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CREATION AND RE-CREATION: PSALM 95 AND ITS INTERPRETATION IN HEBREWS 3:1-4:13

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PSALM 95 does not read like a "typical" psalm. The first half, vv. 1-7a, is an exhortation to praise Yahweh. The second half, vv. 7b-11, is a word of warning against hardening one's heart and ends on an altogether sour note: "As I swore in my wrath: 'surely they shall not enter my rest.'" This second half follows abruptly upon the first, apparently without the slightest indication that these two halves belong together. As a result, many form-critics have argued that Psalm 95 is composed of two songs that were sung in the cult. Congregational praise was followed by a prophetic warning, in what Gunkel called *wechselnde Stimmen*.[1] This overall approach divides into two general camps: (1) those who recognize two distinct parts but say that this structure is original to the psalm,[2] and (2) those who say that this two-part structure is a sign that they were originally two distinct songs with two distinct *Sitze-im-Leben*.[3]

The form-critical approach is not unjustified since there are clear differences between these two parts with respect to mood, person, and subject matter. The first half is praise, the second half a warning; in the first half the worshipers are speaking, in the second half God is the speaker; the first half deals with creation while the second half deals with rebellion in the desert. All of these factors certainly suggest that there are differences between the two parts that need to be discussed. Nevertheless, I question whether past approaches have been helpful in explaining why Psalm 95 looks the way it does. Whether one argues on form-critical grounds for

[1] Hermann Gunkel, *Die Psalmen ubersetzt and erklart* (6th ed.; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986) 418. A similar view is expressed in other older commentaries such as Hermann Hupfeld, *Die Psalmen* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1860) 3.44-45, and W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Psalms* (New York: Macmillan, 1939) 2.419, as well as more recent works such as Hans Joachim Krause, *Psalmen* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1960) 2.662, and Moses Buttenweiser, *The Psalms: Chronologically Treated with a. New Translation* (New York: KTAV, 1969) 798. For an exhaustive summary of the scholarship on Psalm 95 see G. H. Davies, "Psalm 95," *ZAW* 85 (1973) 183-87. His efforts will not be repeated here.

[2] Gunkel is an example of this approach: "The second part, 7-11, stands in stark contrast to the first. . . . The difference between both parts is so great, that one could well divide this psalm into two poems that have come together only accidentally. . . . But this observation fails when one takes notice that the same contrast is evident in the very similar Psalm 81" (*Psalmen*, 418).

[3] See, for example, T. K. Cheyne: "Ps. xcv. as it stands is formed of fragments of two psalms" (*The Book of Psalms* [London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, & Co., 1888] 265).

either original unity (Gunkel) or disunity (Cheyne), the question still remains why *these* two parts are together. One cannot simply argue for original disunity by taking refuge in an inept redactor who, for no apparent reason, brought together two distinct and unrelated songs for use in the cult. Nor does arguing for original unity settle the question. One would still have to ask why an author would write a psalm with such apparently distinct parts for use in the cult. It is a curious situation that the problem created by an alleged incongruity in *subject* matter, etc., is supposedly solved by appealing to the *function* of the psalm in a cultic setting—as if the cultic reciters of the psalm would be disinterested in whether the two parts made sense together. Positing a particular form does not remove the problem of incongruity. It simply raises the same questions on a different level: how can these two parts be justified to coexist in the same psalm? What particular cultic purpose would be served by juxtaposing two such disparate songs?

In discussing Hebrews' use of Psalm, 95, it is only appropriate that we begin by looking carefully at Psalm 95 itself, which is to answer the question, "Why does Psalm 95 look the way it does?" To investigate this issue, we must pay closer attention not to a presumed setting in which a psalm might have been uttered, but to the words on the page. It is the task of the first part of this article to show that Psalm 95 is a sensible and purposeful work, not merely because it might have had a cultic function, but because the psalm makes sense. What unites this psalm is what might be called the creation/re-creation theme.[4] Verses 1-5 deal with God's cosmic creation as motivation for worshiping Yahweh. Verses 6-7a follow by speaking of another act of "creation," the Exodus, which also inspires the faithful to worship. Verses 7b-11 conclude the psalm by warning the readers against unfaithfulness. That the writer chooses the incident at Meribah and Massah (cf. Exod 17:1-7 and Num 20:1-13) as a paradigm for his warning is significant since this is the quintessential rebellion of the original second creation community, thus making explicit the Exodus connection implied in vv. 6-7a. Establishing the thematic unity of the psalm will have some bearing on how we understand Heb 3:1-4:13, the topic of the next section. Hebrews applies this Exodus warning to his readers, (1) by presenting Israel and the church as being in an analogous situation: both are Exodus communities in their period of wilderness wandering; (2) by making certain changes in the citation of Ps 95:7b-11 so as to make it most relevant for his readers; (3) by equating the goal of the Christian's wandering with God's

[4] Two recent and helpful studies have undertaken to show the unity of Psalm 95: Marc Girard, "Analyse structurelle du Psaurne 95," *ScEs* 33 (1981) 179-89, and Pierre Auffret, "Essai sur la structure litteraire du Psaume 95," *Biblische Notizen* 22 (1983) 47-69. Their results are stimulating but based entirely on the structure of the psalm. Where I hope to go beyond these and other studies is by showing that the unity is not only structural but also thematic.

creation rest, a point that draws upon the creation/re-creation theme. I begin by offering the following translation of Psalm 95 for the reader's convenience.

1. Come, let us shout with joy to Yahweh,
   let us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation.
2. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,
   with songs let us shout to him;
3. for Yahweh is a great God, and a great King above all gods
4. in whose hands are the earthly recesses;
   mountain peaks also belong to him;
5. to whom belongs the sea, since he made it;
   his hands also formed the dry land.[5]
6. Come, let us worship and bow down,
   let us kneel before Yahweh our maker;
7a. for he is our God: we are the people of his pasture,
   the sheep of his hand.[6]
7b. Oh, that you would obey him today:
8. "Do not harden your hearts as at Meribah,
   as in the day of Massah in the desert,
9. where your fathers tested me.
   They tried me even though they had seen my deed(s).[7]
10. For forty years I was angry with [that] generation, so I said, 'They are a people whose heart is wandering;
   they do not know my ways.'
11. As I swore in my wrath, 'Surely, they will not enter my rest.'"

[5] To anticipate our discussion, it is tempting to read v. 5 as intentionally ambiguous. Might the mention of sea and dry land refer both to creation and to the parting of the Red Sea? Dahood argues in the same vein for "rock" (**צור**) in v. 1, anticipating the Meribah/Massah incident, which is the focus of vv. 7b-11 (*Psalms II: 51-100* [AB 17; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968] 353).

[6] The exact meaning of v. 7a has been a topic of much discussion. Dahood argues that **ידו** should be read as "his grazing plot" rather than "his hand" (*Psalms* II, 354). This fits well with **מרעיתו** and would yield a nice word play with **יד** in vv. 4 and 5. Nevertheless, even if this creative solution were correct, it would not solve the problem. It is still a question what the mixed metaphor "people of his pasture" means. Whether **ידו** means "grazing plot" or "his hand" will not help us here. It would make more sense were the passage to read "people of his hand" (under his authority) and "sheep of his pasture," i.e., switching the constructs. As it stands, we have two successive mixed metaphors, which for all we know may be an intentional stylistic (chiastic?) device. The Targum, perhaps trying to alleviate the awkwardness, reads, **ואנחנו עמיה וצאן רעיית אידיה**, "And we are his people, the sheep of the pasture of his hand." Gunkel reads, "For he is our God, and we are [his] people, the sheep of his pasture" (*Psalmen*, 417). To achieve this reading, Gunkel must read a suffix on **עם** (or at least argue that the suffix is implied) and transpose the last two words of the phrase to **וצאן מרעיתו**. Neither has any versional support, although the latter emendation is supported by Pss 74:1 and 100:3. He then reads **ידו** as **דעו** (m. pl. imperative of **ידע**) and translates it, "Know that today...." This, too, is conjectural. The same translation is followed by Krause (*Psalmen*, 662), and Oesterley (*Psalms*, 419).

[7] Whether **פעלי** should be translated singular or plural will be discussed in n. 28.

I. *Creation and Re-creation in Psalm 95*

1. *Ps 95:1-7a*

A brief overview of the structure of this portion of the psalm will serve as a lead into a discussion of its thematic unity.[8] We have in vv. 1-5 a message of praise. The first-person cohortative predominates with God being spoken of in the third person. The opening imperative enjoins the worshipers to perform four acts: come let us sing, shout aloud, draw near, shout aloud. Whereas vv. 1-2 extol the worshipers to come, vv. 3-5 give the reasons why (כי). Verse 3 is a general declaration of God's greatness above all gods: there is no one like Yahweh. Verses 4 and 5 are two relative clauses introduced by אשׁר that modify the main compound sentence of v. 3. Verse 4 specifies the declaration of v. 3. Why is God greater than all other gods? By virtue of his ownership of all creation—from the unsearchable depths to the mountain heights, all this belongs to him. Verse 5 takes the thought one step further—or better, one step back. Not only is God the greatest by virtue of his ownership of all creation, but he himself is the creator. He made both the sea (v. 5a, עשׂהו) and the dry land (v. 5b). We have then in vv. 1-5 a call to worship, the motive of which is based on the fact that Yahweh is the greatest God. What makes him the greatest is not only his ownership of creation (v. 4), but the fact that he is the creator himself (v. 5).

