas the present narrative rejects the equivalence.

When Nebuzaradan discovers that the blood of sacrificial animals cannot quell the prophet's blood, he suspects murder most foul. The general extracts from the Jerusalemites a confession of their bloodguilt: it is the blood of Zechariah, they explain, who 250 years earlier had been murdered by their ancestors.

And since they did not confess to him [the crime of their ancestors], he hung them upon the gallows. They said: "[It seethes] because the Holy One, blessed be He, still plans to avenge his blood from us." They continued: "This is, in fact, the blood of the priest, prophet, and judge who prophesied against us [concerning everything you are now doing to us]⁵⁵ and we rose against him and murdered him."

Having learned the true nature of the seething blood, Nebuzaradan reasons that only human blood can appease it and thus expiate the ancestral guilt. He proceeds to slaughter—or, perhaps better, sacrifice—thousands of the best and brightest from among the Israelite population, eighty thousand priests in the flower of youth.⁵⁶ Yet, even this excessive spilling of human blood turns out not produce the desired effect.

At last, having tried to quell Zechariah's blood with both animal and human blood, Nebuzaradan recoils from the bloodletting.

At that moment, he [Nebuzaradan] rebuked him [Zechariah]⁵⁷ and said to him: "What do you want me to do—destroy your entire people on your account!?"⁵⁸ Immediately the Holy One, blessed be He, was filled with mercy and said: "If this man, who is but flesh and blood and is cruel, is filled with mercy for my children, how much more so should I be [merciful toward them], about whom it is written, 'Because the Lord your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you; he will not forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them' [Deut 4:31]"⁵⁹ Immediately he signaled to the blood that it should be swallowed up in its place.⁵⁹

By rejecting the killing of animals and human beings as a mode of expiating the ancestral crime of murder, the Babylonian general succeeds in shaming the God of Israel into subduing Zechariah's demand for vengeance.

What might a Girardian reading of this expansive version of the Zechariah story look like? Girard has himself written about the allusion to the killing of Zechariah in the New Testament as a "revelation of the founding murder" that inaugurated the cycle of human violence to which Jesus has come to put an end.⁶⁰ Indeed, the "murder of the prophets" is both structurally and thematically central to the narrative of human ethical progress that Girard views as the core message of the gospels.⁶¹

The rabbinic treatment of this tradition might, at first glance, seem to conform to Girard's hypothesis concerning the transformative unmasking of the scapegoat mechanism in biblical literature. In Girardian terms, the Zechariah narrative in both its biblical and postbiblical iterations is a sustained meditation on the universal and integral connection between sacrificial cult and violence. The conflict between Joash and Zechariah, the king's own "son-in-law," with whom he is in competition for control over the community and its religious life, ruptures the social fabric.⁶² In the biblical base-text, the crisis coincides with an unspecified divine punishment of the Judah and Jerusalem (2 Chr 24:18), perhaps a plague or other generic form of calamity, another theme that Girard links to the social disruption generated by the sacrificial crisis.⁶³

Finally, the narrative culminates with the "scapegoating" of Zechariah, which seems to return the Temple community to concord. A Girardian reading would suggest that sacrificial cult has only provisionally masked the guilt of the Israelite community, which clings to a self-delusional and patently ineffective belief in the efficacy of animal sacrifice to atone for guilt. Human blood is no more able to expiate sin than is the blood of the sacrificial animals that has been substituted for it. It is only Nebuzaradan's decision to turn away from the whole sacrificial complex that brings an end to the cycle of killing. His heartfelt prayer provides an antidote to the violent nature of sacrifice and thereby brings an end to the cycle of violence.

