

Allusions to Jacob's Dream and New Name Reception (Genesis 28, 32/35)
In Peter's Confession and the Transfiguration Pericopes (Matthew 16, 17)¹

[Running Title: Influence of Genesis 28, 32/35 on Matthew 16, 17]

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ABSTRACT

This essay identifies and analyses parallels between Genesis' stories of Jacob's dream ladder (ch. 28) and his reception of a new name, "Israel" (chs. 32 and 35) with Matt 17's transfiguration vision and Simon's reception of a new name, "Stone"/"Rock" in Matt 16. Jacob's setting up of a stone and altar parallel the church to be built upon Simon the Stone/Rock. The Gospel of John's distinctive modulations of these and related synoptic gospel and Tanakh traditions are documented and assessed. Relevant rabbinic and early Christian literary parallels are brought into the discussion.

Keywords: Jacob's Ladder; Peter's Confession; the Transfiguration.

INTRODUCTION²

This paper is based on a set of notes I compiled some years ago on parallels I had noticed between Genesis' stories of Jacob's dream (chapter 28) and his wrestling with a mysterious figure who gives him a new name (two versions exist in chapters 32 and 35) on the one hand and Matt 16's version of Peter's messianic confession (wherein Simon receives the new name Peter) and Matt 17's transfiguration story on the other hand. For purposes of comparison between the two sets of text I use not only the Greek text of Matt, but the Hebrew versions of Shem-Tob (Ibn Shaprut) and Delitzsch as well. The importance of Shem-Tob's version is that it predates him (born mid 1300s) and is thus old enough to preserve some even earlier rabbinic or rabbinic-influenced materials, especially in what might be called the glosses or interpolations to Hebrew Matthew. (There is no need here to view Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew as ancient; medieval suffices). Unless otherwise stated, for Tanakh citations in English I will use JPS (1917) and for Apocrypha and New Testament citations, NRSV.

Some of the basic parallels I explore in this paper include the following:

- Gen 28:3 "bless" (ברך); Matt 16:17 "blessed are you" (μακάριοι/אשריך)

¹ This essay was originally accepted for publication in *Scrinium* (Brill). I received the first set of comments from the anonymous *Scrinium* reviewer just a few weeks before the passing of my mother and consequently neglected the essay's revision for over a year. This no doubt led to *Scrinium* understandably assuming I had withdrawn the essay. The fact was, however, that I simply lost interest in pursuing the matter under the emotional impact of a family tragedy. The comments I received from the anonymous *Scrinium* reviewer led to the essay's improvement in several respects, and I remain grateful to the anonymous reviewer and to the editor of *Scrinium* for their earlier interest in my essay.

² For their helpful comments on this essay that led to its improvement in several respects the author wishes to thank Margaret Barker (Temple Studies Group), Charles Häberl (Rutgers University), Bernhard Lang (University of Paderborn) Basil Lourié (St. Petersburg, Russia), and Nick Wyatt (University of Edinburgh). Any remaining defects or errors are naturally my own.

- Gen 28:3 “congregation”; Matt 16:18 “church”/“congregation”
- Gen 28:11-12 Jacob sleeps and dreams; Matt 17:3 Shem-Tob “Peter and his companions were asleep” (based on Luke 9:32)
- Gen 28:11,22 “stone” (אֶבֶן); Matt 16:18, “you are Rock” (Shem-Tob, Stone, אֶבֶן), “I will build” (אֶבְנֶה)
- Gen 28:17,22 “house of God”; Matt 16:18 Shem-Tob “I will build my house”
- Gen 28:17 “gate of heaven”; opposite in Matt 16:18 “gates of hell,” and 16:19 “keys to the kingdom of heaven” implies gate/s of heaven.
- Gen 28:18,22 “pillar”; Matt 16-17 “some of you *standing* here” = Gal 2 James, Peter, John as “pillars,” literally, “standing ones” who saw the transfiguration
- Gen 28:22 “this stone”; Matt 16:18 “this rock”
- Gen 32:25 “Jacob was left alone”; Matt 17:8 “they saw no one except Jesus himself alone”
- Gen 32:26 “he prevailed not against him”; Matt 16:18 “shall not prevail against it” (Shem-Tob, “against you”)
- Gen 32:28 “What is thy name?”; Matt 16:13 “Who do people say the son of man is?”
- Gen 32:29 “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel” (reception of new name on Jacob’s part); Matt 16:18, “Simon . . ., you are Rock” (reception of new name on Simon’s part)
- Gen 32:30 “Tell me thy name”; Matt 16:15 “But who do you say that I am?”
- Gen 32:31 “I have seen God face to face”; Matt 17:2 vision of transfigured “face”

The following comparative outline should prove helpful in forming a larger overview of this essay’s basic lines of analysis:³

1. Travel

Gen 28: all the way from Beersheva to Horon/Hawran on the way to find a wife, and in Matt 17 from Caesarea Philippi in the Golan/Jawlan up some mountain (maybe Mt Hermon) to find . . . what, exactly? The theme of marriage appears in Matt 9:15 and again in Matt 25; Matt 9:15 in particular, seems to foreshadow 17:12, to me.

2. Sleep

(if we include the Shem Tov version or the synoptic account)

3. Night Vision of Divine Messengers

Gen 28: angels; Matt 17: the prophets Moses, Elijah, and Jesus

4. A Theophany

God then appears in both accounts, although in Matt 17 his voice issues from a cloud and in Gen 28 he merely stands next to Jacob

5. A Covenant

Gen 28: God gives Jacob and his descendants Israel; Matt 17: God gives the disciples his son and charges them to listen to him

6. Prophecy

Gen 28: I will not leave you until I have done the things I promised; Matt 17: the Son of Man will be raised from the dead, but first will suffer

³ I thank Charles Häberl for his contributions to this outline.

7. Construction

Gen 28: pillar and libations; Matt 17: three shelters for the three prophets⁴

A closer overview of the relevant Gen passages and their corresponding echoes in later traditions is in order. Gen 32:2 informs us of Jacob that “the angels of God met him.” According to Gen 32:25 Jacob wrestles with “a man” who in verse 29 gives him the new name Israel. By contrast, in Gen 35:9 it is “God” who appears to Jacob, and who in verse 10 gives him his new name Israel. It is my suspicion that the story of the enigmatic “man” of Gen 32 gave rise to the later angel Phanuel (*I En* 40:9), inspired by 32:31’s toponym Peniel, which in verse 32 is written with *waw* as Penuel.⁵ Tradition would reconcile the passages’ angels, man and God by combining these into the figure of an *angel of God* who appears in *human* form. Codex Neofiti at Gen 32:25 identifies Jacob’s opponent as the angel Sariel.⁶ According to Matthew Black, in the tradition Phanuel replaced Sariel, just as Uriel had earlier replaced Sariel.⁷ In the *Lad. Jac.*, it is Sariel who is sent to Jacob to interpret his dream. In the *Pr. Jos.*, the angel Uriel reveals that the pre-existent Jacob “descended to earth and . . . tabernacled among men,” after Jacob calls himself “the firstborn of every living thing to whom God gives life.”⁸ When we connect this Gen 28-based notion of a pre-existent Jacob with Gen 28:15, “And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest (בכל אשר תלך),” then perhaps we can detect later reverberations of these traditions in the *Gos. Thom.* logion 12, ΠΑΝΤΑΤΕΤΝΕΙ ΕΜΑΥ ΕΤΕΤΝΑΒΩΚ ΩΔΙΑΚΩΒΟΣ ΠΑΙΚΑΙΟΣ ΠΑΕΙ ΠΤΑΤΠΕ ΜΗΠΚΑΖ ΩΩΠΕ ΕΤΒΗΤΖ, “At whatever place (ΠΑΝΑ, lit. the place = Hebrew המקום) you are, you are to go to Jacob the Righteous, he because of whom heaven and earth came into being.” The significance of “the place” in Gen 28 as an allusion to the Jerusalem temple, as Wyatt deftly argues,⁹ will become more apparent as we continue.

As I will show, early traditions link together elements of the separate stories of Peter’s confession (Matt 16) and of Jesus’ transfiguration (Matt 17). Since I am arguing that these two different stories in part reflect the influence of Gen 28 and 32/35 (in reverse sequence, though, since Matt 16 ties more into Gen 32/35 and Matt 17 into Gen 28), it is worth noting that similarly Jewish sources link together various elements of the different stories contained in Gen chapters 28 and 32/35. As J. Z. Smith writes: “The Palestinian Targumim are unanimous in rendering Peniel (Gen 32:30) as ‘I have seen angels of the Lord face to face’ rather than the usual singular circumlocution, ‘angel of the Lord.’ This most probably refers to the angels in the ‘ladder’ vision of Genesis 28:12, with chapter 35 supplying the warrant for connecting chapters 32 and 28.”¹⁰ As the same author notes, already Hos 12:4-5

⁴ Häberl adds to this the following clarifying comments: “There’s some variation here, of course (7 gets pushed back in the Matt 16 narrative, 6 comes last in Matt) but that’s one of the characteristic features of such narratives. It strikes me as significant that Jacob goes all the way from Beersheva, at the southernmost extent of the Israelite territories, all the way up to Horon, at the northernmost extent. All the more so because of the covenant. This dimension is missing from the NT account, possibly because the covenant there does not involve land but the Son of Man. The fact that God introduces Jesus as his son to the apostles reaffirms the marital theme going on here.”