Verses 6 and 7a parallel vv. 1-5 in structure. Verse 6 corresponds to vv. 1-2: come, let us worship, bow down, kneel. Verse 7a corresponds to vv. 3-5 by providing the motive for worship: "for [כי] he is our God, i.e., we are the people of his pasture, the sheep of his hand." Once again, the community is to come and worship. But the motive here is not simply God as the creator and owner of that creation (as if that were not enough!). What motivates the worshipers now is that God is also the "creator" of his people (עשׂנו, v. 6).[9] But what does it mean to say, "Yahweh is our maker"? When were God's people created? This is a reference to Israel's "creation" as a people when they came out of Egypt.

(1) *Creation and Re-creation Language*. This juxtaposition of creation language and the Exodus is a theme found elsewhere in Scripture.Hos 8:13-14 is one example: "Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sin. They will return to Egypt. Israel has forgotten his maker [עשׂה]." Israel will be punished for his disobedience by returning to Egypt. But again, the question is raised, What does "his maker" mean? The context of the

[8] More detailed treatments may be found in Auffret, "Essai sur la structure"; Girard, "Analyse structurelle"; Davies, "Psalm 95"; and Charles Bruce Riding, "Psalm 95:1-7c as a Large Chiasm," *ZAW* 88 (1976) 418.

[9] Both Girard ("Analyse structurelle," 183ff.) and Auffret ("Essai sur la structure," 49ff.) pick up on the repetition of עשׂה in vv. 5 and 6 and its importance for understanding the structure of Psalm 95, but they do not make the thematic connection.

passage suggests at least one thing: it is to be understood in some connection to the Exodus.10 By sending faithless Israel back to Egypt, God will undo what he has done (עשׂה) by bringing them out of Egypt. Their punishment will be an Egypt from which they will never return. What a fitting punishment for disobedient Israel: for forgetting her "creator" she will be reduced to a state that undoes her creation—she will return to Egypt. Israel is undone.

The creation/re-creation theme is also found in Exodus 15, the Song at the Sea. Verse 16 refers to the Israelites who are coming out of Egypt as "a people you have created" (עם־זו קנית).[11] We should not allow the fact that a different root is used (קנה instead of עשׂה) to distract us from the force of the argument. The Exodus is closely associated with an act of creation and it is the presence of this theme that is important.[12]

Isa 43:14-17 is also relevant. Verse 15 reads: "I am Yahweh, your Holy One; Israel's creator [בורא], your King." Again, a different root is used but the idea of creation is clear nevertheless. (The use of ברא, if anything, strengthens the argument, since it provides a strong connection with creation in Gen 1:1.) What is meant here by "Israel's creator"? The context is loaded with Exodus imagery and therefore strongly suggests that there is some connection between Israel's creation and the Exodus. Verses 16-17 are an explicit reference to the crossing of the Red Sea: "Thus says Yahweh, who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out chariots and horses, both armies and soldiers." These passages provide convincing evidence that a tradition exists in the OT that understands the Exodus as an act of creation. The use of the *Leitwort* עשׂה in Ps 95:5-6, in addition to the obvious reference to creation in vv. 1-5, suggests that Psalm 95 exhibits a similar tradition.[13]

[10] Although the point cannot be developed here, there is another level at which this passage can be read—with what follows in v. 14 rather than (or better, in addition to) with what precedes. Israel has forgotten his *maker* and proceeds to *build* (בנה) temples and *fortify* (רבה, Hiph.) towns. In any event, the close juxtaposition of עשׂה and Egypt remains.

[11] The root קנה can also mean "to buy, "acquire," or "beget." The meaning of the root is ambiguous, yet with God as the subject the meaning "create" is likely. See Gen 14:19, 22 (קנה שׁמים וארץ); Ps 139:13 (קנית כליתי); and Prov 8:22 (referring to wisdom, יהוה קנני). For a fuller discussion, see P. Humbert, "'Qana' en hebreu biblique," *Festschrift Alfred Bertholet* (Tubingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1950) 259-66. Deut 32:6, like Exod 15:16, is probably another archaic poem and also uses this root with Israel as the object. It is worth noting that, in this verse, both קנה and עשׂה appear: "Is he not your father, your creator [קנך], who made you [עשׂך] and formed you [יכוננך]?"

[12] The use of קנה in Isa 11:11 is also helpful, although there it is used in the context of the return from Babylon rather than the Exodus. The relationship between these two events will be developed in the following paragraphs.

[13] Like עשׂה, ידו is also a *Leitwort* bringing together the creation ("depths of the earth" and "dry land" in vv. 4 and 5) and the Exodus ("sheep of his hand" in v. 7). The use of shepherding language to describe the Exodus will be discussed below.

Isa 43:14-17 is also instructive in another direction. Not only do we have here the connection between creation and Exodus (re-creation) in vv. 15-17, but between creation, Exodus, and the return from Babylon, which is portrayed as a second Exodus. Verse 14 reads, "Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer [גאלכם], the Holy One of Israel, 'For your sake I will send to Babylon and bring all of them down as fugitives, the Chaldeans in the ships in which they took pride.'" Although a complete discussion of the connection between creation, the Exodus, and the return from Babylon would take us far beyond our stated purpose, it does provide a useful line of inquiry. For one thing, the juxtaposition in this passage of the Exodus (vv. 16-17) and the return from Babylon (v. 14) shows that both follow the re-creation paradigm. It also establishes a connection between re-creation and redemption (גאל), since redemption here can mean nothing other than the return from Babylon. Isa 48:20-21 establishes this connection further:

> Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians. With a joyous shout make it known and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth. Say, "Yahweh has redeemed [גאל] his servant Jacob. They did not thirst when he led them through the desert; he made water flow from a rock for them. He split a rock and water gushed forth."

This passage is particularly helpful. The return from Babylon is juxtaposed explicitly to the Exodus (with a clear reference to the rebellion at Meribah and Massah), thus portraying the return from Babylon as a second Exodus.[14] Hence, it speaks not only of the return from Babylon as an act of Yahweh's redemption (גאל), but by clear implication the Exodus as well. The first Exodus is unambiguously tied to the second Exodus. Both are acts of re-creation; both are acts of redemption.

Now, I would not want to press this line of reasoning too far, as if to say that every mention of redemption from Egypt or Babylon is to be automatically understood as an act of creation. I am not saying that creation and redemption are interchangeable concepts. Rather, I am making the observation that both creation and redemption language are used to describe God's acts of deliverance, be it the Exodus or the return from Babylon.[15] Bearing this in mind will bring other passages into our discussion that might otherwise be neglected. One such passage is Isa 54:5, "For your husband is your maker [עשׂיך], Yahweh of Hosts is his name. Your redeemer [גאלך], the Holy One of Israel; he is called the God of all the earth." This is reminiscent of the re-creation language seen above. And vv. 6-8 make explicit the connection to the return from Babylon ("I abandoned you .. . I will bring you back"). The language of creation and redemption are juxtaposed to a re-creation event. Another example is Isa 44:2, "Thus says

[14] This theme is also found, for example, in Hos 9:3 and Isa 52:4.

[15] This point is also helpful for our understanding of קנה, mentioned above, which can also mean "to redeem." There may be a purposeful ambiguity in Exod 15:16.

Yahweh your maker [עשׂך], who formed you [יצרך] in the womb and helped you." Here, creation and yet another theme, conception, are brought together. There is no explicit mention of either the Exodus or the return from Babylon in this passage (the immediate context runs from v. 1 to v. 6).

Nevertheless, the question still remains what "formed you in the womb" means. One plausible explanation is suggested by v. 24, which juxtaposes יצר and גאל: "Thus says Yahweh, who redeemed you [גאלך], who formed you [יצרך] in the womb." In v. 2, creation and conception are paralleled, whereas here in v. 24 it is redemption and conception. Isa 45:9-13 argues along a similar vein. Yahweh is the potter who forms (יצר) man (v. 9). He is also the potter who forms Israel (v. 11). What follows then is a discussion of his act of cosmic creation (v. 12) juxtaposed to the return of the exiles from Babylon (v. 13). Again, I will resist the temptation to make too much of these parallels. Certainly יצר can be paralleled to both עשׂה and גאל without having to conclude that these words all mean the same thing. Nevertheless, the fact that these terms are brought together suggests at least that they are to be understood as having some connection between them. There is, at least in these passages from Isaiah,16 a complex of themes--conception, redemption, creation—all of which refer not only to the Exodus and/or the return from Babylon but to each other as well. Seen in this light, there is a tradition in Scripture that understands both the Exodus and the return from Babylon to be antitypes of creation. And the first half of Psalm 95 is merely one example of this tradition. This is of obvious interest for our argument since establishing the presence of the Exodus theme in Ps 95:1-7a provides a clear connection with the otherwise distinct second half.