Indeed, the version of the story in the Babylonian Talmud goes a step further and has the general convert to Judaism at the culmination of the narrative: "Thereupon he debated with himself whether to repent, saying, 'If such vengeance is exacted for

one life, how much more will happen to me for having taken so many lives!' He fled, sent a parting gift to his household, and became a convert to Judaism."⁶⁴ According to Girard, the motif of conversion is central to the possibility of transcending the sacrificial complex: "conversion is resurrection" insofar as "awareness of guilt is forgiveness in the Christian sense," he writes.⁶⁵ If Girard were to relinquish his Christian exceptionalism, he might argue that this late antique Jewish narrative exemplifies the distinctive and superior perspective of the biblical tradition, which produces a vision of non-sacrificial or even anti-sacrificial dedication of the self that supersedes the sacrificial context out of which it emerges.

But is the rabbinic retelling of the Zechariah narrative, in fact, about sacrificial practice at all? In his recent interpretation of this text, Michael Swartz has persuasively argued that the story goes to great lengths to draw a clear distinction "between any kind of blood of a sacrificial or alimentary animal and the blood of the martyr."⁶⁶ As noted above, the text emphasizes that the human blood of the murdered hero is explicitly treated in a manner that departs from the prescription in Leviticus 17:13 for covering with earth the blood of a wild animal that is permitted to be eaten. Along similar lines, Jonathan Klawans has likewise argued that the Zechariah tradition in rabbinic literature does not address the inadequacies of the sacrificial cult per se, but rather belongs to a broader rabbinic discourse concerning the moral and ritual defilement of the Jerusalem Temple caused by acts such as idolatry, sexual sin, and murder.⁶⁷ This discourse, Klawans argues, is not an indictment of the regular regime of sacrifice as presented in Leviticus and elsewhere in the Torah, but an indication of Israel's own culpability for the eventual destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.⁶⁸

The redactional use of the Zechariah story within the fifth- or sixth-century *Lamentations Rabbati* confirms this interpretation.⁶⁹ Like many midrashic collections, *Lamentations Rabbati* does not form a coherent literary or conceptual whole: the thirty-six proems at the beginning of the work were likely affixed to it at a later time; similarly, the commentary on the first two chapters of the biblical book is considerably more extensive than that on the final three chapters, suggesting an extended and varied compositional history.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, as Shaye Cohen has argued, the work does exhibit a general unity of purpose and perspective—namely, an exegesis of the book of Lamentations as a sustained reflection on the causes of the destruction of Second Temple.⁷¹ In particular, Cohen has called attention to the tendency in *Lamentations Rabbati* to minimize the significance of martyrdom in the events of the destruction, despite the obvious potential for highlighting this very theme.⁷² The Zechariah narrative, which was incorporated in four separate textual contexts within the work, conforms to this general pattern.⁷³ Neither Zechariah nor the descendants of his murderers who are themselves killed by a foreign power are treated as *martyrs*, if that term is understood, as we have seen it so often was, to index a person who dies as a ritually efficacious sacrifice. Rather, the bloodshed in the Zechariah narrative stands as a physical indictment of the simultaneous ritual and ethical shortcomings of the Jewish people, which lead ineluctably to the

destruction of the Temple. On this point, Jewish and Christian writers converged: the destruction and exile from Jerusalem and Judea were a consequence of Jewish guilt.⁷⁴ But only post-Reformation readings of the ancient sources would insist that this shared historico-theological conviction reflects an understanding of sacrifice as nothing other than atavistic violence.

Conclusion

René Girard—or a scholar adopting his conceptual framework—might argue that it is the still unresolved sacrificial complex at the heart of *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* that accounts for its doctrine of divinely sanctioned vengeance. This same scholar might read the rabbinic versions of the Zechariah narrative as a principled rejection of the necessity of sacrifice, whether animal or human, in favor of an ethics of revelatory conversion. Despite the stark difference between the two narratives, the scapegoat mechanism might nevertheless be invoked as the common structural principle governing the very notion of sacrifice operative in the texts.