⁵ Cf. the opinion of J. Z. Smith in Charlesworth, *OTP* 2, p. 709.

⁶ See Charlesworth, *OTP* 2, p. 708.

⁷ Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or I Enoch*, Leiden, 1985, p. 201.

⁸ J. Z. Smith in Charlesworth *OTP* 2, p. 713.

⁹ N. Wyatt, “Where Did Jacob Dream His Dream?” in *The Archaeology of Myth: Papers on Old Testament Tradition*, London—Oakville, 2010, pp. 1-12.

¹⁰ J. Z. Smith in Charlesworth *OTP* 2, p. 710.

“correlates” Gen 28 and 32:¹¹ “And by his strength he strove with a godlike being (אלהים); / So he strove with an angel (מלאך), and prevailed;/ He wept, and made supplication unto him;/ At Beth-el he would find him. . . .” The *Lad. Jac.* strings together the Gen 28 dream and chapter 32’s angelic bestowal of the new name Israel, collapsing the two events together in uninterrupted succession. The angel comes to give Jacob an interpretation of his ladder dream.

One should not look for perfect correspondence between each and every detail in the Gen Jacob and Matt Peter/Jesus stories. The issue that obscures some of the parallels is not, I think, all that uncommon in a lot of New Testament passages that subtly allude to the Tanakh. Just as classical poets and authors loved to conceal learned allusions to other, previous writings in their own compositions, rabbis loved to do the same, which is quite clear in the massive body of rabbinic literature, and I think we see the same proclivity in some of the earlier traditions the gospel writers inherited.

The general paradigm here, I believe, involves one in which several fine details of a Tanakh passage informs a New Testament pericope, while much of the larger narrative structure/s of the Tanakh passage is not all that germane to the New Testament author’s concerns. The result is that the latter Tanakh aspect (larger story lines) has fewer parallels in the New Testament than do the finer relevant details within the overall story line. Consequently, it may be helpful for the moment to focus in on just a few of the comparative structures, namely, 1) sleep accompanied by dream-vision, and 2) bestowal of a new name. The evidence for a connection between the larger parallels are then to be found in the finer, smaller details embedded within the larger narratives (e.g., shared stone, building images, etc.).

I THE STATUS QUAESTIONIS

As far as I am aware there is no previous study on the topic of the influence of Gen 28, 32/35 on Matt 16’s Petrine pericope and 17’s transfiguration story. The two blocks of text can be correlated, however, insofar as Jacob’s “stone” and the “rock” who is Simon Peter have both been associated with the Jewish trope of the cosmic foundation stone.¹² The literature on Matt 16’s Peter’s Confession pericope is of course massive.¹³ While the famous Greek wordplay in Matt 16 (Πέτρος / πέτρα) is often assumed to reflect an Aramaic *Vorlage*, Hebrew remains a viable option,¹⁴ as does an original Greek wordplay.¹⁵

¹¹ J. Z. Smith in Charlesworth *OTP* 2, p. 707.

¹² On Jacob’s stone as the *’eben šētiyyā*, see N. Wyatt, “Where Did Jacob Dream His Dream?” in *The Archaeology of Myth: Papers on Old Testament Tradition*, London—Oakville, 2010, p. 5; on Peter the rock as the cosmic foundation stone, see Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, “The Revelation of the Sacral Son of Man: The Genre, History of Religions Context and the Meaning of the Transfiguration,” in: *Auferstehung—Resurrection: The Fourth Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium Resurrection, Transfiguration and Exaltation in Old Testament, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity—Tübingen, Sept. 1999*, Friedrich Avemarie, Hermann Lichtenberger, eds. Tübingen, 2001, pp. 247-298, and J. Massingberd Ford, “‘Thou art Abraham and upon this Rock . . .’” *The Heythrop Journal* (1965), pp. 289-301.

¹³ For a critical overview and treatment, consult Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20*. (Hermeneia Series), Minneapolis, 2001.

¹⁴ David N. Bivin, “Jesus’ *Petros-petra* Wordplay (Matthew 16:18): Is It Greek, Aramaic, or Hebrew?” in: *The Language Environment of First Century Judaea: Jerusalem Studies in the*

The closest association between the Gen 28 Jacob story and the Matt 16 Peter's Confession pericope that I am aware of is of an indirect nature. A 2002 article by Jenny Read-Heimerdinger and Josep Rius-Camps suggests that Luke 24's name Cleophas is a play on "Cephas," and that the larger Lukan text here, especially as transmitted by Codex Bezae, is based on various allusions to the Gen 28 Jacob story. Their article also points out John 1:42's renaming of Simon as Cephas, which is situated so near 1:51's allusion to Jacob's ladder.¹⁶ Surprisingly, Read-Heimerdinger and Rius-Camps do not refer to Matt 16, although this would have gone rather well with their quotation of Gen 28:22.¹⁷ In any case, what Read-Heimerdinger and Rius-Camps have to say about the influence of Gen 28 on Luke 24 can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to my proposal for an influence of Gen 28, 32/35 on Matt 16, 17, given the points of contact between the explicit Petrine pericope of Matt 16 and the possible implicit Peterine allusion ("Cleophas" as a play on "Cephas") in Luke 24's Emmaus narrative: "The links between Luke's account of Jesus' resurrection appearances and the dream which Jacob had at Bethel of a ladder between heaven and earth are not straightforward, one to one parallels but rather an intricate web of interwoven strands which work together to produce a global picture rather than a linear one."¹⁸

As for the *status quaestionis* on Matt 17's transfiguration account, Riesenfeld's 1947 study located the transfiguration in a Sukkot setting.¹⁹ Jeffrey L. Rubenstein counters Riesenfeld's link between Sukkot and enthronement in an article contesting a purported eschatological dimension of Sukkot in ancient times.²⁰ A disputed question is whether 2 Cor shows knowledge of the transfiguration story, which would be relevant for the question of the historical origins of the story in its synoptic versions in general and in Matt 17 in particular;

Synoptic Gospels Volume Two, Randall Buth, R. Steven Notley, eds. Leiden—Boston, 2014, pp. 375-394.

¹⁵ On the possibility of Jesus as a Greek speaker, see Stanley E. Porter, "The Role of Greek Language Criteria in Historical Jesus Research," in: *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus. Volume 1: How to Study the Historical Jesus*, Tom Holmén, Stanley E. Porter, eds. Leiden—Boston, 2011, pp. 361-404.

¹⁶ Jenny Read-Heimerdinger; Josep Rius-Camps, "Emmaous or Oulammaous? Luke's Use of the Jewish Scriptures in the Text of Luke 24 in Codex Bezae," *Revista Catalana de Teologia*, 27/1 (2002), pp. 23-42; see specifically pp. 39-40.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39. For further explorations of Gen 28/Luke 24 parallels, see Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, "Luke-Acts: The Problem of Editing a Text with a Multiple Textual Tradition," in: *Textual Research on the Psalms and Gospels. Recherches textuelles sur les psaumes et les évangiles: Papers from the Tbilisi Colloquium on the Editing and History of Biblical Manuscripts Actes du Colloque de Tbilisi, 19–20 septembre 2007*, Christian-B. Amphoux, J. Keith Elliott, Bernard Outtier, eds. Leiden—Boston, 2012, pp. 147-165; *idem*, "Where is Emmaus? Clues in the Text of Luke 24 in Codex Bezae," in: *Essays in New Testament Textual Criticism*, D. C. Parker, D. G. K. Taylor, eds. Birmingham, 1999, pp. 227-249. I owe my knowledge of the Read-Heimerdinger and Rius-Camps work on this topic to Margaret Barker, whose comment to me about Codex Bezae's allusion at Luke 24:13 to Gen 28's "Bethel" in the LXX-based form Οὐλαμμαοῦς soon led me to discover the Read-Heimerdinger and Rius-Camps essay documented in footnotes 15 and 16.

¹⁸ Jenny Read-Heimerdinger; Josep Rius-Camps, "Emmaous or Oulammaous?" p. 32.

¹⁹ H. Riesenfeld, *Jésus transfiguré: L'arrière-plan du récit évangélique de la transfiguration de Notre-Seigneur*, Copenhagen, 1947.

²⁰ Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "Sukkot, Eschatology and Zechariah 14," *Révue Biblique*, 103/2 (1996), pp. 161-195.