(2) *Shepherding Language.* What further establishes the creation/re-creation theme in Ps 95:1-7a is the shepherding language of v. 7a. The juxtaposition of shepherding to the deliverance theme is common in Scripture. First, let us turn back to Isaiah 44. We have already seen that v. 24 connects redemption and conception. Relevant here is the rest of v. 24, which juxtaposes re-creation ("Thus says Yahweh who redeemed you, who formed you in the womb") to creation ("I am Yahweh, the creator [עשׂה] of all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself").

Verses 26b-27 make even more explicit the connection to the re-creation theme, here the return from Babylon: "[I am Yahweh] . . . who says of

[16] The purpose of this discussion is not to establish a causal relationship between texts. That Psalm 95 has an understanding of the Exodus that seems to be present in Isaiah does not necessarily imply that the psalmist is deriving his message from Isaiah, either consciously or unconsciously. I am simply answering the form-critical argument that Psalm 95 is made up of two parts that have little more in common than an alleged cultic function. Toward that end, it is sufficient to show that in its understanding of the Exodus, Psalm 95 stands within a tradition of interpretation well represented elsewhere in Scripture. Indeed, this may be all anyone can say.

Jerusalem, 'it will be inhabited,' of the towns of Judah, 'they will be rebuilt,' and of her ruins, 'I will restore them,' who says to the watery deep, 'be dry and I will dry up your streams.'" Besides the overt reference to the return from Babylon, the mention of waters drying up is another clear attempt to portray the return from Babylon as a second Exodus (see Isa 48:20-21 and n. 14 above). The creation/re-creation theme being thus established as central to this passage, we continue reading in v. 28, "who says concerning Cyrus, 'My shepherd [רעי][17]—he will bring to pass all I please. He will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."'" In allowing the captives to leave Babylon and rebuild their city and temple, Cyrus is acting like a shepherd.

Although more subtle, Hos 12:13-14 (EV. 12-13) is also relevant: "Jacob fled to the country of Aram; Israel served to get a wife, for a wife he tended flocks [שׁמר][18]. By a prophet Yahweh brought Israel up from Egypt, by a prophet he cared for him [נשׁמר]." This wordplay strongly suggests that the deliverance from Egypt was a shepherding activity. As Israel tended Laban's flocks for his wives, so did Yahweh (through the mediating work of Moses the prophet) "tend" his people by bringing them up out of Egypt.

An example from the Pentateuch is Num 27:15-17. Yahweh is scolding Moses for striking the rock instead of obeying his command only to speak to it (Num 20:1-8). Moses says, "May Yahweh, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over this community who will go out before them and come in before them, and who will lead them out [יוציאם] and who will bring them in, so that the community of Yahweh will not be like sheep without a shepherd [כצאן אשׁר אין־להם רעה]." Although the specific context is not the actual Exodus event, the shepherding imagery is still relevant. Moses, the shepherd, was to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and into Canaan. By his disobedience, this shepherding was completed by one who remained steadfast: Joshua.

There are also several passages from the Psalms that speak of the Exodus in shepherding language.

> He brought out [נסה] his people like sheep [צאן], he led [נחס] them like a flock [עדר] through the desert. [Ps 78:52]
>
> You led [urn] your people like sheep [צאן] by the hand of Moses and Aaron. [Ps 77:20]

[17] For "my shepherd" the LXX reads cppovciv, perhaps "to be like-minded," for which the editors of BHS offer the retroversion רֵעִי (*amicus meum eel sententia mea)*. This is a plausible suggestion and certainly makes sense in the context, but I see no compelling reason to accept it. It cannot, on the basis of text-critical standards (e.g., *lectio difficilior* or *lectio brevior*), be preferred to the reading in the MT, since the issue here is not a problem in the consonantal text.

[18] Although the object "flocks" is not expressed, the meaning is obvious since the point here is what Jacob had to do to get a wife. Gen 30:32 speaks of sheep, lambs, and goats.

> Why, 0 God, have you rejected us forever? Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture [צאן מרעיתך]? Remember your people [עדתך] whom you created [קנית] of old, the tribe of your inheritance whom you redeemed [גאלת]; you dwelt in Mount Zion.[19] [Ps 74:1-2]

I should also mention Psalm 100, which juxtaposes creation language to shepherding language, although there is no further overt reference to either the Exodus or the return from Babylon: "Know that Yahweh, he is God; he made us [עשׂנו]. Indeed,[20] we are his people, the sheep of his pasture [צאן מרעיתו]."

Finally, shepherding imagery is also common in prophetic literature, where it refers to the return from Babylon. These passages are: Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10; Mic 5:4; and Ezekiel 34. In view of the close connection between the Exodus and the return from Babylon noted above, these passages are relevant to our argument. All of this establishes that expressing God's salvific activity in shepherding imagery is a common OT theme.[21]

The point of the first half of Psalm 95 is clear: Psalm 95 is an "Exodus psalm" long before we get to v. 7b. It is the creation/re-creation theme in the first half that serves to connect it to the second. What is overt in vv. 7b-11 is barely concealed in vv. 1-7a. Of further interest is the manner in which this theme is presented. Verses 1-5 speak of God as creator of the world, whereas vv. 6-7a speak of him as creator of his people. Both are worthy motives for praise. Nevertheless, vv. 6-7a bring the message much closer to home. Praising God for his cosmic creative act is one thing, but praising him for one's own concrete existence is quite another. This Exodus imagery in vv. 6-7a makes vv. 1-5 more immediate for the readers of this psalm. The

[19] Psalm 74 is helpful in three other respects. First, the parallel between קנה and גאל is worth noting. Second, the reference to Mount Zion may be reminiscent of Exod 15:17. Third, Psalm 74 is also helpful in that it also introduces mythic creation language into the context (vv. 12-17).

[20] The Ketib for this last phrase is לא אנחנו, which the Massoretes read as לו אנהנו, "we are his." Although my argument is not affected either way, the latter reading is more expected in the context of creation and shepherding language. A strong argument, however, is made by Daniel Sivan and William Schniedewind, that לא and הלא are asseveratives in biblical Hebrew ("Letting your 'Yes' be 'No' in Ancient Israel: A Discussion of the Asseverative לא and הלא," *JSS* [forthcoming]). The translation would be, "Indeed, we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." This solution is also attractive in that it connects אנחנו unambiguously with עמו. Leaving the *Qere* would yield an awkward syntax, a point that has puzzled commentators. Sivan and Schniedewind cite J. Lewis as having first posed this solution ("An Asseverative לא in Psalm 100:3?" *JBL* 86 [1967] 216).

[21] Despite the pervasiveness of this theme in the OT, I am not suggesting that shepherding imagery is exclusively associated with the Exodus or return from Babylon. One example is Ps 78:70-72, which speaks of David, the shepherd. Jon Levenson argues that shepherding imagery is used for enthronement (*Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1976] 87) as did Mowinckel before him (*The Psalms in Israel's Worship* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1962] 1.156ff.).

creation is concretized in the most suitable manner, by an appeal to the second creation. The proper response is praise.

We see then that the message of the first part of Psalm 95 is:

A. Let us praise Yahweh [the maker] (vv. 1-2)
  B. because of his creation. (vv. 3-5)
A'. Let us praise Yahweh, our maker (v. 6)
  B'. because we are his [second creation]. (v. 7a)[22]

There is a progression from creation to re-creation, from the cosmic to the personal. The second half of the psalm continues the progression: the Exodus theme is made explicit. Relating, then, this second creation imagery to the second half of the psalm, which is itself overtly concerned with the Exodus theme, seems a logical step.

2. Ps 95:7b-11

We must first establish more precisely the significance of the Meribah/Massah incident for our psalm. This is a fitting example of disobedience for our psalmist to choose to make his warning: it is the quintessential rebellion of the Exodus community. Our understanding of this incident and what it means for our interpretation of Psalm 95 will be aided by looking at how this incident is presented elsewhere in Scripture.

The rebellion is recorded twice, in Exodus 17 and Numbers 20. This raises the question of whether the psalmist had one or the other in mind for his psalm. In Exodus 17, the emphasis is on the disobedience of the people. They want water, so Moses is told by God to strike the rock so that water will come out of it for the people to drink. Moses' action was one of obedience. In a manner of speaking, this narrative is a story of the Israelites denying the efficacy of the Exodus. In v. 3 we read of the people grumbling against Moses (similar to their grumbling in Exod 14:11-12): "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" The Lord responds by giving another display of "Exodus power." He commands Moses to strike the rock with the staff with which he had earlier struck the Nile (v. 5). The staff with which he had cut off the

[22] Whereas we see an ABAB pattern in these first seven verses, Charles Bruce Riding argues for an ABBA pattern ("Psalm 95:1-7c," 418):

A. Let us worship our Savior (vv. 1-2)
  B. for he is the creator of everything (vv. 3-5).
  B'. Let us worship our creator (v. 6)
A'. for he is our Savior (v. 7a).

He defends his understanding of v. 7a, that shepherding language is savior language, by appealing to Lev 26:12-13 and Jer 11:4. This also strengthens my suggestion that what is in view in v. 7a is Israel's re-creation, i.e., its salvation from Egypt. Riding does not relate this part to the rest of Psalm 95.

lifegiving waters of the Egyptians was now providing water for the Israelites: the Exodus is revisited.[23] Numbers 20 provides a different perspective on the incident. There the people grumble as they do in Exodus 17, but the emphasis of guilt is clearly on Moses. He is told only to speak to the rock. Instead, he strikes it—twice. His punishment is that he will not be permitted to enter the land (Num 20:12).