I have argued, however, that these particular Jewish texts from late antiquity neither bear out Girard's hypothesis of a universal scapegoat mechanism nor encode any putative psychological discomfort with sacrificial violence. Rather, both texts index the pervasive concern among late-antique Jews with the meaning and function of the blood of the murdered righteous, which intensified as the theorization of martyrdom as sacrifice was employed to secure Christian hegemony. On my reading, the Zechariah narrative rejects the equation of sacrifice and murder, thereby deflating the discursive power of martyrdom that had so captivated many Jews and Christians in late antiquity. By contrast, the rabbinic martyrology insists on the abiding power of sacrificial blood to affect salvation, implicitly celebrating the passage from mere animal sacrifice to a heightened form of cult in which human victims are specifically chosen from among the ranks of the heroes of rabbinic tradition.

The two narratives thus reflect the diversity of approaches to the phenomenon of sacrifice among late-antique Jews, a heterogeneity that is likewise attested in early Christian writings.⁷⁵ But beneath the diversity of approaches to sacrifice stood a very concrete competition among Jews and between Jews and Christians over the biblical past, as embodied in the physical remains of exemplary figures spread across the sacred geography of the Holy Land.

Notes

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1. Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), 103–52; and J. Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 172–89. For revisions of this perspective that emphasize the continuing vitality of the traditional temple cults and the complexity of their transformation to new modes of religious authority and practice, see David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 30–33, 37–82, and *passim*.

2. For a thoroughgoing critique of the use of the concept of "spiritualization" in modern scholarship, see Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), esp. 147–74, 213–54; Jonathan Klawans, "Interpreting the Last Supper: Sacrifice, Spiritualization, and Anti-Sacrifice," *New Testament Studies* 48 (2002): 1–17.

3. Guy G. Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformations in Late Antiquity*, translated by S. Emanuel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), esp. 56–83. On the role of sacrifice in the development of postbiblical Judaism in particular, see esp. Michael D. Swartz, "Judaism and the Idea of Ancient Ritual Theory," in *Jewish Studies at the Crossroads of Anthropology and History: Authority, Diaspora, Tradition*, edited by R. S. Boustan, O. Kosansky, and M. Rustow (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 294–317; Michael D. Swartz, "The Topography of Blood in Mishnah Yoma," in *Jewish Blood: Reality and Metaphor in History, Religion, and Culture*, edited by Mitchell B. Hart (London: Routledge, 2009), 70–82; Michael D. Swartz, *Place and Person in Ancient Judaism: Describing the Yom Kippur Sacrifice*, International Rennert Center Guest Lecture Series 9 (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, Faculty of Jewish Studies, 2000). On the search for alternative ritual means to fulfill the obligations of sacrifice within late antique paganism, see especially Salzman's essay in this volume.

4. See the introduction and individual contributions in Ra'anan S. Boustan and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *Blood and the Boundaries of Jewish and Christian Identities in Late Antiquity*, special theme-section of *Henoche* 30 (2008): 229–364.

5. On sacrificial language in Christian martyrology, see Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 50–61; also George Heyman, *The Power of Sacrifice: Roman and Christian Discourses in Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007). On sacrificial language in early Jewish martyrology, see Jan Willem van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), esp. 140–56; Ra'anan S. Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of Merkavah Mysticism*, TSAJ 112 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 149–98.

6. On the ideological use to which the Romans put the destruction, see esp. Jodi Magness, "The Arch of Titus at Rome and the Fate of the God of Israel," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 59 (2008): 201–17; Fergus Millar, "Last Year in Jerusalem: Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, edited by J. Edmondson, S. Mason, and J. Rives (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 101–28.

7. On the Christian interpretation of the destruction as a sign of the transfer of divine favor from the Jewish people to the Christian Church, and the Jewish internalization of this theological construct, see Israel J. Yuval, "The Myth of the Jewish Exile from the Land of Israel: A Demonstration of Irenic Scholarship," *Common Knowledge* 12 (2006): 16–33.

8. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 175–211.

9. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 106. See also Ishay Rosen-Zvi, "Bodies and Temple: The List of Priestly Bodily Defects in Mishnah *Bekhorot*, Chapter 7" (Hebrew), *Jewish Studies* 43 (2005–2006), 49–87; and Steven D. Fraade, "The Temple as a Marker of Jewish Identity before and after 70 C.E.: The Role of the Holy Vessels in Rabbinic Memory and Imagination," in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*, edited by L. I. Levine and D. R. Schwartz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 235–63.

10. The term *resignification* is taken from Michael Fishbane's synthetic analysis of how rabbinic Judaism "reinterpreted and reenacted the old Temple sacrifices" in *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 123–35, at 124.

11. A comprehensive critical edition appears in Gottfried Reeg, ed., *Die Geschichte von den Zehn Märtyrern*, TSAJ 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985).

12. For a full list of the sources, see my n. 50, following.

13. See esp. René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, translated by S. Bann and M. Metteer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 158–63; René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, translated by Y. Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), esp. 100–24.

14. For critical discussion of this entrenched view, see Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 203–11.

15. Paul Mandel, "The Loss of the Center: Changing Attitudes towards the Temple in Aggadic Literature," *HTR* 99 (2006): 17–35, at 34.

16. Mandel, "Loss of the Center," 35.

17. On the seminal place of the Jewish martyrologies of the early Byzantine period in the development of medieval Jewish martyrdom, see Shmuel Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), esp. 107–40.

18. The theory was most fully articulated in René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, translated by Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); also Girard, *Scapegoat and Things Hidden*. See also René Girard, "Generative Scapegoating," in *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, edited by R. G. (R. G.) Hamerton-Kelly (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 73–105.

19. See esp. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 22–26, as well as the previous literature cited there.

20. Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Domestication of Sacrifice," in *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, edited by R. G. Hamerton-Kelly (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 191–214.

21. Jonathan Z. Smith, "On Comparison," in *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 36–53.

22. See esp. the critical assessment in Heyman, *Power of Sacrifice*, 151–56.

23. Ivan Strenski, "At Home with René Girard: Eucharistic Sacrifice, the 'French School' and Joseph De Maistre," in *Religion in Relation: Method, Application, and Moral*

Location (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 202–16; see also Ivan Strenski, *Contesting Sacrifice: Religion, Nationalism, and Social Thought in France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), esp. 101–11.

24. Strenski, "At Home with René Girard," 204.

25. All citations of the work refer to Reeg, *Geschichte von den Zehn Märtyrern*. All translations of this work below are mine, though I have also consulted David Stern, "Midrash Eleh Ezkerah; or, *The Legend of the Ten Martyrs*," in *Rabbinic Fantasies*, edited by D. Stern and M. J. Mirsky (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 143–65.

26. Shulamit Elizur, *Wherefore Have We Fasted? Megillat Ta'anit Butra and Similar Lists of Fasts* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006), 204–14. The earliest versions of the martyrology number among the anonymous, preclassical *piyyutin* dating to the fifth century and the first half of the sixth century and were likely already used for Yom Kippur. A number of examples of these early poetic versions of the martyrology have been published: Az beshivyeinu appears in A. M. Habermann, "Ancient Piyyutin" [Hebrew], *Turbiz* 14 (1942): 57–58, and in a slightly different form in S. Speyer, "The Dirge Az be-veit shivyeinu" (Hebrew), *Sinai* 63 (1968): 50–55; see also the *qedushta* entitled *Az be-ma'asi diberot 'asarah*, which may have been composed by the Byzantine-period liturgical poet Yannai, published in M. Zulay, *The Liturgical Poems of Yannai, Collected from Geniza Manuscripts and Other Sources* (Hebrew) (Berlin: Schocken, 1938), 374–75.

27. Boustán, *From Martyr to Mystic*, 51–98. The Byzantine-period dating for the martyrology was already suggested by Leopold Zunz, *Die synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters*, 2nd ed. (Repr., Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1967), 139–44, and P. Bloch, "Rom und die Mystiker der Merkabah," in *Festschrift zum siebzigsten Geburtstag Jakob Guttmanns* (Leipzig: Gustav Fock, 1915), 113–24.