A. D. A. Moses reviews the doubts and deals with them convincingly.²¹ Contesting a widely held view, in an often-cited and influential 1976 article, Robert H. Stein has claimed that the transfiguration account cannot originally have been a resurrection narrative.²² However, Stein has in no way overturned James M. Robinson's and Helmut Koester's earlier (1971) following observation: "C. H. Dodd . . . has proved that the transfiguration does not follow the outline of the resurrection stories accepted as such in the circles in which our gospels were written. Yet he has not shown convincingly that the transfiguration is different in form from earlier views of resurrection appearances. . . ."²³

II GENESIS 28

Throughout Gen 28 and 32/35 the "bless"/"blessed" (ברך) trope is prominent. Nothing directly equivalent to this occurs in Matt 16, but the latter's "blessed are you" (16:17, μακάριοι/אשריך, Shem-Tob) is worth noting, for although Hebrew ברך and אשרי are distinct terms, in English "bless" and "blessed"/"fortunate" respectively, still the Hebrew pairs "blessed"/"cursed" (אור/ברך) and "blessed"/"fortunate"/"woe"/"woe to" (אוי/אשרי) semantically overlap to an appreciable degree. Gen 1:22, which contains the first instance of ברך in the Tanakh, links blessing to fertility, "And God blessed them and said, Be fruitful and multiply. . . ." Ps 72:17b-18 uses ברך and אשרי as synonyms: "May men also bless themselves (ויתברכו) by him; / May all nations call him happy (יאשרוהו). Blessed (ברוך) be the LORD God, the God of Israel. . . ." The same synonymy is found in Ps 112:1a, "Happy (אשרי) is the man that feareth the LORD," and 2b, "The generation of the upright shall be blessed (יברך)." Ps 128:1-4 offers the same paradigm. As a final example, whereas Ps 1 famously begins with "Blessed/happy (אשרי) is the man," its slightly less famous parallel in Jer 17:5-8 begins with "Blessed (ברוך) is the man": "(7) Blessed (ברוך) is the man that trusteth in the LORD, / And whose trust the LORD is. (8) For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, / And that spreadeth out its roots by the river, / And shall not see when heat cometh, / But its foliage shall be luxuriant; / And shall not be anxious in the year of drought, / Neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Gen 28:3's "a congregation (לקהל) of peoples (עמים)," rephrased in Gen 35:11 as גוי וקהל גוים, "a nation and a company of nations," is paralleled in Matt 16:18's ἐκκλησίαν μου, "my church," "my congregation," which Delitzsch's *Hebrew New Testament* renders as קהלתי. Gen 28's "stone"/"stones" (singular אבן in verses 18, 22, plural אבני in verse 11), "house of God" (בית אלהים, verses 17, 22) and "gate of heaven" (שער השמים, verse 17) all

²¹ A. D. A. Moses, *Matthew's Transfiguration Story and Jewish-Christian Controversy*, Sheffield, 1996, pp. 224-233. See also George H. van Kooten, "Why Did Paul Include an Exegesis of Moses' Shining Face (Exod 34) in 2 Cor 3?: Moses' Strength, Well-being and (Transitory) Glory, according to Philo, Josephus, Paul, and the Corinthian Sophists," in: *The Significance of Sinai Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, George J. Brooke, Hindy Najman, Loren T. Stuckenbruck, eds. Leiden—Boston, 2008, pp. 149-181. See further, David Wenham, A. D. A. Moses. "'There Are Some Standing Here. . . .' Did They Become the 'Reputed Pillars' of the Jerusalem Church? Some Reflections on Mark 9:1, Galatians 2:9 and the Transfiguration," *Novum Testamentum*, 36/2 (1994), pp. 146-163.

²² Robert H. Stein, "Is the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8) a Misplaced Resurrection-Account?" *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 95/1 (1976), pp. 79-96.

²³ James M. Robinson, Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity*, Eugene, Oregon, 1971, p. 49.

tie in with the same Matthean pericope as well. Gen 22:17, “the gate of heaven” (שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם) gives us the opposite of Matt 16:18’s “the gates of Hades,” but the latter’s positive contrast, “gate/s of heaven,” is/are implied by Matt 16:19’s “keys of the kingdom of heaven,” since keys are used to open and lock a gate. In effect, Peter controls access to the ladder that joins heaven and earth, God and humanity.

Shem-Tob’s version of Matt 16:18 is quite interesting; here is George Howard’s translation: “I say to you: you are a stone and I will build upon you my house of prayer. The gates of Gehenna will not prevail against you.”²⁴ I would change this slightly to: “And I say to you: You are Stone (אֶבֶן), and on you I will build (אֶבְנֶה) my house of prayer (בֵּית תְּפִלָּה). And the gates of Gehenna will not prevail against you.” Every detail is important here, even the two introductory conjunctive *waws* Howard leaves out. And it is of utmost importance to translate אֶבֶן here as a name, Stone, and not merely as a noun, “a stone.” The pun is between the name Stone (אֶבֶן) and the verb “build” (אֶבְנֶה), since the Greek’s ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ, “on this rock,” is replaced in Shem-Tob with עָלֶיךָ, “on you.” “You are Stone and on you I will build my house of prayer (בֵּית תְּפִלָּה)” gives us a clear allusion to Isa 56:7: “Even them will I bring to My holy mountain,/ And make them joyful in My house of prayer (בֵּית תְּפִלָּה);/ Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices/ Shall be acceptable upon Mine altar (מִזְבֵּחַ);/ For My house (בֵּית) shall be called/ A house of prayer (בֵּית תְּפִלָּה)²⁵ for all peoples (הָעַמִּים).”

In accord with rabbinic traditions, N. Wyatt suggests that Jacob’s stone is the foundation stone of the Jerusalem temple, an allusion to a protrusion of the bedrock now beneath the Dome of the Rock, from which the prophet of Islam is said to have ascended to heaven.²⁶ Jacob’s stone is the אֶבֶן שֵׁתִיָּה, the cosmic foundation stone of *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* 35.²⁷ In light of this I would suggest that the stone pillow of Gen 28 was inspired by the sight of a protrusion of the temple “foundation stone,” a protrusion that suggested to someone (perhaps a high priest) the shape of a pillow, and this in turn was crafted into a “foundation story” involving the patriarch Jacob. Also according to N. Wyatt, the “pillar” (מִצְבֵּה) of Gen 28:18, 22 is really an allusion to the Jerusalem temple’s altar, which is demonstrated by the fact that chapter 28’s מִצְבֵּה becomes מִזְבֵּחַ in the variant account in chapter 35:1, 3, 7.²⁸ Thus Isa 56:7’s מִזְבֵּחַ links the verse to Gen 28 and 35; the same Isa verse’s הָעַמִּים forms another

²⁴ George Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, Macon, Georgia, 1995, pp. 80-81.

²⁵ Famously cited in Matt 21:13 and parallels: “My house shall be called a house of prayer; but you are making it a den of robbers.” A more accurate rendering of the second part might be expressed as, “but you are making it a den of revolutionaries.” In my view this may be an allusion in part to Josephus’ accounts in *The Jewish War* of the Sicarii/Zealot occupations of the temple during the Jewish War. Although the gospels generally depict the revolutionaries in a pejorative light, which agrees with Josephus’ own tone on the matter, nevertheless, there are abundant traces in the gospels of an earlier more positive posture towards subversive activity, on which see Fernando Bermejo-Rubio, “Jesus and the Anti-Roman Resistance: A Reassessment of the Arguments,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 12 (2014), pp. 1-105; idem, “Jesus as a Seditionist: The Intertwining of Religion and Politics in his Teaching and Deeds,” in Zev Garber ed., *Teaching the Historical Jesus: Issues and Exegesis*, London—New York, 2015, pp. 232-43.

²⁶ N. Wyatt, “Where Did Jacob Dream His Dream?” p. 5.

²⁷ Reference in Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis*, Leiden—Boston, 2013, p. 292.

²⁸ N. Wyatt, “Where Did Jacob Dream His Dream?” p. 3. Although the Gen text presents the relevant part of the story in chapter 35 as a separate, later event from the overlapping one in chapter 28, they are obviously variant accounts of the same story.

link to Gen 28:3's promise to Jacob that he will become "a congregation (לְקַהֵּל) of peoples (עַמִּים)," which in turn indirectly links the Isa verse to Matt 16:18's "church"/"congregation."

Gen 28:22's "and this stone," וְהָאֶבֶן הַזֹּאת, is of especial interest. Delitzsch renders Matt 16:18's τὰς πέτραις, "this rock," as הַסֵּלַע הַזֶּה. In using סֵלַע, "rock" in the sense of "crag," "cliff," we lose any parallel to the word-play between Πέτρος and πέτρα. However, סֵלַע, pl. סֵלָעִים, is decidedly of interest in this case because it brings to mind Gen 28:12's "ladder," סֵלַם.²⁹ Whatever Hebrew term we might choose to render πέτρα in this instance is not a chief concern, since whatever we choose it would be basically synonymous with Gen 28:22's אֶבֶן. Equally important in Delitzsch's rendering is the element זֶה, "this," since Delitzsch's -עַל- הַזֶּה, "and upon this rock," produces a double parallelism with Gen 28:22's וְהָאֶבֶן הַזֹּאת, "and this stone." As Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling document, rabbinic tradition sees in Gen 28:17's three instances of זֶה cryptic allusions to the building, destruction and rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple:

An early and widely transmitted tradition of particular importance is the building, destruction and rebuilding of the Temple based on Gen 28:17. This tradition is first found in connection with Genesis 28 in Sifre Deut 352. . . .

Thus you find concerning Jacob that he saw it built, and he saw it destroyed, and he saw it rebuilt, as it is said, *And he was afraid, and he said, "How awesome is this place—behold that it was built—this is none—behold that it was destroyed—other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven"* (Gen 28:17)—behold that it will be rebuilt and ornamented in the future.