There are some advantages to understanding Exodus 17 as the background for Psalm 95. First, the people are the guilty party, a fact that would speak more forcefully to the readers of Psalm 95. Second, in Psalm 95 the forty-year period of God's anger against his people (v. 10) seems to be a consequence of the rebellion (v. 8). In other words, the rebellion is at the beginning of the forty-year period as in Exodus 17 rather than Numbers 20, where it occurs at the end of the forty years. Yet, this fact also poses a difficulty with relating this incident to our psalm. The event narrated in Numbers 20 occurs near the end of that period and after a long succession of rebellions starting in chap. 11. Hence, the threat of losing the promise of the land is more immediate. This fact would also speak quite forcefully to the addressees of Psalm 95, since this is how the psalm ends.

Other passages, especially several psalms, also mention the rebellion. Ps 106:13-15 and 32-33 follow the tradition of Exodus 17 by emphasizing the people's rebellion. Two passages, both in the Pentateuch, follow Numbers 20 (Num 27:14 and Deut 32:51). Several passages focus not on the issue of rebellion, but speak of the incident as an example of God's benevolence in providing water for his people (Pss 78:15-20; 105:41; 107:6; and 114:8, as well as Isa 48:21 discussed above).[24] Ps 81:7 puts an interesting twist on things by interpreting the incident as one where God tested the people, rather than the people tested God. This is particularly noteworthy since Psalm 81 resembles Psalm 95 more closely than any other (see n. 2 and Gunkel's comment).

All of this shows the variety of exegetical traditions concerning Meribah/Massah. Which of these forms the background for Psalm 95? Clearly, the traditions that regard the whole event as an act of God's benevolence can be disregarded, so too the tradition expressed in Psalm 81. This leaves us with the two main traditions of Exodus 17 and Numbers 20. Yet, there is no reason to argue that Psalm 95 is necessarily dependent on one or the other. For one thing, there does not appear to be anything in the psalmist's use of the Meribah/Massah incident to indicate that he had one of these traditions in mind over the other. One might counter that Psalm 95 has Exodus 17 in mind, since these texts mention both Meribah and Massah whereas Numbers 20 mentions only Meribah. But this argument is quite

[23] Wis 11:4-14 exhibits a similar interpretation of this incident. See especially v. 5: "For through the very things by which their enemies were punished, they themselves received benefit in their need."

[24] Besides Wis 11:4-14 mentioned in the previous note, a similar exegetical tradition is also found in other texts, including Pseudo-Philo 10:7; 11:15; 20:8; and 1 Cor 10:4.

inconclusive. The fact that both are mentioned in Psalm 95 is more likely a function of the parallelism, or "seconding" quality, of biblical poetry than any perceived dependence on Exodus 17. Moreover, it would be very difficult to conclude, merely on the basis of the presence of both names, that the author of Psalm 95 did not have Numbers 20 in mind, too.

Defining the issue as either/or would artificially limit the discussion. We are reminded again of the fact that this event is recorded twice, near the beginning of Israel's wilderness wanderings and toward the end. Only one incident of wilderness rebellion is earlier (manna and quail in Exodus 16) and only two are later (the bronze snake in Numbers 21 and the worship of Baal Peor in Numbers 25). The rebellion at Meribah/Massah forms a frame around virtually the entire wilderness rebellion period. The mention of Meribah and Massah may be shorthand not just for Exodus 17 or Numbers 20 but both—and everything in between.[25] The subject in the mind of the psalmist may not be merely this specific incident but the entire period of wilderness rebellion. If the psalmist did have any specific text in mind, it is more likely to have been Num 14:26-35 than either Exodus 17 or Numbers 20.[26] There are some strong parallels in this passage that are not found in the Meribah/Massah narratives proper. For one thing, Num 14:26-35 is an extended oath: חי־אני נאם־יהוה, "'As surely as I live,' declares Yahweh . . ." (v. 28), similar to the oath language of Ps 95:11. What follows is a detailed description of the consequences of their unbelief. For one thing, their bodies will fall in the desert (vv. 29, 33, 35) and only the obedient Caleb and Joshua will enter (v. 30). We see that just as the unbelief of the wilderness community kept them from their "rest," the addressees of Psalm 95 are threatened with this same punishment. And, although not as direct a connection, the fact that Caleb and Joshua are permitted to enter the land parallels what is implied in Psalm 95, i.e., that those who do not harden their heart, who do not test the Lord, will indeed enter into his rest. Also, the time of the Lord's discontent will be forty years (vv. 33-34). Both Psalm 95 and Numbers 14 mention the forty-year period of wrath. This is missing from both Exodus 17 and Numbers 20.

We see then that the Meribah/Massah incident is a forceful reminder of the disobedience of the Exodus community. This is the explicit reference to

[25] Or, as Calvin argues, "Meribah and Massah" may be a synecdoche where the narrative of Numbers 20, the height of their rebellion, represents the entire process of rebellion (*Commentary on the Book of Psalms* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981] 4.43-44). Even Moses, the chosen mediator, rebelled. Can it get any worse? The specific issue of dependence does not appear to be argued in the major commentaries.

26 See also William L. Lane, who suggests concerning Heb 3:8 that the "interpretive rendering of the place names as **o[parapikrasmoj** . . . and **o[peirasmoj** . . . indicates the translator's intention to interpret Ps 95:7b-11 in the light of Num 14" (*Hebrews 1-8* [WBC; Dallas: Word, 1991] 85). Referring to the writer of Hebrews as a "translator," however, seems to imply that he is working with the MT. It is more likely that his rendering of the place names is simply taken from the LXX.

the Exodus theme implicit in the first half of the psalm. True, the actual deliverance from Egypt is not mentioned in vv. 7b-11, but that is simply because the point of these verses is to warn against disobedience rather than recount God's act of deliverance. And what better way to warn this community of faith than by appealing to the example of the original second-creation community? The creation/re-creation theme is a motive not only for praise but for warning as well. With this is mind, it might be better to think of our psalm not in two parts, as is normally done, but in three:

vv. 1-5: First creation is the motive for worship
vv. 6-7a: Second creation is the motive for worship.
vv. 7b-11: Second creation is the motive for warning.[27]

In this sense, the second part (vv. 6-7a) is the bridge that brings the whole psalm together. Hence, there is no abrupt change in subject matter when we come to v. 7b. Psalm 95 has been concerned throughout with the Exodus as an object lesson, first for praise, then for warning.[28]

This is not to say, however, that our psalm behaves in a perfectly predictable manner. For one thing, there is a sudden shift from praise to

[27] Auffret also argues that v. 7b begins a third distinct part of the psalm ("Essai sur la structure," 64-65). He reads "Today" as an "invitation" parallel to לכו in v. 1 and באו in v. 6. Auffret subdivides vv. 8-11 by seeing two more such invitations: כיום in 8b and אם־יבאון in 11b.

[28] Another point that may help in substantiating the connection between the two halves of the psalm is the meaning of פעלי in v. 9. The form is clearly singular ("my deed") but the question is whether it should be read as a singular, or as a collective "my deeds." One could certainly argue that this is a reference, for example, to the plagues against the Egyptians or perhaps the events recorded in Numbers 11-20, i.e., that פעלי should be read as a plural. Yet it is consistent with the argument of the psalm to understand it as referring to a singular event, the Exodus: "Be warned, heirs of God's creative act; even your fathers who saw my deed tested and tried me. If they can fall in the desert, so can you." Davies also mentions that this can refer to one event, but he suggests Meribah or even Exod 32:25-29 ("Psalm 95," 194). He mentions the Exodus but only in passing.

The question remains whether there are any instances in Scripture of פעל in the singular, preferably in construct with God, be it by name or pronoun, that have an unambiguous singular meaning. This does not seem to be the case. In fact, there are many instances where the meaning is unambiguously plural. Some examples in the Psalms are 64:10 (פעל אלהים); 90:16 (פעלך, although LXX and some Syriac mss read פעליך); 143:5 (פעלך, with many mss, as well as LXX, Syriac, and Targum, reading פעליך); 92:5 (פעלך); and 111:3 (פעלו). Of particular interest are Isa 5:12 and Deut 32:4, both of which are arguably in re-creation contexts, the former the return from Babylon and the latter the Exodus. Yet, there are several instances where the meaning is at least ambiguous. These passages include Hab 3:2 (פעלך) and Ps 77:13 (פעלך, although many mss, with LXX and Syriac, read פעליך), both of which deal with the Exodus; Isa 45:11 (פעל ידי, mentioned above), which speaks of the Exile; and Job 36:24 (פעלו), which speaks of creation. Three other examples may apply, but there the topic of discussion is not God's work but man's personal moral conduct (Prov 24:12, 29; Job 34:11). Clearly, we do not want to make too much of this point. Nevertheless, it is worth consideration that פעלי here might possess an ambiguity as elsewhere. The psalmist might have had in mind many of the deeds of God recorded in Numbers 11-20, as well as the Exodus.

warning. The issue, however, is what one may be justified in concluding from this sudden shift. To assume, as Cheyne does, that these "fragments of two psalms" could not have been the product of one author or one *Sitz-im-Leben* lacks any argument or proof. Mood alone is not the deciding factor, and any insistence that the psalm is made up of two disparate parts would have to account for evidence of its unity. Likewise, Gunkel's position of the original unity of the psalm is not convincing unless one can demonstrate what exactly in the psalm provides for this unity, besides merely cultic function.