28. Solomon Zeitlin, "The Legend of the Ten Martyrs and Its Apocalyptic Origins," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 36 (1945–1946): 1–16.

29. *Jubilees* 34:12–19. The passage is translated in James C. Vanderkam, trans., *The Book of Jubilees*, CSCO 511 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 228–29. For discussion of this passage in the context of the various etiologies for Yom Kippur in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, see 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), 95–97.

30. Zeitlin, "Legend," 4–7; Urbach, *Sages*, 521–22.

31. For example, *yYom* 7.5 (44b–c); *LevR* 10.6; *SongR* 4.4.5; *bZev* 88b; *b'Arak* 16a. According to Friedrich Avemarie, trans., *Yoma-Versöhnungstag*, Übersetzung des Talmud Yerushalmi 2.4 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 193 n. 92, the different versions share a common source, although they have subsequently developed in distinct directions.

32. This crucial observation is emphasized in Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, "The Christian Exegesis of the Scapegoat between Jews and Pagans," in *Sacrifice in Religious Experience*, edited by A. I. Baumgarten (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 207–32.

33. Michael D. Swartz, "The Semiotics of the Priestly Vestments in Ancient Judaism," in *Sacrifice in Religious Experience*, edited by A. Baumgarten, SHR 93 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 57–80, esp. 72–76.

34. This material is found in its fullest form at *Ten Martyrs*, I–X. 15.20–28 + 18.1–3. It is also found in what is perhaps its earliest extant formulation in *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim* to Song 1:3; Eliezer Halevi Grünhut, ed., *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Wilhelm Gross, 1971), 4a.

35. *Ten Martyrs*, I–X.18.1–3. See the parallel in *Midrash Shir hu-Shirim* to Song 1:3 (Grünhut, p. 4a).

36. *Ten Martyrs*, I–IX.20.1–5. The translation follows recension VII.

37. *Ten Martyrs*, V–VIII.21.10. Similarly, following Rabbi Ishmael's death, Michael and Gabriel, along with the rest of the angelic host, praise Rabbi Ishmael for joining the rest of the martyred righteous, who are blessed to have been "brought as offerings upon the altar that is in heaven" (*Ten Martyrs*, V–VIII.22.63).

38. The imagery associated with the theme of eschatological vengeance in *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* is not an isolated phenomenon, but appears in many of the individual martyrologies that make up the larger anthology. See the martyrdoms of Rabbi Eleazar ben Shammai' (*Ten Martyrs*, I, VI–VII, IX–X.43.13–15; I, III–V.51.18–19) and of Yesheva' the scribe (*Ten Martyrs*, I.50.6–8).

39. Boustán, *From Martyr to Mystic*, 133–39. On the transformation—and conflation—of the various elements of the biblical Yom Kippur ritual within the cultic theology of Hebrews, see Stökl Ben Ezra, *Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, 187–90. On Hebrews and its relationship to the legacy of biblical sacrifice more generally, see now Morna D. Hooker, "Christ, the 'End' of the Cult," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*, edited by R. Bauckham et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 189–212, and Christian A. Eberhart, "Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors in Hebrews," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights*, edited by G. Gelardini (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 37–64.

40. Girard, *Things Hidden*, 149–53, at 151. See also Girard's discussion of the story of Cain and Abel at the very opening of *Violence and the Sacred* (4), which he invokes in support of his central contention that sacrifice is a substitution for violence since Cain, as a tiller of the soil rather than shepherd, is cast as a murderer precisely (if paradoxically) because he has no outlet for his violent impulses; the same basic argument is presented again in René Girard, "Satan," in *The Girard Reader*, edited by J. G. Williams (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 203.

41. Girard, *Things Hidden*, 152.

42. This supersessionist progression is apparent throughout Girard's corpus, but is particularly pronounced in the chapter here under discussion (*Things Hidden*, 141–79).