In this interpretation, the positive reference to the existence of 'this (זֶה) place' in Gen 28:17 indicates the building of the Temple. The destruction of the Temple is indicated by the negative 'this is none' (אֵין זֶה), and the fact that the biblical verse once again refers to the positive 'and this is (וְזֶה) the gate of heaven' indicates the future rebuilding.³⁰

Just as the destruction of the temple in 70 CE inspired the rabbinic traditions that agree with Sifre Deut 352,³¹ so it is possible that Matt 16 has been inspired by the same destruction. The evidence assembled by Grypeou and Spurling makes possible the suggestion

²⁹ N. Wyatt compares Gen 28's ladder and stone to the tree and stone of Text KTU 1.3 iii 20–31 of the Ugarit Baal Cycle, where we read of "a word of tree and whisper of stone" at the place of divine revelation where heaven and earth meet. See N. Wyatt, "Where Did Jacob Have His Dream?" p. 6. While of course Jacob's ladder was not made of wood (which nevertheless did not prevent the church fathers from comparing it with Jesus' wooden cross), it is worth pointing out that the pair of wood and stone continued throughout the ages. One example is the *Gos. Thom.* logion 77: "I am the light above all. I am the all. The all came forth from me, and the all extended to me. Split a piece of wood, I am there; lift up the stone, and there you will find me." H. G. Lunt writes of the *Lad. Jac.*: "Here and below surely *prosōpon* in the sense of 'bust' or 'portrait.' We retain the traditional 'ladder,' although surely this is rather a solid staircase, lined with statues, as on a ziggurat. (Cf. E. A. Speiser's comment on Gen 28:12 in his *Genesis* (The Anchor Bible; Garden City, N.Y., 1964] p. 218)." H. G. Lunt in Charlesworth, *OTP* 2, p. 407. Wyatt advances a similar interpretation; N. Wyatt, "Where Did Jacob Dream His Dream?" p. 6.

³⁰ Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis*, pp. 293-294.

³¹ See *ibid.*, p. 295.

that Matt 16:18 is speaking of the eschatological temple, not of an historical “church,” much less of the founding of a “new religion.” Jesus promises to (re)build the temple, the house of prayer for the congregation of the nations, the people descended from Jacob as promised in Gen 28:3. The promise to build a new temple by no means necessarily implies a denigration of the second temple; on the contrary, it may imply a hope for its rebuilding between the period after 70 CE and up to and including during the Bar Kokhba Revolt in the 130s. In fact, in light of traditions that identify Jacob’s stone with the messiah,³² one might even suspect that the Shimon Peter of Matt 16 is somehow a messianic figure, just as was Shimon bar Kokhba, “Shimon the Star,” who also had a (posthumous) name change from Shimon bar Koseba (“Shimon of Koseba”) to Shimon bar Kosiba, “Shimon the Liar.”

The *Apoc. Pet.* merges traditions relating to the transfiguration with the famous logion about the destruction and rebuilding of the temple in three days, which in turn leaves a trace in 2 Cor 5:1-4, which forms the conclusion to Paul’s allusions to the transfiguration story that begin in 2 Cor 2:14, continues throughout chapter 3, then further in 4:3-6. The *Apoc. Pet.* has Jesus speak at the transfiguration of “a tabernacle not made with men’s hands, which my heavenly Father hath made for me.”³³ Cf. Mark 14:58: “I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands” (cf. John 2:19; Matt 26:6; *Gos. Thom.* 77). Related to these sayings is 2 Cor 5:1, which comes soon after Paul’s allusions to the transfiguration story in 2 Cor 2-4: “For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

Shem-Tob’s Hebrew version adds to Matt 17:3: “Peter and his companions were asleep. Asleep but not asleep; awake but not awake. They saw his body and the two men with him.”³⁴ This is congruent with the version of the transfiguration in Luke 9:32: “Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.” Shem-Tob’s “Asleep but not asleep; awake but not awake” agrees with the language of *bTa’anit* 12b, where R. Ashi explains that dozing is defined as “A sleep that is not sleep and a wakefulness that is not wakefulness.” The text explains that dozing at first may impede memory of what one is being told, but later the dozing person is able to recall what was said. Luke’s importation of the sleep trope (absent from Mark and Greek Matthew) into the transfiguration story creates not only a link with the Gethsemane story, but also a possible link with Jacob’s sleep and dream of Gen 28.

According to Gen 28:12, Jacob’s dream ladder, סלם, was set up, מִזֵּב, which forms an allusion to verse 18, ’s and 22’s מַצֵּבָה (a מַצֵּבָה is specifically a stone pillar) that Jacob set up (שָׁמַת/וִישָׁם), suggesting a correspondence of some kind between the dream ladder and the pillar. In the cognate text of Gen 35:7 Jacob “built [there] an altar,” וִיבִן שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ, the verb בָּן, “build,” parallels the same verb in Matt 16:18, “I will build,” אֶבְנֶה in Shem-Tob and Delitzsch. In Gen 35:14, Jacob sets up, וַיִּצֵּב, the pillar, מַצֵּבָה. The setting up of the dream ladder, the setting up of the pillar, and the building of the altar all arguably correspond with each other to various degrees, and the parallel in Matt 16 is the congregation/house that Jesus builds on Rock/Stone. The erection of the church=temple parallels Jacob’s celestial ladder.

Gen 28:18’s and 22’s “pillar” (מַצֵּבָה) can be correlated with Matt 16:28, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom,” which introduces the transfiguration story. (As I will discuss later, Wis 10:10 calls the ladder Jacob saw “the kingdom of God”). Gal 2:9 calls James, Peter and

³² See *ibid.*, pp. 298-300.

³³ M. R. James translation.

³⁴ For the Hebrew text and English translation, see George Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, pp. 82-83.

John “pillars,” which in Semitic languages would literally be “standing ones,” as in Matt 16:28. David Wenham and A. D. A. Moses rightly connect this Matthean verse and its Markan and Lukan parallels to the use of the term “pillars” to describe James, Peter and John in Gal 2; the term “pillar” in Aramaic would be literally “a standing one.”³⁵ In short, the Jerusalem triumvirate³⁶ were called “pillars” as a reference to their being among those who were “standing here” (Matt 16:28; cf. the emphasis in Gen 28, 32/35 on place, “where,” “there”) to witness the transfiguration. Given the presence of both stone and pillar in Gen 28, we can therefore reconstruct another tradition that links together the stories of Peter the Rock’s/Stone’s confession and the Jerusalem three’s title of “pillars.”

In Gal the three are James, Peter (Cephas) and John, with the note that James is the Lord’s brother, a triadic order reflected in the New Testament canon, which contains the epistles of James, Peter and John, in that order. In the synoptic gospels (written decades after Gal) this triad is re-ordered and becomes Peter, James and John, with the note that the last two are brothers. A further oddity in Luke 22:8 omits James, “So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, ‘Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it,’” and Acts 1:13 puts James last, “Peter, and John, and James.” Luke 22:8’s parallel in Mark 14:13 speaks of “two of his disciples”; Matt 26:17, 19 simply has “the disciples”; the Gospel of John altogether omits the two disciples incident. We read of “Peter and John” without any mention of James in Acts 3:1,3,11; 4:1,13,19; 8:14,17,25. Similar to Luke 22:8 is Acts 8:14: “they sent Peter and John to them.” Acts 12:2 relates the death of “James, the brother of John.” Then James (the brother of Jesus) appears in Acts 12:17, “James and the believers,” and next we read of the same “James” in 15:13 and 21:17, but nowhere does Acts ever mention that this James is Jesus’ brother. This can hardly be unintentional or an oversight. It seems rooted in the desire to conceal or at least mute James’ exalted stature as Jesus’ brother. Similar motives seem responsible for the synoptics’ apparent transformation of James the brother of Jesus, a witness of the transfiguration, into James the brother of John, which in effect deprives James the Righteous of the honour of having witnessed the transfiguration.³⁷

I would not call the synoptics’ apparent turning of James the Righteous into James ben Zebedee a “falsehood.”³⁸ We are dealing here with transformations of earlier traditions

³⁵ David Wenham and A. D. A. Moses, “‘There Are Some Standing Here. . . .’ Did They Become the ‘Reputed Pillars’ of the Jerusalem Church? Some Reflections on Mark 9:1, Galatians 2:9 and the Transfiguration,” pp. 146-163.

³⁶ Three, probably patterned after the traditional three pillars Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. James would correspond to the patriarch Jacob, and Peter would correspond with Abraham (as I document below, Abraham traditions are applied to Peter in Matt 16). This would leave Isaac and John, but I am not aware of any similarities between these two that might justify associating them with each other.

³⁷ Note that the *Gos. Thom.* 12’s logion about James the Righteous is followed immediately by logion 13, the Thomasine version of Peter’s confession and the transfiguration. When logion 12 is read in the light of its synoptic parallels (Matt 20:20ff. and parallels), one can recognize that the latter have once again transformed Jesus’ brother James the Righteous into James the brother of John.