The fact that these verses are a warning accounts for the other differences in this part of the psalm. In vv. 1-5, God is spoken of concerning his cosmic creation. In vv. 6-7a, he is spoken of concerning his creation of Israel. In the second half, God is no longer spoken of; he is the speaker. More specifically, he is giving his people a command, the imperative obviously being a helpful way to express a warning. The end result is a psalm that progresses from the impersonal to the personal. We move from creation (he made it) to re-creation (he made us). We see how emphatic vv. 6-7a are in concretizing the God spoken of in such ineffable terms in vv. 1-5: "Yahweh our maker, . . . he is our God, . . . we are the people of his pasture, the sheep of his hand." Verses 7b-11 are even more concrete by making explicit what is implicit in vv. 6-7a. Also, we move from God as passive object to God as active speaker; from the indicative to the imperative. To put it another way, Psalm 95 is an *a fortiori* argument couched in creation language. In the same way that the worshipers respond properly (i.e., worshipfully) to the event of God's first creation, an event in which they were not immediate partakers, ought they not also to respond properly to the event of the second creation, an event that brought them into existence in history as the people of God?

It seems, then, that the "today" spoken of in v. 7b is the "today" of the worshiper. It is he whom God created out of the Exodus. It is ironic that in making the creation more concrete by appealing to the second creation, the psalmist is also making it timeless for the sake of all the faithful, i.e., so that it can be concrete for everyone at any time. But is this not the very heart of the religious experience, to make past events "timelessly concrete—for worshipers at any time and in any place to bring the past to bear on their present spiritual life? "Today" is any day in which disobedience to the God of creation/re-creation is a live possibility for the worshiper. It is in this sense that the psalm speaks to all worshipers of Yahweh from generation to generation. This understanding of our psalm may provide an explanation for why there is no demonstrative on "generation" (דור) in v. 10. Although the LXX has it (**th gene% e)kein^** = בדור ההוא), its absence in the MT (whether original or secondary is not an issue) leaves the matter of which generation ambiguous. It may be a device to make the warning immediately applicable to its readers, whenever their "today" might be.

Our psalm ends: "They shall not enter my rest" (מנוחתי). "Rest" could have several meanings. First, it could be understood as referring to entering the land. One would then reasonably posit an exilic setting for our psalm. This is an attractive solution, since it would bring together creation and both acts of re-creation, the Exodus and the return from Babylon. Another point of view is to equate rest with the temple, a point that would add support to Davies' suggestion that the psalm is pre-exilic and tied to the Jerusalem temple.[29] Such an understanding is found in 1 Chr 28:2 (בית מנוחה); 2 Chr 6:41 (נוחך); Ps 132:8 (מנוחתך); and Isa 66:1 (מקום מנוחתי), although, at least for the Chronicles texts, the concern is for the second temple. A third option is to see this as a spiritual rest. Von Rad, for example, understands it as "a gift which Israel will find only by a wholly personal entering into its God."[30] Finally, it is tempting to understand "my rest" as God's creation rest referred to in Gen 2:2. Although the root in Genesis is שׁבת rather than נוח, this interpretation would be in keeping with the theme of the psalm and would provide a nice closure: it begins and ends with creation. In any event, irrespective of how we solve this problem, this last interpretation seems to be how the writer of Hebrews understood Psalm 95. It is to the issue of the use of Psalm 95 in Hebrews that we now turn.

II. *The Interpretation of Psalm 95 in Heb 3:1-4:13*

This section of Hebrews is a warning against unbelief. The use of Psalm 95 (LXX 94, hereafter Psalm 95) in 3:7b-11 serves as an example of past apostasy and the consequences thereof: "They shall never enter my rest" (3:11; 4:3). The writer accomplishes his task in three ways. First, he prepares his readers in 3:1-6 for his interpretation of Psalm 95 principally by introducing the typological connection between Israel and the church. Second, he quotes the psalm in such a manner that it might have the most immediate bearing on the new Exodus community (3:7-19). Third, his understanding of "rest," the goal of the new Exodus community, as God's creation rest establishes the creation/re-creation connection (4:1-13).

1. *Heb 3:1-6*

These verses serve as an introduction to the writer's exegesis of Psalm 95, which begins in v. 7. In these verses, he prepares his readers by (1) making overt reference to his readers, a move necessary in establishing the admonitory posture of the remainder of the pericope, and (2) presenting Jesus as the new and better Moses, thus establishing the connection between the

[29] Davies, "Psalm 95," 187ff.

[30] G. von Rad, "There Still Remains a Rest for the People of God: An Investigation of a Biblical Conception," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) 99.

original Exodus community and the new Exodus community at "the end of the ages" (9:26). Both of these are accomplished in part by playing on the ambiguity of **oikoj** throughout these verses.

In v. 1, the writer for the first time addresses his readers, calling them "holy brothers, participators in a heavenly calling" (**aJgioi adelfoi**, **klhsewj ejpouraniou metoxoi**). By addressing his readers directly, the writer is preparing them for the stern warning in the next passage. The term **metoxoi** also anticipates 3:14, where the "partakers" are the specific addressees of the warning.[31] The use of **oikoj** also serves to bring the church into the discussion. The word occurs in vv. 2 and 5 referring to Israel and in v. 3 apparently referring to Moses. In v. 6 it refers to the church.[32] Both devices, the direct mention of the recipients and the climactic use of **oikoj**, provide a nice lead into the warning addressed directly to the church.

A second purpose the use of **oikoj** achieves is in presenting Jesus as a type of Moses. Diminishing Moses' greatness is not in the writer's purview.[33] Rather, the focus is on Christ, who is exalted far above the central mediator of the old dispensation. Jesus is "found worthy of greater honor" (v. 3). He is posited as the second and greater Moses: Moses is merely a servant (**qerapwn**), Jesus is the son; Moses is in (**ejn**) God's house while Jesus is over (**ejpi**) it;[34] Moses is the house itself while Jesus is the builder of the house. The argument centers on the writer's midrashic exegesis of Num 12:7: " 'My servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house" (LXX: **ejn olJ& t& oikJ@& mou**; compare with Heb 3:2, 5: **ejn olJ&**[35] **t& oikJ@& autJou**). The irony is evident: the very fact by which Moses is said to be superior to the grumbling Miriam

[31] A full treatment of the complexities involved in interpreting **metoxoi** may be found in E. Nardoni, "Partakers in Christ (Hebrews 3:14)," *NTS* 37 (1991) 456-72.

[32] Harold W. Attridge comments, "the author . . . evidences the delight of the rhetorician and midrashist in the subtle and playful use of language" (The Epistle to the Hebrews [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989] 104). It is tempting to posit some typological significance to this, that the church is.the antitype not only of Israel but of Moses as well, the latter being further suggested by the idea that the faithful are coheirs with Christ, their "brother" (2:11, 17), who is himself the antitype of Moses. Attridge cautions against such an interpretation that "unnecessarily presuppose[s] a univocal symbolic meaning for olxocg throughout the pericope" (ibid., 110). It seems to me, however, that this typology, which plays precisely on the ambiguity of the term is, if anything, a move away from presupposing a univocal symbolic meaning.

[33] See also, E. Grasser, "Mose and Jesus: zur Auslegung von Hebr 3:1-6," *ZNW* 75 (1984) 21.

[34] S. Layton argues that Christ "over his house" reflects OT stewardship language ("Christ over his House and Hebrew אשר על־הבית," *NTS* 37 [1991] 473-77).

[35] The oldest mss do not have the adjective in v. 2 and Attridge thinks that this variant is likely to be original (*Hebrews*, 104). The Hebrews text was probably made to conform to v. 5 and Nurn 12:7. Mary Rose D'Angelo agrees that the shorter form is original, which raises the question why the adjective would have been omitted if Num 12:7 is being quoted (*Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews* [SBLDS 42; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979] 73). She concludes that the Nathan oracle in 1 Chr 17:14 is the basis for Heb 3:2, 5, a point which serves to highlight Christ's faithfulness as appointed high priest.

and Aaron in Numbers 12 is used by the writer of Hebrews to accent his inferiority to Christ. Whereas Moses, although faithful, was merely in the house, Christ was over it as its builder.