43. See the discussion of this narrative tradition as a series of "accretions" to the biblical text in Sheldon H. Blank, "The Death of Zechariah in Rabbinic Literature," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 12–13 (1937–1938): 327–46.

44. Important studies that focus primarily on the rabbinic versions of this narrative include Betsy Halpern Amaru, "The Killing of the Prophets: Unraveling a Midrash," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 54 (1983): 153–80, and Blank, "Death of Zechariah in Rabbinic Literature," 327–46.

45. On the Christian recontextualization of the Zechariah traditions in *Vitae Prophetarum* 23.1–2, see David Satran, *Biblical Prophets in Byzantine Palestine: Reassessing the Lives of the Prophets*, SVTP 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1995): 22–33, 46–49; also A. M. Schwemer, *Studien zu den frühjüdischen Prophetenlegenden Vitae prophetarum*, 2 vols., TSAJ 49–50 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995–96), 2:283–321.

46. Matt 23:35 // Luke 11:51. Naturally, the scholarly literature on the uses of this narrative in these passages is vast. See esp. Catherine Sider Hamilton, "'His Blood Be upon Us': Innocent Blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70 (2008):

82–100; H.G.L. Peels, "The Blood 'from Abel to Zechariah' (Matthew 23,35; Luke 11,50f.) and the Canon of the Old Testament," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 113 (2001): 583–601. For detailed argumentation that the Zechariah in the two Gospels is to be identified with the priest-prophet Zechariah son of Jehoiada of 2 Chr 24:20–22 and not with Zechariah son of Barachiah of the early Second Temple period who authored the prophetic book of Zechariah, see Isaac Kalimi, "The Story about the Murder of the Prophet Zechariah in the Gospels and Its Relations to Chronicles," *Revue Biblique* 116 (2009): 246–61.

47. See the impressive range of sources gathered in A. A. Barb, "St. Zacharias the Prophet and Martyr: A Study in Charms and Incantations," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 11 (1948): 35–67.

48. See Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature*, translated by B. Stein (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 170–71, comparing *Lamentations Rabbati* 4:13, §16, with *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 592.1. For discussion of the motif of Zechariah's blood in *Itinerarium Burdigalense* as well as in later Christian pilgrimage texts, see John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster, U.K.: Aris and Phillips, 1977), 173. Oded Irshai, "Historical Aspects of the Christian-Jewish Polemic Concerning the Church of Jerusalem in the Fourth Century" (Hebrew), 2 vols., Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1993, 1: 8–12, already noted the significant similarities between these Zechariah traditions and the pilgrimage traditions concerning James, the brother of Jesus, who likewise was said to have been slain in the middle of the temple or even adjacent to the altar.

49. Jean-Daniel Dubois, "La mort de Zacharie: Mémoire juive et mémoire chrétienne," *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 40 (1994): 23–38.

50. Variants of the narrative are found at *yTa'an* 4.8 (69a–b); *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 15, §7; *LamR*, Proems 5 and 23; 2:2, §4; 4:13, §16; *EccLR* 3:16, §1; 10:4, §1; *bGit* 57b; *bSan* 96b. See also the version in the eleventh-century *Midrash Aggadah* to Num 30:15, on which see Halpern Amaru, "Killing of the Prophets."

51. *yTa'an* 4.8 (69a–b). Unless otherwise noted, I follow the readings in MS Leiden as printed in Peter Schäfer and Hans-Jürgen Becker, eds., *Synopse zum Talmud Yerushalmi*, Band II/5–12: *Ordnung Mo'ed*, TSAJ 83 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 264. The translation is my own. I have also consulted the translation and textual notes in Michael Swartz, "Bubbling Blood and Rolling Bones: Agency and Teleology in Rabbinic Myth," in *Antike Mythen: Medien, Transformationen und Konstruktionen*, edited by U. Dill and C. Walde (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 224–41, at 229–30.