³⁸ Here I am responding to the anonymous *Scrinium* reviewer’s following comment: “this contention seems to be in contradiction with other passages of the Gospels (Mk 3:21 and Mt 12:46 = Mk 3:31). It seems very difficult to argue that these passages are all falsehoods.” I would respond regarding Mk 3:21 and Matt 12:46 = Mk 3:31, see John Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition*, Minneapolis, 1999, pp. 11-19. Painter presents convincing argumentation clarifying that these Marcan and Matthean passages (like John 7:1-

motivated by common names that link the various stories. This reflects traditional praxis; cf. Genesis' bifurcation of an originally single Enoch into two separate evil (Gen 4:17-18) and righteous (Gen 5:18-24) Enochs.³⁹ Similarly, we need see no falsehood in Matt 23:35's (and *Tg. Lam.* 2:20's) transformation of Zechariah ben Yehodiah of 2 Chron 24:20-21 into Zechariah ben Berachiah (ben Iddo) of Zech 1:1, Ezra 5:1.⁴⁰ Consider also the fusion of the apostle and the evangelist Philip in early Christian sources.

Bereshit Rabbah Parashah LXVII on chapter 28:11's מקום states: "And what does it mean, 'And he lighted upon the place'? He prayed in the sanctuary. According to Joshua ben Levi the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob performed three prayers: Abraham the morning prayer, as in, 'And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD' [Gen 19:27], where the word 'stand' (עמד) means nothing other than 'pray' (תפלה)."⁴¹ The Parashah then goes on to list various traditions about the stone Jacob used as a pillow. These include a teaching that the stone was really twelve stones standing for the twelve tribes. Alternatively, there were three stones, because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob recognized that God would unite his name with their own names. The same Parashah on verse 12 reads: "And behold, a ladder,' that is, stairs, 'was set up upon the earth,' that is, the altar which was to be made out of earth [Exod 20:24], whose top reached to heaven, which were the sacrifices whose fragrance rises to heaven, and the angels of God, that is, the high priests, who ascended and descended upon the stairs." Another interpretation given is that the ladder alludes to Sinai, since the two words have the same gematria value. One of the traditions given in Parashah LXVIII on verse 28 states: "'You have fought with God and men and have prevailed,' that is, you have fought with the Upper and the Lower," or "you have fought with God whose image is engraved above." Cf. Matt 16:19's "earth" and "heaven" after 16:18's "will not prevail."

III GENESIS 32/35

Gen 32:25, "Jacob was left alone"; cf. Matt 17:7 and parallels where Moses, Elijah vanish, "And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone." Gen 32:26, "he prevailed not against him"; cf. Matt 16:18, "shall not prevail against it" (Shem-Tob, "against you").⁴² As for Matt 16:17's trope of divine revelation, "For flesh and blood has not

10) actually do not present the family of Jesus in an unduly negative light, as is often unjustifiably assumed in the commentaries, usually based on patristic sources.

³⁹ Later kabbalists seem to have sensed this aspect of Gen 4-5, arguing that Enoch alternated between being both righteous and unrighteous. Cf. Moshe Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism*, London—New York, 2007, pp. 645-70.

⁴⁰ Cf. Herbert W. Basser with Marsha B. Cohen, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions: A Relevance-based Commentary*, Leiden—Boston, 2015, pp. 616-617.

⁴¹ My translation from the Hebrew in J. Theodor, C. H. Albeck, *Bereshit Rabba mit kritischem Apparat und Kommentar: Parascha XLVIII-LXXXVI*, Berlin, 1927.

⁴² The difference between the Greek version's "it" and the Hebrew version's "you" could reflect a similar ambiguity we encounter with the pronoun in Gen 28:12's בו, which can mean either that the angels were ascending and descending upon "it," that is, the ladder, or upon "him," that is, Jacob. It is worth pointing out that whereas in John 1:51 the angels will ascend and descend on the Son of man, all other uses of "ascend" in John's gospel involve either the Son of man ascending (3:13; 6:62) or Jesus ascending (20:17). This suggests that John 1:51's reference to Jacob's ladder alludes to Jesus' own angelic-like ascent to heaven. Relevant is the following: "The story of Jacob's dream likewise appears to be alluded to in the text of Mark 16.3 in the Old Latin MS k, where mention is made of angels moving up and down

revealed (Shem-Tob, גלה) this to you, but my Father in heaven,” this is paralleled in Gen 35:7, “And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el, because there God was revealed (נגלו ; variant reading נגלה) unto him.”

J. Massingberd-Ford documents how the portrait of Peter the Rock in Matt 16 is based upon Jewish traditions about Abraham as the Rock in the sense of the cosmic and temple foundation stone,⁴³ who received a freely given divine revelation concerning monotheism in contrast to the polytheism of his father who had mistaken the sun, moon and stars for the Creator. This forms the basis of Matt 16’s divine revelation not taught by “flesh and blood,” but vouchsafed by “my Father in heaven” directly to Peter.⁴⁴ The *Lad. Jac.* contains a prayer sung by Jacob (based on the *Qedusha*)⁴⁵ in which he refers to the revelation that the sun, moon and stars are not to be confused with the Creator. This is the same constellation of tropes associated with Abraham’s reception of revelation concerning monotheism in the traditions discussed by Massingberd-Ford. Thus we can see that Matt 16 may be presenting Peter the Rock as a type of Jacob as well as of Abraham.

Matt 16 is cognate to Gal 1: “(11) For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; (12) for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. [cf. v. 16, ‘to reveal his Son to me’] 13 You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it.” Here we see parallels not only to Matt 16:17’s revelation not by flesh and blood but from God, Matt 16:16’s “Christ,” but also to Matt 16:18’s “church” which cannot be destroyed, since the gates of hell will not prevail against it (or against its foundation stone, as in Shem-Tob’s version). Gal 1:18 then mentions Cephas (= Petros), and 1:19 refers to James, the brother of the Lord. Gal 2:9 speaks of “James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars.” Paul’s confrontation with Peter in 2:11ff. mirrors Jesus’ confrontation with Peter in Matt 16:22-23. Gal 2:18, “But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down,” agrees with Matt 16:18’s “build,” which itself alludes to the tradition about tearing down and rebuilding the temple (Mark 14:58 and parallels).

Comparing them to Peter’s keys in Matt 16:19, Massingberd-Ford lists various “keys” of rabbinic tradition. According to *Bereshit Rabbah* Parashah 73, 4-5, God possesses three keys, all associated in some way with death and resurrection: The key of burial, the key of rain, and the key of the womb. These same three keys are listed in *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 7,6 as the key of resurrection, the key of the barren woman, and the key of rain.⁴⁶ Taking my Hebrew copy of *Bereshit Rabbah* off the shelf I found that among the references to these keys are also Parashah 77 on Gen 32:24, which compares Jacob being left alone to the divine unity first by stating, “There is none like unto God, and who is like unto God, O Jeshurun,”

between heaven and earth at the point when the stone is moved from the tomb of Jesus.”

Jenny Read-Heimerdinger; Josep Rius-Camps, “Emmaous or Oulammaous? Luke’s Use of the Jewish Scriptures in the Text of Luke 24 in Codex Bezae,” p. 40.

⁴³ On the role of the cosmic foundation stone in relation to Matt 16, see the illuminating essay by Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, “The Revelation of the Sacral Son of Man: The Genre, History of Religions Context and the Meaning of the Transfiguration,” pp. 247-298.

⁴⁴ J. Massingberd Ford, “‘Thou art Abraham and upon this Rock . . .,’” pp. 289-301.

⁴⁵ The prayer contains the divine name *il avir*, which as H. G. Lunt notes is “Heb. ’Ēl ’ābîr, ‘LORD-Bull.’” Lunt in Charlesworth, *OTP* 2, p. 408. On Bull-El (*šr ’l*) in an emended rendering of Hosea 8:6, see N. Wyatt, “Where Did Jacob Dream His Dream?” p. 2. These two instances of this divine name take on significance in view of Hos 12’s reference to the story in Gen 28, 32/35.

⁴⁶ See J. Massingberd Ford, “‘Thou art Abraham and upon this Rock . . .,’” p. 293.

alluding to Deut 33:26, “There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun.”⁴⁷ The question is answered that first Elijah and Elisha, then Jacob are in fact like God: “God revives the dead; Elijah did that, too. God withholds the rain; Elijah did that, too. . . . Furthermore, God revives the dead; Elisha did that, too. God considers the infertile; Elisha did that, too. . . . Who is like God, O Jeshurun? The patriarch Israel. What does God write of him? ‘The Lord alone is exalted.’ But also, ‘Jacob remained alone.’”⁴⁸ Here we have references to the keys of the resurrection, the keys of rain, and the keys of conception. Rabbinic tradition holds that the eschatological Elijah will resurrect the dead. These traditions are of obvious relevance to Matt 16, for not only are the keys enumerated by Ford applicable to Peter, but in *Bereshit Rabbah* on chapter 32 the same domains controlled by these keys are applied to Elijah and Jacob. Not only is one of the three witnesses to the transfiguration named Jacob, but Elijah appears there, and then immediately thereafter the disciples ask Jesus in Matt 17:10-11: “‘Why, then, do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ He replied, ‘Elijah is indeed coming and will restore all things. . . .’”