By presenting Jesus as the second Moses, the writer is not simply arguing for Christ's superiority for its own sake. He is preparing his readers for his exegesis of Psalm 95 by laying the foundation for his understanding of the church as the new wilderness community.[36] As Moses led his people out of Egypt and through the desert, Jesus now leads his people through their wilderness. Hughes writes,

> As he [Moses] had spoken the words of God to the people of Israel and had led them from the bondage of Egypt to the land of promise, so the Coming One would proclaim the words given him by the Father (Jn. 12:49f.) and deliver the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16) from a more terrible tyrant than Pharaoh (Heb. 2:14) and bring them to an inheritance better than that of Palestine (Heb. 11:13-16; 13:14).[37]

Presenting Jesus as the second Moses establishes the typological connection between Israel and the church. This serves two purposes for the writer's subsequent exegesis of Psalm 95. First, the parallel between the two Exodus *communities* makes the application of Psalm 95 immediately relevant. Secondly, the *contrast* between the two *mediators* yields an implicit *a fortiori* argument[38] that heightens the motive for heeding the warning: disobedience had dire consequences then; how much more so now?[39]

Apart from the building imagery, the comparison to Moses is already evident in v. 1. Jesus is the "apostle and high priest whom we confess." Jesus is both the apostle (sent from God to the people) and the high priest (representative of the people to God). This is also the role that Moses played.[40]

[36] F. F. Bruce argues that the urgency of the situation for the new wilderness community would have been heightened by the fact that it had been about forty years since Christ's death and resurrection, an event referred to as his "exodus" (**thn e@odon**) in Luke 9:31 (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964] 65). Both Attridge (*Hebrews*, 115) and James Moffatt (*Epistle to the Hebrews* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924] 45) argue that there is nothing typological about the figure of forty years. Nevertheless, Bruce's suggestion is plausible and may very well have increased the readers' sensitivity to the warning.

[37] Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 135-36.

[38] See O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebrder* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960) 100, and C. Spicq, *L'Epitre aux Hebreux* (Paris: Gabalda, 1953) 2.71-72.

[39] This *a fortiori* is first seen in 2:1-3, where Hebrews contrasts Christ to angels.

[40] Bruce, *Hebrews*, 55. Hughes sees this as combining the functions of Moses and Aaron (*Hebrews*, 126-28). Attridge argues that the reference to Christ as apostle and high priest is not an "implicit typology" of Moses and Aaron (*Hebrews*, 106). The role of Christ as "apostle" is common enough elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Mark 9:37 and other passages where Jesus is said to be sent by the Father) that Attridge does not think an implicit typology is needed to explain Christ's apostleship here. The presence of this theme in the NT is a point well made. Whether or not the typology is needed, however, is not the issue. In this context, where comparison to Moses is precisely the point, the typology might be too obvious to miss.

He was "sent" by God in that he received God's message and relayed it to the people (e.g., in Numbers 12 and the Sinai narrative). He was also the mediator between God and the Israelites (e.g., his pleading with God in Numbers 14 and Exodus 32). It is precisely in these two senses that Christ was faithful. He was an apostle in that he was sent by the Father to be "made like his brothers" and "make atonement for the sins of the people" (2:17). He is the high priest not only in offering himself as a sacrifice, but in his present, postresurrection function as the permanent and heavenly high priest in heaven "to appear for us in God's presence" as mediator (8:1-2; 9:24ff.). To follow through with the Exodus imagery of this passage: Jesus was sent by the Father to lead his people out of sin and guide them faithfully through their period of wilderness wandering to a heavenly inheritance.

With this, the writer has prepared his readers for his subsequent exegesis of Psalm 95. The timeless warning of Psalm 95 is now applied to the new and final Exodus community.

2. *Heb 3:7-19*

In this pericope, Hebrews quotes Ps 95:7b-11 and adds further comment on the relevance of the psalm for his readers (vv. 12-19). The writer's handling of the psalm exhibits similarities to *pesher* exegesis in which a particular passage is given an eschatological interpretation, "relating to the sect's own position in history, and rooted in its peculiar attitude to the biblical text."[41] This is precisely what Hebrews does. It is significant that Hebrews does not quote the psalm as a proof-text to support a preceding argument, as is the case for his OT quotations in the first two chapters. The psalm does not provide data to support a theological point. Rather, it is quoted simply "for the sake of exposition and application."[42] This tells us something about the writer's understanding of the church's situation in redemptive history. In the same way that the original Exodus community, which rebelled at Meribah and Massah, was a community wandering through the wilderness, so too is the church a community of wilderness wanderers living between Egypt and Canaan with the ever-present possibility of rebellion. It is already assumed on the basis of 3:1-6 that Israel and the church are in analogous situations.[43] What once applied to Israel now finds its full meaning with respect to the church.

[41] Devorah Dimant, "Qumran Sectarian Literature," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRINT 2/2; ed. Michael E. Stone; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) 507.

[42] S. Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Wed. G. Van Soest N. V., 1961) 85.

[43] Spicq argues that the use of Psalm 95 "presupposes an exact correspondence between the successive generations of the people of God, and perfect steadfastness in God's conduct toward them" (*L'Epitre*, 71, citing 1:1-2 as anticipating this idea). Spicq's point is well taken, but this is not to say that the typology is completely unexpected, since the point of vv. 1-6 is to present Jesus as the second Moses and the church as the new Israel.

The main exegetical concern, however, is the writer's interpretive handling of the psalm. There is little question that he is quoting the LXX rather than the MT. Yet, this quotation of the psalm is not entirely consistent with the LXX. In wishing to make this psalm more relevant to his readers, the author says things about Psalm 95 that are not found in Psalm 95. His particular understanding of the psalm for his readers is reflected in three significant variations from the LXX. The first is the insertion of **dio**, "therefore," in v. 10, which is absent from the LXX. The second is the prepositional phrase **en dokimasi%**, "with scrutiny," in v. 9, where the LXX and MT both have a verb (LXX **edokimasen** "they tried" and MT בחנוני "they tried me"). The third variation is **taut^**, "this generation," in v. 10, where the LXX reads **ekein^** "that generation."

We are given some insight into the writer's theological concerns first by his insertion of **dio** in v. 10. This particle is absent in both the LXX and MT. Verses 9--10a in the LXX read, "Where your fathers tested, they tried, and saw my works. I was angry with that generation for forty years." Similarly, the MT reads, "Where your fathers tested me, they tried me even though they saw my works. I was angry with that[44] generation for forty years." The point is that both of these texts state that God was angry for forty years. In other words, God's anger was a characteristic of the wilderness period. The addition of **dio** in Hebrews, on the other hand, changes the meaning significantly. The writer reads the forty-year period as referring not to the period of God's wrath, but to the period of God's activity in the desert. "Your fathers tested with scrutiny and saw my works for forty years. Therefore [**dio**] I was angry with this generation." God was not angry for forty years. Rather anger is what follows the forty-year period in which they saw God's works.

Why does Hebrews insert **dio**? Why does he remove the notion of God's anger from the wilderness period, where it certainly seems to belong, and place it after? One rather obvious answer is that he wants to portray the wilderness period in a positive light—one that is not characterized by wrath. But why would he want to do this? Because his purpose for quoting Psalm 95 is to warn the *church*, the *new* wilderness community.

To elaborate: The syntax of the LXX and MT equates the period of God's activity with that of God's wrath. After all, the entire forty-year period of wandering is the punishment for Israel's wanting to return to Egypt in Numbers 14. Psalm 95 views the wilderness period negatively. But this negative impression will not do for Hebrews.[45] The church's period of

[44] There is no demonstrative in the MT. I say "that generation" simply for the purpose of translation.

[45] Besides the psalms mentioned above (see also n. 24), Hos 2:14ff. is another OT example of such a positive interpretation of the wilderness period. That Hebrews refers to the heavenly sanctuary as the tabernacle (8:1-2; 9:1-2, 11) rather than the temple is further evidence of his positive opinion of the wilderness period.

wilderness wandering is not one of wrath but of blessing. They are not subject to God's punishment as was the first wilderness community. They are rather "partakers of a heavenly calling" (Heb 3:1) or, in the language of Heb 2:4, they have witnessed "signs, wonders, various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit." What were the works they saw? Not wrath, but the coming of the Messiah and the inauguration of the church age. For Hebrews this is clearly not a show of God's anger, but of his blessing—indeed the very climax of his redemptive plan.[46] The new Moses had come and the new Israel was born, all of which were attested by "signs, wonders, and miracles." These are the "works" that the new Israel had seen during her period of wilderness wandering.

The insertion of **dio** serves to make the clear distinction between the forty-year period of God's activity and the subsequent period of his anger. Anger is what follows upon disbelief in God's activity, not what characterizes the period of God's activity. Hence, in applying the psalm to the church, the writer of Hebrews is telling his readers that their wilderness period is one of blessing, not wrath or punishment. If they are unfaithful by following the example of the Israelites, and "testing with scrutiny God's works," this present age will be followed by God's anger in which they forfeit the promise of rest.

That the writer is fully aware of his exegetical technique is made certain in 3:17. There, regarding *Israel's* disbelief (not the church's), he asks, "And with whom was he angry for forty years?" Here the writer follows the syntax of the LXX, which reads the forty years as a period of God's wrath. This is the exact opposite of what he did in 3:10. Why would the writer give the same verse, which for him was Holy Scripture, two different meanings? I suggest the following theological motivation: in 3:10 he is talking about the church; in 3:17 he is talking about Israel.