52. This unit appears at the end of the passage in *LamR* 4:13, §16, rather than before it, as here.

53. The *editio princeps* (Venice, 1523) reads: "bulls, rams, and sheep" (*parim 'eilim u-khevasim*) (Schäfer and Becker, *Synopse zum Talmud Yerushalmi*, Band II/5–12: *Ordnung Mo'ed*, 264).

54. Compare *Ten Martyrs*, I–IX.20.3–5.

55. The phrase in brackets was added by a later scribe to MS Leiden; it appears as part of the text in the Venice edition of the Palestinian Talmud as well as in the parallel versions in the Palestinian midrashim. On the scribal additions in MS Leiden and the relationship of the manuscript to the Venice edition, see Yaacov Sussman, "Introduction," in *Talmud Yerushalmi: According to Ms. Or. 4720 (Sca. 3) of the Leiden University Library with Restorations and Corrections* (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2005), 23–29.

56. The versions in *Lamentations Rabbati* and the Babylonian Talmud list in addition to "the eighty thousand young priests" also the men of the Great and Minor Sanhedrin: youths and maidens, and school children.

57. The phrase might also be translated: "he rebuked it [the blood]." But I translate it this way because in some parallels Nebuzaradan here addresses Zechariah by name (e.g., *LamR*, Proem 23 and 2:2, §4; *bGit* 57b).

58. This entire sentence is in Aramaic, after which the text returns to Hebrew.

59. This final unit of the narrative differs considerably in the parallel in *bGit* 57b. For discussion, see the following.

60. Girard, *Things Hidden*, 158–62.

61. Especially Girard, *Scapagoat*, 100–24.

62. The high social status of Zechariah, as "son-in-law of the king, high priest, a prophet, and a judge," conforms to Girard's paradigm, in which the scapegoat is as likely to be the king as the outcast: see especially René Girard, "A Venda Myth Analyzed," appendix to R. J. Golsan, *René Girard and Myth: An Introduction* (New York: Garland, 1993), 151–79.

63. See esp. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 39–67, 75–78, and 95–98.

64. *bGit* 57b. This form of the story also appears in *LamR*, Proem 23.

65. "The Anthropology of the Cross: A Conversation with René Girard," in Williams, *Girard Reader*, 262–94, at 286.

66. Swartz, "Bubbling Blood and Rolling Bones," 227–31.

67. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 183–84; Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 121–22.

68. A similar conclusion concerning the defiling force of Zechariah's murder is drawn by Sider Hamilton in "His Blood Be upon Us," esp. 99–100, which, however, treats the rabbinic story as background to the New Testament gospels rather than as a fourth-century Jewish response to Christian uses of this story, as I do.

69. My discussion addresses the recension of *Lamentations Rabbati* printed in Solomon Buber, *Midrasch Echa Rabbati: Sammlung aggadischer Auslegungen der Klagelieder* (Vilna: Romm, 1899; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1967).

70. For discussion of the text, sources, genres, and transmission of *Lamentations Rabbati*, see Paul D. Mandel, "Midrash Lamentations Rabbati: Prolegomenon and a Critical Edition to the Third Parasha" (Hebrew), Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997; Paul D. Mandel, "Between Byzantium and Islam: The Transmission of a Jewish Book in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," in *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality and Cultural Diffusion*, edited by Y. Elman and I. Gershoni (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 74–106.

71. Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Destruction: From Scripture to Midrash," *Prooftexts* 2 (1982): 18–39.

72. Cohen, "The Destruction," 24–25.

73. Halpern Amaru, "Killing of the Prophets," argues that the Zechariah story contributes to the martyrological emphasis of Moshe ha-Darshan's eleventh-century *Midrash Aggadah*. But, even if this is so, the narrative should not be understood to carry a single meaning; the redactional context of the narrative there does not have a direct bearing on the meaning of the narrative here within *Lamentations Rabbati*.

74. Yuval, "Myth of the Jewish Exile."

75. See esp. Heyman, *Power of Sacrifice*.

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