Next, let us consider Gen 28:16: “And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said: ‘Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.’” 17: “And he was afraid, and said: ‘How full of awe is this place!’” With this, cf. Mark 9:5: “Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’” 6: “He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.” Cf. further Matt 17:4, “Lord, it is good for us to be here,” and 17:6, “they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear.”

In the *Pr. Jos.*, Jacob says he descended to tabernacle on earth. This is usually (rightly) taken as a parallel to John 1:14, a Johannine allusion to the transfiguration wherein the talk of tabernacling/dwelling creates a link with the talk of tabernacles (Hebrew, *sukkot*) in the transfiguration story. Curiously the place-name Peniel/Penuel (which in later tradition becomes the angel name Phanuel) occurs together with the place-name Sukkot in Judges 8.8ff. In any case, as just mentioned, John 1:14’s “and we have seen his glory” is an allusion to the transfiguration. Curiously, the John 1:51 allusion to Jacob’s ladder is closely preceded in 1:42 by “He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas’ (which is translated Peter),” which is the Johannine version of Matt 16’s Simon receiving the new name Rock. The close proximity between John 1:49 and 1:51 can be viewed as evidence for a traditional link discerned between the stories of Peter’s confession and Jacob’s ladder, with the latter informing the transfiguration story.

Charles Häberl reminded me of a passage in the *Ginza Rba* 2,142 which speaks of a ladder of Christ. “Next he made (*abid*) a ladder (*sumbilita*) reaching from earth to heaven, and he ascends and descends (*usaliq unahit*), floating between heaven and earth, and he says to you: ‘Behold, I have come from on high; I am your Lord.’ But do not believe him, because the ladder of Christ (*sumbilita d-mšiha*) is made (‘*bida*) upon deception, magic and deceit.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ “Who is like?” cf. *Gos. Thom.* logion 13’s question about “whom am I like,” the Thomasine parallel to Matthew’s “Who is the Son of man?”

⁴⁸ My translation from the Hebrew in J. Theodor, C. H. Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba mit kritischem Apparat und Kommentar: Parascha XLVIII-LXXXVI*, Berlin, 1927.

⁴⁹ My translation from the Mandaic text in Matthias Norberg, *Codex Nasaræus, liber adami appellatus*, London, 1815-1816) and Heinrich Petermann, *Sidra Rabba: Thesaurus sive Liber Magnus vulga “Liber Adami” appellatus opus Mandaeorum summi ponderis*, Leipzig, 1867. My impression of the *Ginza Rba* passage is that it may presuppose/reflect an angelic Christology (rejected by Mandaeans of course), since Jesus goes up and down the ladder, whereas in the Jewish traditions of the celestial ladder the angels perform this action. Angelic Christology is more dominant than many Christians themselves realize. One thinks of St.

Re-examining the text I found that it then continues with a denunciation of Christ's claim to be "God the Saviour" (*ana hu alaha paruqa*) on the basis of his ability to eclipse the sun's light, when in reality he is only darkening the eyes, not the sun. This is intriguing, since Papyrus Berolinensis 11710's version of John 1's Nathaniel tradition has Jesus direct him to "walk in the sun."⁵⁰ Also, the Mandaean text would seem to presuppose an association between Genesis' tower of Babel and Jacob's ladder, portraying Christ's erection of his own ladder reaching to the skies as implying a similar arrogance exhibited in the tower of Babel's piercing heaven. As Häberl comments, "The word in Mandaic for 'ladder' is *sumbilta*, allegedly from Akkadian *similtu*, (maybe) a cognate of Hebrew *sullam*." On Gen 28:12, N. Wyatt writes: "The term *sullām* in v. 12 (Akk. *similtu*) is perhaps derived from the architectural form of Mesopotamian ziggurats."⁵¹ A connection between the tower of Babel and the Mandaean ladder of Christ modelled on Jacob's ladder would support Wyatt's argument that Jacob's talk of "the gate of heaven," *ša'ar haššāmayim*, contains an allusion to Babel (*bābēl*, literally, 'gate of god'), and to the story of its (in)famous tower.⁵²

John transfers Peter's confession "You are the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matt 16:16) to Nathaniel in John 1:49, which imports the name "Israel" into the scene: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" There is more than one link between this Johannine passage and Luke's version of the transfiguration. First, John 1:14's "and we have seen his glory" brings to mind Luke 9:31, which says of Moses and Elijah, "They appeared in glory," and 9:32, "they saw his glory (Shem-Tob, 'his body,' גופו) and the two men who stood with him." Second, John 1:51's allusion to Jacob's dream during sleep is congruent with Luke 9:32: "Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him." Shem-Tob's interpretation of this as a reference to a hypnagogic or hypnopompic state of dozing makes eminent psychological sense, because it is precisely in such transition states that visionary experiences are wont to occur.

John 1 puts into Nathaniel's mouth the equivalent of the synoptic Peter's confession, but later in John 6 we find the Johannine version of Peter's confession ascribed to him: "(68)

Francis of Assisi's vision of Jesus as a six-winged seraph. That may have something to do with influence from the Cathars' angelic Christology, whose beliefs/praxis about poverty also influenced Francis, indirectly no doubt. Francis was not a Cathar himself, but certainly he could have been easily influenced by their ideas which were in the intellectual air of the time. Häberl notes that Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Gen 28 "suggests a tradition, circulating in the West, at least, that the reason angels first ascended the ladder was that they were trapped on Earth for revealing secrets." It would seem, then, that the Mandaean ladder of Christ passage turns Jesus into a *fallen* angel.

⁵⁰ In Papyrus Berolinensis 11710 John the Baptizer's statements about Jesus are transferred to Nathaniel. See J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, Oxford—NY, 1993, p. 43. Can we compare this with Gen 32:31?: "The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip."

⁵¹ N. Wyatt, "Where Did Jacob Dream His Dream?" p. 6.

⁵² Ibid., p. 8. As Wyatt here remarks that the text basically depicts Babylon as "the gate of heaven," which was "a theological breakthrough of astonishing courage and profundity." He develops this point in pp. 9-10, where he notes that Jacob has dreamed at once of both Jerusalem and Babylon, but really more so of Babylon "with *its* stairway to heaven," implying "that even in . . . Babylon" God is present.

Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom can we go?’⁵³ You have the words of eternal life. (69) We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

John 1:49’s “you are the Son of God” is inspired in part by the synoptic versions of Peter’s confession. The evolution of the phraseology can be traced as follows. Mark 8:29 has simply, “You are the Messiah.” Then at the transfiguration we read in Mark 9:7, “‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’” Matt 16:16 has added “the Son of the living God” to Mark’s “You are the Messiah” by importing the sonhood trope from the transfiguration. Next, John 1:49’s “you are the Son of God” reflects the influence of Matt 16:16’s “you are . . . the Son of the living God.” Lastly,⁵⁴ Luke 9:20’s “The Messiah of God” reflects a shortening of Matt 16:16’s “the Messiah, the Son of the living God” under the mutual impact of John 1:49’s terse “the Son of God.”

Herbert W. Basser cites the Targum in his commentary on Matthew’s version of the transfiguration: “The *Targum to Isaiah* 42:1, which is the source of the declaration, relates: ‘This is my servant the Messiah, I draw him close, my chosen with whom I (Targum: *Memra*) am well pleased. I set my holy spirit upon him; he shall reveal laws to the nations.’”⁵⁵ Here the Targum’s “the Messiah” creates a link between Peter’s confession, “You are the Messiah,” and the declaration from the cloud at the transfiguration. It is well known that Mark 9:7’s and Matt 17:5’s “my Son, the Beloved” becomes in Luke 9:35 “my Son, my Chosen.” It is correct that this has been done on the basis of Luke recognizing that Mark 9:7’s “my Son, the Beloved,” and Matt 17:5’s “my Son, the Beloved, with him I am well pleased,” both allude to Isa 42:1, “Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth.” However, Luke 9:35 omits Matthew’s addition (from Isa 42:1) “with him I am well pleased.” This suggests that Isa 42:1 was not Luke 9:35’s sole influence for “my Chosen.” The other influence was *I En* 46:3: “This is the Son of Man . . . , for the Lord of Spirits has chosen him, and his lot has prevailed through truth in the presence of the Lord of Spirits forever.”⁵⁶ (Cf. *I En* 45: “I will cause My Elect One to dwell among them”). This verse’s “prevailed” connects the passage also to Matt 16:18’s “prevail.” Moreover, *I En* 46:1’s concentration on the Son of man’s face links the passage to the transfiguration: “And his head was like wool, /And with him was another whose countenance had the appearance of a man, /And his face was full of

⁵³ Cf. Genesis 28:15, “whithersoever thou goest,” and *Gos. Thom.* logion 12, “At whatever the place you are, go to James. . . .”