Let me develop this point more fully. Simply by quoting this psalm, Hebrews is making a statement regarding the *continuity* between Israel and the church: both have a wilderness period. Yet, the negative overtones in Psalm 95 regarding the wilderness period would not suit the reality of the church age as one of great blessing. This is why the author inserts **dio** in v. 10. The syntax of 3:17, however, is not intended merely to reflect more accurately the syntax of the LXX, as if his exegetical conscience suddenly began to bother him. Rather, he is making explicit in 3:17 what was implied by the insertion of **dio** in v. 10: there is a *distinction* between the two periods of wilderness wandering. The Israelite wilderness period was one of wrath: "With whom was he angry for forty years?" (3:17). The church's wilderness period is one of divine blessing: "They saw my works for forty

[46] E. Grasser comments briefly that the purpose of **dio** is to emphasize the experience of God's salvific activity (*Heilserfahrung*), what he refers to as "vierzig Jahre Wundererweisungen Gottes" (*An die Hebraer* [Hebr 1-6] [EKKNT 17/1; Zurich: Benziger and Neukirchen-V1uyn: Neukirchener, 1990] 176). See also Attridge's comments (*Hebrews*, 115).

years" (3:10). Although Israel may have fallen away shortly after her Exodus, thus characterizing her wilderness wandering as a time of wrath, the period following the church's Exodus is characterized by "signs, wonders, various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit." For the writer of Hebrews, then, there is continuity and discontinuity between the two wilderness periods. The two are analogous, but not merely so.[47] This is in keeping with the tenor of Hebrews throughout the book: the new supersedes the old.[48]

Besides the addition of **dio** in v. 10, a second factor that highlights this emphasis on God's activity is the prepositional phrase **evn dokimasi%** in v. 9. Attridge suggests that "**dokimasi%** has connotations of close and even skeptical scrutiny," which yields the translation, "Where your fathers tested with scrutiny and saw my works."[49] We should notice that the object of the testing in Hebrews is not God, as is the case with the MT, but the works. Here Hebrews agrees with the LXX. But he goes beyond the LXX by changing the verb **evdokimasen** to the prepositional phrase **evn dokimasi%**. The effect is to draw further attention to the faithlessness of the Exodus community in view of these works. He does not say with the LXX: "Your fathers tested, they tried my works." Hebrews reads: "Your fathers tested with scrutiny my works." He is telling his readers that the age in which they live, and the blessings of which they partake, are themselves a certain and true witness to God's ongoing faithfulness in bringing the new Exodus community to its rest. Skepticism or disbelief regarding these sure signs is unthinkable.[50]

[47] Hughes argues that there is an "ambivalence of association" regarding the forty-year period, but the "overall sense of the passage is not altered" (*Hebrews*, 143). But I would suggest that the writer is a more careful exegete/theologian than even Hughes gives him credit for. Hughes may be missing the theological point of the writer's handling of the psalm. I must also disagree with Attridge's view. Regarding **dio** in v. 10 he says, "This is somewhat surprising in view of the association of forty years with the wrath of God in the following exposition (3:17), but it is possible that the author conceived of two periods of forty years, one of disobedience and one of punishment" (*Hebrews*, 115). Yet this sounds too much like assuming a "univocal symbolic meaning," which Attridge cautions against elsewhere. Nor is Yeo Khiok-Khng's suggestion helpful. He says that 3:10 and 17 serve to equate the period of testing with the period of God's wrath ("The Meaning and Usage of the Theology of 'Rest' (**katapausij** and **sabbatismoj**) in Hebrews 3:7-4:13," *Asia journal of Theology* 5 [1991] 2-33, esp. p. 5). This solution does not seem to give **dio** its due force, as Attridge also remarks (*Hebrews*, 115).

[48] Although for different purposes, Paul's exegesis of Gen 12:7 in Gal 3:15-29 is analogous to Hebrews' exegesis of Ps 95:9-10. Since Gen 12:7 refers to Abraham's "seed" (זרע, **sperma**) in the singular, Paul argues in Gal 3:16 that its proper referent is Christ. In Gal 3:29, however, Paul states plainly, almost matter-of-factly, "you are [plural] Abraham's seed." That Paul sees Gen 12:7 as having a dual referent is quite consistent with his understanding of the close identification of Christ and his church elsewhere, e.g., his use of "in Christ."

[49] *Hebrews*, 115.

[50] Yeo's argument, that the prepositional phrase is "used to keep the place name כמרימה [sic] of the MT," is unconvincing, since **evn dokimasi%** corresponds not to כמריבה in v. 8 but בחנוני in v. 9 ("The Meaning and Usage of the Theology of 'Rest,'" 4). Another solution is offered by K. J. Thomas, who argues that the phrase in Hebrews refers to God's testing of man

A final change that the author of Hebrews uses to actualize the psalm is the insertion of **tauvthn** in v. 10. Reading "this generation" where the LXX reads **ekeivnhn** ("that") further concretizes the psalm—indeed, the whole Exodus experience—for the readers. By quoting the psalm the way he does, he is showing his readers that this is the generation with which God is ultimately concerned.[51]

The commentaries are largely divided over the significance this change has. Spicq, for example, says that it makes the psalm "more urgent for the present community," a position with which I am in agreement.[52] The opposite opinion is represented by Attridge, for one, who sees this as "a minor variation from the LXX . . . [which does not] seem to serve any particular purpose in Hebrews' application of the psalm."[53] But we have already seen with **dio** that Hebrews' exegesis of the psalm is careful and deliberate. Of course, this does not mean that every change is necessarily theologically significant. There are, for example, two "minor," or perhaps better "stylistic," variations, namely the more common verb forms **eidon** and **eipon** in Hebrews rather than the Hellenistic forms in the LXX, as Attridge, too, remarks.[54] But **tauvthn** does not seem to be minor or stylistic, but of a completely different order. Hebrews' exegesis of Psalm 95 in general shows **tauvthn** to be a purposeful and deliberate change from the LXX.

Another argument, this by Yeo, is unconvincing.[55] Yeo argues that Hebrews changes the LXX "that generation" to "this generation" because "that generation" does not occur anywhere else in the NT.[56] He argues further that since the verb **proswcqisa** in v. 10 is past tense, that therefore "this generation" must refer to the Israelites, who lived in the past, and not the church. In other words, Yeo cites common NT usage to explain why Hebrews changes the LXX "that generation" to "this generation," while at the same time arguing that Hebrews' "this generation" refers to Israel because the verb is in the past tense. The problem with this argument is that of all the uses of "this generation" in the NT, not once does it refer to a past generation, as Yeo says it does here. Furthermore, one need not

rather than man's testing of God as the LXX has it. This yields the translation, "where your fathers, during their testing, tried and saw my works for forty years" ("OT Citations in Hebrews," *NTS* 11 [1965] 307). I do not find this solution as helpful as Attridge's, especially since one would expect the pronoun **evn dokimasi% auvtwn**.

[51] An insight that cannot be given full consideration here is brought out by Karen H. Jobes ("Rhetorical Achievement in the Hebrews 10 'Misquote' of Psalm 40," *Bib* 72 [1991] 387-96). She argues that the change from **ekeivnhn** to **tauvthn** "achieves phonetic assonance" with **evn** in the previous line (p. 391). Jobes gives several strong examples of such "phonetic manipulation," which "[communicated] the author's intended semantic sense . . . while simultaneously achieving assonance" (p. 392).

[52] *L'Epitre,* 74.

[53] *Hebrews,* 115-16.

[54] Ibid., 115.

[55] "The Meaning and Usage of the Theology of 'Rest,'" 5.

[56] See also Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations,* 35-36.

assume that Hebrews has in mind either Israel or the church, as if a choice were to be made. To argue as I do, that the near demonstrative is used to actualize the psalm, is not to argue that in v. 10 Israel is no longer in view. The referent is not either Israel or the church, but both. The author is, after all, citing Psalm 95 and thereby drawing on an example from the past, Israel. But his application of the psalm shows that his primary theological concern is the church. The strength of the warning is precisely in bringing the two Exodus communities together, to warn the new on the basis of the old without losing sight of either one. The tense of the verb is not the determining issue.[57]

For Hebrews, the church is the new Israel. They have seen the new Moses. They have seen God's mighty acts in the new wilderness. This (**taut^**) is the generation with which God is concerned. What Psalm 95 may have referred to at an earlier time was merely prelude to this new era, "at the end of the age" and "in the fulness of time." The threefold repetition of **shmeron** in 3:13, 15, and 4:7 further accents the present fulfillment of what was spoken of in Psalm 95. Both **taut^** and **shmeron** specify for Hebrews what is left ambiguous in Psalm 95. The promise of God's rest is for today, for this generation. In other words, both terms have a decided redemptive-historical dimension. "Today" or "this generation" is the present situation of the believer, a situation in which he wanders in the wilderness, between slavery and the better, heavenly country awaiting him.[58] Hebrews' appeal is not merely to the individual in his moment of existential decision (although it is that, too), but to the individual living in the eschatological age when the new Moses is leading his people through the wilderness to their final rest. We see then that both Psalm 95 and Hebrews apply the example of the wilderness rebellion to motivate their communities to obedience. The difference between the two is that the writer of Psalm 95 makes the warning "timelessly concrete" by leaving the identity of the rebellious generation and the "today" ambiguous. The writer of Hebrews, on the other hand, accomplishes his admonitory purpose in precisely the opposite fashion—by making the psalm as time specific as possible.[59]

[57] Thomas is a bit ambiguous in seeing **taut^** as a reminder of Jesus' words (e.g., Matt 23:36) that strengthens the OT warning, yet "is not intended to designate some other than the wilderness generation" ("OT Citations," 307).