⁵⁴ For evidence of Lukan dependence on John, see Barbara Shellard, “The Relationship of Luke and John: A Fresh Look At an Old Problem,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, 46/1 (1995), pp. 70-98. However, I would argue that the elements in our current version of Luke that depend on John are the result of secondary cross-contamination involving both texts. That is, although originally Luke predated John, interpolations have crept into Luke that are post-John. Similarly, interpolations (based on Luke, for example) have crept into John that predate John. We can see similar cross-contamination in the scribal transmission of 2 Pet and Jude as well, which renders the unqualified claim that 2 Peter copied Jude insufficient. We simply do not have the original versions of either text, but rather mixed types. Cf. F. Lapham, *Peter: The Myth, the Man and the Writings. A Study of Early Petrine Text and Tradition*, London—New York, 2003, pp. 152-158. The same scenario applies to all four canonical gospels, so that although Mark is the earliest gospel, our current Mark has post-Markan additions based on later gospels; cf. Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development*, Philadelphia, 1990.

⁵⁵ Herbert W. Basser with Marsha B. Cohen, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions: A Relevance-based Commentary*, Leiden—Boston, 2015, p. 438.

⁵⁶ George Nickelsburg translation.

graciousness, like one of the angels.”⁵⁷ This is significant because *I En* 46:1-3 additionally exhibits parallels to the story of Peter’s confession, notably in 46:2’s question concerning “that Son of Man, who he was. . . .” The Enochic parallels to the accounts of Peter’s confession and the transfiguration in Matthew and Luke are important enough, but especially telling is *I En* 46:1’s “full of graciousness” or “full of grace,” which connects the passage with John 1:14’s allusion to the transfiguration: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” Lastly, we should not overlook that the nearby *I En* 49:4 rephrases Isa 42:1 as “For he is the Elect One before the Lord of spirits according to his good pleasure.”

Immediately after John 6’s version of Peter’s confession, the text continues: “(70) Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.’ (71) He was speaking of Judas son of Simon Iscariot. . . .” Amazingly, John 6:69, “*We* have come to believe and *know that you are the Holy One of God*,” is imported from Mark 1:24, where a demon (who refers to itself as “us” twice in the verse, cf. John 6:69’s somewhat strange “We” instead of “I” in the mouth of Peter) calls Jesus “the Holy One of God”: “I *know who you are, the Holy One of God*.” It is consequently not a coincidence that John 6:69’s “Holy One of God” is followed in 6:70 by “a devil.” This “devil” of John 6:70 seems to have been inspired not only by Mark 1:24, but also by Matthew 16:23’s application to Simon Peter of the term Satan (in the sense of “opponent”) in precisely the Matthean pericope containing Peter’s confession of Jesus as “the son of the living God,” which John 6:69 rewords as “the Holy One of God.” John 6:70-71 then transfers to Judas Iscariot Matthew 16’s charge of being Satan, rewording it as “a devil.” The version of this in the *Apoc. Pet.* has Jesus rebuke Peter: “Satan maketh war against thee, and hath veiled thine understanding; and the good things of this world prevail against thee. Thine eyes therefore must be opened and thine ears unstopped that thou mayest see a tabernacle not made with men’s hands, which my heavenly Father hath made for me and for the elect. And we beheld it and were full of gladness.”⁵⁸ The language of “prevail against thee” connects this passage with Matt 16:18, “and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it,” or “against you” as in the Shem-Tob version. Interestingly, there is another use of the terminology of “prevailing against” in the *Apoc. Pet.*’s transfiguration account, where we read of Moses’ and Elijah’s shining clothing, “and there is nothing which prevails against them in this world.”⁵⁹

The *Apoc. Pet.*’s inclusion of “hath veiled thine understanding” in the transfiguration account suggests a link was already made between Matt 16:23 (which is really an integral part of the story of Peter’s confession) and the transfiguration story. In a passage where Paul alludes to the transfiguration story we encounter the same trope of the veiled mind.⁶⁰ In 2 Cor 3:15 Paul attacks the Jewish followers of Jesus who do not accept his (Paul’s) particular doctrine of Christ: “Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds.” Paul’s allusions to the transfiguration continue in 2 Cor 4:3-6 (“veiled,” “light,” “glory,” “the face of Jesus Christ”) and 5:1-4 (“tent”). Not only that, but 2 Cor 2:17’s “*standing* in his presence” introduces chapter 3’s allusions to the transfiguration. The trope of “standing” similarly introduces all the synoptic accounts of the transfiguration (Matt 16:28,

⁵⁷ Matthew Black translation.

⁵⁸ M. R. James translation.

⁵⁹ Dennis D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened: A Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter*, Atlanta, Georgia, 1988, p. 234.

⁶⁰ Interestingly, Codex Bezae at Luke 24:32 says the two disciple’s hearts were “veiled,” κεκαλυμμένη, in contrast to the standard reading “burning,” καιομένη. See Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, “Luke-Acts: The Problem of Editing a Text with a Multiple Textual Tradition,” p. 157.

Mark 9:1, Luke 9:27, “there are some standing here”). Moreover, 2 Cor 2:14-16’s emphasis on “fragrance” and “aroma” overlaps with the same tropes involving the fragrances of paradise that figure so prominently in the *Apoc. Pet.*’s transfiguration account. There is really no convincing reason to suspect that the *Apoc. Pet.* is based on 2 Cor 2-5. Much more satisfying and natural would be the thesis that both the Petrine and Pauline texts independently of each other reflect and preserve early traditions on the transfiguration.

To return to John’s gospel, John 12:20ff. parallels synoptic elements immediately following Peter’s confession (John 12:24-26; cf. Matt 16:24-26), the transfiguration (John 12:28ff.) and the Gethsemane story (John 12:27). Then John 12:33-34 returns to allusions to Peter’s confession, amazingly in 12:34 transferring to the spiritually blind “crowd” parallels to Peter’s protests in Matt 16:22 against Jesus’ prophecy of his impending death in Matt 16:21. John 12:34 also Peter’s word “messiah” (Christ) in Matt 16:16, and even Jesus’ question “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” is paralleled in the shortened form “Who is this Son of Man?” (a simultaneous allusion to *1 En* 46:2, where Enoch asks of “that Son of man, who he was”): “(33) He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. (34) The crowd answered him, ‘We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?’”

Earlier, the already mentioned John 12:23’s “the Son of Man” and “glorified” parallel Matt 16:27, “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father.” John 12:27-28 then merges the transfiguration and Gethsemane stories by transforming the transfiguration’s divine voice into a response to Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer: “(27) ‘Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say — Father, save me from this hour? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. (28) Father, glorify your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.’”

Here John has recognized that Matthew has created Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer out of the earlier Our Father, and John decides to rephrase Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer to make it more explicitly agree with the Our Father. John 12:27’s “Father, save me from this hour” echoes Matt 6:13, “And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.” John 12:28’s “Father, glorify your name” is of course based on Matt 6:9, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”⁶¹

The Pepsys Harmony 57.25-27 §61 similarly seems to mix elements of the transfiguration, Gethsemane and resurrection stories: ‘Sir, it is goode pat we duellen here. 3if it be 3oure wille, do we so, sir, pre dayes felle: on to 3ou, anopere to Moyses, and pe pridde day to Hely.’⁶² Margery Goates comments: “Obviously a mistranslation. . . . *dayes felle* is a puzzle,” and wonders whether *dayes felle* is an error for OF. **daissel*, on the basis of F. *dais*, “canopy.”⁶³ The proposal is unsatisfactory for rendering *tabernacula*. The term *dayes* would literally mean “days,” while *felle* usually means “cruel.” In 1.12 the term *fulle*, “fully,” occurs, which renders the “fullness” of John 1:16. Could *felle* be an error for *fulle*? The sense might then be: “Lord, it is good that we dwell here. If it be your will, do we so, Lord, three days fully,” that is, “let us dwell here three days fully.” If the garbled text allows this meaning, then the three tabernacles, physical dwellings, have been transformed into a verb (“to dwell”) involving three days’ duration. This might entail each day spent dwelling there would be done out of honour for Jesus, Moses and Elijah respectively. “If it be your will” connects the narrative to the Gethsemane story, where the same allusion to the *Pater Noster*

⁶¹ The anonymous *Scrinium* reviewer was not convinced that John in these instances reflects knowledge of the synoptic parallels. I leave it to readers to make up their own minds on the issue.

⁶² Margery Goates, *The Pepsysian Gospel Harmony*, London, 1922, p. 57.

⁶³ Margery Goates, *The Pepsysian Gospel Harmony*, p. 128.

occurs. The “three days” trope connects the passage to the theme of the resurrection, in agreement with Matt 16:21, “and on the third day be raised.” Grypeou and Spurling write of the rabbinic interpretation that sees Jacob’s stone as in actuality twelve stones: “PRE 35 presents a development of this tradition and teaches that the twelve stones were the stones of the altar upon which Isaac had been bound. . . .”⁶⁴ This can be correlated with Matt 16’s prophecy, following the talk of the Rock, concerning Jesus’ impending death, given that early tradition sees the Aqedah as a prophetic foreshadowing of Jesus’ crucifixion.

The *Ap. Jas.*⁶⁵ also mixes traditions from Peter’s confession, the rebuke, the transfiguration and Gethsemane. In 3-4 we read, “Then Peter replied, ‘Lo, three times you have told us, ‘Become full,’” which brings to mind the number three in the Gethsemane story (“three” also figures in the transfiguration, as well as the Thomasine version in logion 13). This is followed in 4 with talk of the spirit and soul (cf. the contrast between spirit and flesh at Gethsemane), then “Grant us, therefore, not to be tempted by the devil, the evil one.” Here we have an allusion to the Our Father, alluded to in turn in the Gethsemane accounts. In 5-6 we read, “But I answered and said to him, ‘Lord, do not mention to us the cross and death, for they are far from you.’” This agrees with Matt 16:21-23. In 6 Jesus teaches, “Therefore, become seekers for death, like the dead who seek for life;” this agrees with the basic point of Matt 16:24-26. *Ap. Jas.* 6 mentions John’s beheading, which can be correlated with Matthew 17:12. *Ap. Jas.* 10 has Jesus ask, “Can you still bear to sleep, when it behoved you to be awake from the first,” another allusion to the Gethsemane story. In 13 we read: “And once more I [prevail upon] you, for I am revealed to you (pl.) building a house which is of great value to you when you find shelter beneath it, just as it will be able to stand by your neighbours’ house when it threatens to fall. Verily I say unto you, woe to those for whose sakes I was sent down to this place; blessed will they be who ascend to the Father!” Here we have parallels to Matt 16:18, “prevail against it/you,” 16:17, “revealed,” 16:18 (Shem-Tob) “I will build my house,” and 16:17, “blessed.” With “sent down” and “ascend” cf. Gen 28:12’s “ascending and descending.” The words “great value” parallel Matt 13:45-46’s kingdom of heaven parable about a “pearl of great value,” and “find shelter beneath it” may allude to Matt 13:31-32’s mustard seed parable. The talk of a “house” being “built” and threatening to “fall” is paralleled in Matt 7:24-27, where the wise man builds his house on a rock, so that it does not fall when storms blow, in contrast to the foolish man who builds a house on sand, so that the house falls when the storms arrive. The *Ap. Jas.* 13 thus correctly recognizes that Matt 16 alludes back to Matt 7. The wise man is Jesus who builds his house (“church”) on a rock, the rock of Peter. The foolish man is Paul (already alluded to in Matt 5:19) who builds his house (his “churches”) on sand. Paul seems to have been aware of traditions like these, and possibly responds to them in 1 Cor 3:10-21, where he, in his typical style, turns the usual meaning of “wise” and “foolish” upside down, so to speak. Finally, in *Ap. Jas.* 15 Jesus ascends in a *merkabah*-like event, similar to the ascent in the *Apoc. Pet.*’s conclusion to the transfiguration.⁶⁶

Both texts of the *Apoc. Pet.* and the *Ap. Jas.* use language and imagery related to the *merkabah* ascent. Since the transfiguration story had been influenced in part by the story of Jacob’s ladder, it does not surprise us that Jewish tradition describes Jacob’s ladder dream as a *merkabah* ascent. Wis 10:10 describes Gen 28’s vision as a revelation of the kingdom of

⁶⁴ Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis*, p. 297.

⁶⁵ My citations of the *Apocryphon of James* are from Francis E. Williams in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, Leiden, 1990, pp. 30-37.

⁶⁶ I examine these parallels also in Samuel Zinner, “A Series of Allusions to Peter and Paul in the Sermon on the Mount,” *Journal of Higher Criticism*, forthcoming.

God (βασιλείαν θεοῦ) and a bestowal of knowledge γνῶσιν ἁγίων. The NRSV renders this (in part problematically, as we will see) as: “When a righteous man fled from his brother’s wrath, she guided him on straight paths; she showed him the kingdom of God, and gave him knowledge of holy things. . . .” Interpreted as straightforwardly as possible, this text is literally calling the ladder Jacob saw “the kingdom of God,” which brings to mind Mark 9:1’s “kingdom of God” in the introduction to the transfiguration: “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.” Luke 9:27 similarly has “the kingdom of God”; Matt 15:28 reads “the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”⁶⁷

Referring to *Leviticus Rabbah* 29.2, Stefan Schorch writes in a discussion of Wis 10:10, “Besides this midrash and its parallel versions, the motif of Jacob being asked by God to ascend the ladder into heaven, but fearfully denying this request reappears in a number of further midrashim.”⁶⁸ Other dissenting sources affirm a heavenly ascent by Jacob, such as Tanhuma Buber, *Wayyetze* 6 and *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* 1.4.⁶⁹ Schorch interprets Wis 10:10 as a reference to Jacob’s ascent as a *merkabah* or *hekhalot*-like ascent, representative of the “way” of the mystics, the latter shedding light on Wis 10:10’s “straight paths.”⁷⁰ Schorch demonstrates that in contrast to the NRSV’s rendering we are required on grammatical grounds to understand γνῶσιν ἁγίων as “holy ones,” that is, angels, not “holy things,” so that γνῶσιν ἁγίων refers to knowledge possessed by the angels which Jacob has now acquired by means of his heavenly ascent.⁷¹ I would argue that here “the kingdom of God” (Schorch renders βασιλείαν θεοῦ as “divine kingdom”) is intended as a reference to the celestial realm of the angels ruled by God, which appears in the dream as a ladder. In short, the ladder is a dream symbol for the kingdom of God.⁷² The term “kingdom” here may also be correlated with the Jewish traditions that interpret Jacob’s ladder as a prophetic sign foretelling the persecution of Jacob’s descendants by the various worldly kingdoms or empires under the symbols of their angelic princes.⁷³ The same interpretation is found in the various versions of *Lad. Jac.*

IV

CONCLUSION: OF NAMES AND FACES

⁶⁷ Cf. John 1:51’s importation of “the Son of man” into the allusion to Jacob’s dream.

⁶⁸ Stefan Schorch, “Jacob’s Ladder and Aaron’s Vestments: Traces of Mystical and Magical Traditions in the Book of Wisdom,” in: *Studies in the Book of Wisdom*, Géza G. Xeravits and József Zsengellér, eds. Leiden—Boston, 2010, p. 187.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 188.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 189-190.

⁷² Incidentally, compare Wis 10:9-10, “Wisdom rescued from troubles those who served her. When a righteous man fled from his brother’s wrath, she guided him on straight paths; she showed him the kingdom of God, and gave him knowledge of holy things,” with the Qur’an *al-Fātiḥa*: “Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds, the merciful, the compassionate, king on the day of judgement. We worship/serve you, and to you we flee for refuge. Guide us on the straight path, on the path of those to whom you have been gracious and loving, on whom is not wrath, and who go not astray” (my translation from the Arabic). While there is no literary connection between these two texts, their similarities illustrate how Qur’anic language has been informed by typical Jewish terminology, especially liturgical.

⁷³ For references, see Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis*, p. 290.

In Gen 32:28, the wrestling angel asks Jacob, “What is thy name?”; in Gen 32:30, Jacob in turn asks the angel, “Tell me, I pray thee, thy name.” Compare these two verses respectively with Matt 16:13, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” and 16:15, “But who do you say that I am?” Whereas Jacob answers the “man’s” question, when Jacob asks for the “man’s” name, he receives no answer. This is probably because his name is the tetragrammaton, and it is not yet the moment for a full revelation to be vouchsafed to Jacob, perhaps in part because the wrestling is not quite finished (dawn hasn’t fully arrived yet). It is as if Jacob must earn the right to the theophany or revelation that follows.

In between the angel’s and Jacob’s questions about names comes Gen 32:29, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel.” The variant in 35:10 reads: “And God said unto him: ‘Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name’; and He called his name Israel.” The parallel to this is Matt 16:17-18: “And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you (אשריך), Simon son of Jonah! . . . And I tell you, you are Peter.” In some structural respects John 1:42 is even closer: “You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas.” (Let us not forget 1:49’s “King of *Israel*”).

Gen 32:31: “And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: ‘for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.’” This ties into the transfiguration’s emphasis on the vision of Jesus’ luminous face, inspired by the story of Moses’ transfiguration in Exod 34:29-35. Like Jacob, Moses had seen God face to face (Numb 12:8, despite Exod 33:23) and lived. The mention of Sinai in this Mosaic transfiguration Exodus passage may be significant in light of the previously mentioned tradition in *Bereshit Rabbah* that identifies Jacob’s ladder with Sinai, on the basis of the two words sharing the same gematria value. This may have relevance for the argument that Gen 28 has influenced the story of Jesus’ transfiguration. However, this possibility should not be overemphasized, for while the practice of gematria in the specific category of ‘absolute value’ *mispar hekhrehi* (‘absolute value’) among Jews in the Second Temple period is documented by some scholars, it became common only in the later rabbinic literature.⁷⁴ In any case, gematria is almost always a rather tenuous phenomenon upon which to build scholarly argumentation.

⁷⁴ On Second Temple period and later gematria use among Jews see Meir Bar-Ilan, “John S. Lucas, *Astrology and Numerology in Medieval and Early Modern Catalonia* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003). Review Essay,” *The Review of Rabbinic Judaism: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, 8 (2005), p. 294; David Derovan, “Gematria,” in: *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Second Edition, Volume 7*, p. 424; Gard Granerød, *Abraham and Melchizedek: Scribal Activity of the Second Temple Times in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110*, Berlin—NY, 2010, p. 74, footnote 33. For an apparent case of gematria in *1 En 69*, see Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*, Leiden, 1985, pp. 247-248.