[58] But this point is not to ignore the strong element of realized eschatology in the epistle, for example, 12:22, "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God."

[59] It is still a question why Psalm 95 was written in the first place. If Hebrews' use of the Exodus theme is predominantly eschatological, what is the case for Psalm 95? Commentators have remarked on the liturgical use of the psalm in the synagogue, which bespeaks a more existential function. Still, the issue of the *Sitz-im-Leben* of Psalm 95 is somewhat of a mystery. That it is cultic does not answer the question. One would still need to ask why Psalm 95 was written for the cult. A possible answer is that the psalm has an exilic context. In this sense, the experience of the Exodus community had obvious relevance for the "Exodus community" of

The author's understanding of Psalm 95 for the church is reflected first and foremost in how he quotes it. The words **dio**, **eJn dokimasi%** and **tauta** are variations from the LXX that reflect his theological motivation to make this psalm more relevant to his readers. This motivation is the same as his motivation throughout the book: to show that the full significance of the OT is realized by the church and only proleptically by Israel.

3. *Heb 4:1-13*

These concluding verses show that Hebrews stands within the tradition argued above that understands creation as a paradigm for deliverance. There are three factors that demonstrate this point: the argument from Gen 2:2 in Heb 4:4, the double meaning of **e@rga**, and the double meaning of **kataskeuazw**.

By citing Gen 2:2, Hebrews is arguing that the rest that is the reward to the faithful new Exodus community is to be understood not as physical land, but as an eschatological rest, specifically, the rest that God has enjoyed since the completion of his creative work. Gen 2:2 reads, "God rested [**katepausen**] from his works." Our psalm ends, "They shall never enter into my rest [**thn katapausin mou**]." For Hebrews, creation is the consummation of the Exodus. Yet, the manner in which Hebrews brings creation and Exodus together differs from what we have seen earlier. For the OT passages I cited above, creation is not the consummation of the Exodus but a paradigm for the Exodus. In other words, creation is not the goal of the Exodus as it is here in Hebrews, but the type of the Exodus. This is not merely a difference—these two perspectives are in fact on opposite ends of the redemptive-historical spectrum, and the distinctiveness of Hebrews' application of these themes should not be lost.

Nevertheless, we still have to deal with the question of why the warning directed to the new Exodus community is supported by an appeal to creation imagery. Clearly, an important factor in the author's bringing Gen 2:2 and Ps 95:11 together is the root **katapauw**, which appears in both.[60] But this merely explains what allowed him to make the exegetical connection, not what motivated him to make it. Why call upon Gen 2:2 to "explain" Ps 95:11 when it appears to introduce a whole new subject into the discussion, namely, creation? After all, the writer could simply have said that the church's rest is not earthly but heavenly and be done with it, without even introducing the subject of God's creation-rest. Or if he really

the Exile. This might suggest, although perhaps not a full-blown eschatological perspective, at least an application of Israel's past deliverance from Egypt to the deliverance from Babylon. Hence, both the original audience of Psalm 95 and the audience of Hebrews would be second Exodus communities to whom an Exodus warning had been applied.

[60] It is certainly to the advantage of Hebrews' argument that the LXX uses a form of xaTattauw in both Gen 2:2 and Psalm 95, thereby perhaps establishing a connection between the passages, whereas the MT uses שׁבת and מנוחתי, respectively.

wanted to bring another passage into the discussion, he could easily have found one that contains **katapauw** but pertains directly to the rest of the faithful rather than to the seventh day of creation. So why introduce this distant verse into the discussion? It is because Ps 95:11 says, "They shall never enter my rest," not "they shall never enter their rest." The exegetical problem the author of Hebrews is trying to explain is why Ps 95:11 refers to the rest in the land as "*my* rest," i.e., *God's* rest, when in fact it is *Israel's* rest. It is this exegetical problem in the text that, so to speak, backs him into a theological corner. For him, the phrase "my rest" demands that he sees *some sort* of relationship between deliverance and creation. The church as the new Exodus community, redeemed, or "created" as it were, has as its goal the original rest of creation. It is the consummate rest—God's rest.[61] No less than God's creation rest can be expected for those who are "partakers of the heavenly calling." The faithful share God's creation rest because they are coheirs with Christ. The physical rest Joshua (4:8)[62] gave his people as well as the rest of Psalm 95 (however this is to be understood) were merely proleptic of this final rest.[63]

Hebrews' use of **e@ga** and **kataskeuazw** make this relationship between deliverance and creation more explicit. The term **e@ga** occurs four times in this passage. The first reference to "my works" is, as we have seen above, in 3:9 (**ta e@ga mou**) and pertains to the blessings of the church age. The other three references (4:3, 4, and 10) are spawned by the writer's quoting Gen 2:2 and pertain to the works of God during the six days of creation (**twn e@gwn aujtou**). The result is a wordplay, which is worthy of consideration in the context of my argument. The **e@ga** in 3:9 refer to the works of deliverance. The **e@ga** of chap. 4 refer to the works of creation. Both creation and deliverance are God's "works." To take it one step further, in Gen 2:2, God works (creation) and then rests. In Hebrews 3, God also works (deliverance/second creation), and then, not he, but the faithful rest--in his rest. This striking parallel bespeaks an integral relationship between creation and deliverance in the writer's thinking.

The verb **kataskeuazw** is used in Hebrews 3:3 and 4. Attridge comments that in certain contexts this word refers to God's creative activity. He cites

[61] A similar idea is found in *'Abot R. Nat.* 12. Regarding Moses' death we read, "Moses, thou hast had enough of this world, for lo, the world to come awaits thee: for thy place hath been ready for thee since the six days of Creation" (*The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* [trans. Judah Goldin; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955] 65).

[62] The fact that both Joshua and Jesus are the same name in Greek (**Ihsouj**) certainly strengthens the typological connection. See also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 130, and Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 52.

[63] The literature on the meaning of rest in antiquity is immense and complex. (Both Attridge [*Hebrews*, 126-28] and Spicq [*L'Epftre*, 95-104] devote an excursus to the subject.) Of particular interest are instances where rest is described as a new creation, for example, 4 Ezra 8:52; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 78-86; *1 Enoch* 45:3-6; *T. Levi* 18:9; and 4QFlor 17:8 (cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 126, and Spicq, *L'Epitre*, 95-96). A discussion of this issue would take us far from our topic. In any event, it is clear that Hebrews is making the connection between rest and creation.

Wis 9:2 and 13:4 as examples,[64] as well as Isa 40:28; 43:7; 45:7 and 9, which in the MT read **ברא**.[65] This verb is used in Hebrews 3 in two ways. First, in v. 3, it refers to Jesus' building of the "house" (**oikoj**). It is also used in v. 4 to refer to God's act of creation. In v. 3, Jesus is the builder (**o[kataskeuasaj**) of a house. In v. 4, God creates all things (**o[de panta kataskeuasaj**). The question is, What does it mean for Jesus to be the "builder of a house"? Heb 3:3 reads, "Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the one who builds the house has greater honor than the house itself." There seems to be an analogy being made: Jesus is to Moses as builder is to house. A strict reading of this analogy yields that Jesus "built" Moses, which does not make much sense. Hence, we should be cautioned against making too much of this analogy. Nevertheless, for the analogy to have any force, we must make something of it. I suggest that Moses is here a metonymy for the people Moses brought out of Egypt—the Exodus community. Several commentators mention this possibility.[66] Mary Rose D'Angelo argues on the basis of the Targums, rabbinic literature, and intertestamental literature that understanding "house'" as "people of God" is not without precedent.[67] If this is so, both Jesus in v. 3 and God in v. 4 are engaged in creation activity: God creates everything, and Jesus, the new Moses, "creates" his people. Creation language is again used to express deliverance.

III. *Conclusion*

Psalm 95 is an *a fortiori* argument couched in creation language to warn the people against disbelief The portrayal of the Exodus as an act of re-creation in vv. 6-7a bridges vv. 1-5, which speak of creation, and vv. 7b-11, which relate the Meribah/Massah incident. The writer of Hebrews applies the warning of 7b-11 to his community by means of an interpretation of the passage that brings out the eschatological dimension of his exegesis, thus making it speak directly to the new Exodus community in its period of wilderness wandering. The rest for which this new Exodus community strives is the rest in which God has partaken since the completion of his creative work. Creation is both the type of re-creation and its consummation; it is the paradigm for the Exodus community as well as the reward for those who remain faithful in their wilderness wandering.

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[64] Wisdom is also a clear example of the juxtaposition of creation and deliverance. See Wis 16:24-18:4; 19:6-7; and 19:18-21.

[65] Hebrews, 110.

[66] Attridge cites Moffatt (Hebrews, 42) as well as H. Montefiore (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [New York: Harper; London: Black, 1964] 72) and Teodorico (*L'epistola agli Ebrei* [La Sacra Bibbia; Turin: Marietti, 1952] 79) as examples, yet he is quick to dismiss this possibility. He does not offer a solution to the meaning of the analogy.

[67] Moses, 95-149, esp. pp. 145-49.