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# Treading the Grapes of Wrath

## The Wine Press in Ancient Jewish and Christian Tradition (continuation)

### 2. Targumic Literature

One other set of wine press traditions may also be polemical. Gen 49, 10–12 (‘He tethers his foal unto the vine, and his ass’ colt unto the choice vine. He washeth his garments in wine, and his vesture in the blood of grapes’) is explained in much of Jewish tradition as referring to the Messiah.<sup>46</sup> The Aramaic Neofiti I on Genesis 49, 11 states the following:

“How beautiful is King Messiah who is to arise from among those of the house of Judah. He girds his loins and goes forth to battle against those that hate him; and he kills kings with rulers, and makes the mountains red from the blood of their slain and makes the valleys white from the fat of their warriors. His garments are rolled in blood; he is like a presser of grapes...The mountains will become red from his vines and the vats from wine.”<sup>47</sup>

This Aramaic *targum*, more or less representative of the other Palestinian *targumin* which translate in a similar manner,<sup>48</sup> describes how the Messiah will make short shrift of the nations. Once again there will be much blood and gore. The verse in Genesis clearly provides for most of the sanguinary

<sup>46</sup> See, for instance, BT Sanhedrin 98b on Gen 49, 10 (‘As long as men come to Shilo’) and cf. the comments of Rashi and Tg. Onq. on the verse.

<sup>47</sup> See A. D. Macho, *Neophyti: Targum Palestinense MS De La Bibliotheca Vaticana*, Madrid and Barcelona 1968, I, 635 (English translation).

<sup>48</sup> See also, for example, M. L. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch According to their Extant Sources*, Rome 1980, 158 (text) and 119 (translation) on Ms. V of Frg. Tg.: “‘He tethers’ (Genesis 49, 11) – How beautiful is the King Messiah who will arise from the house of Judah! He girds his loins and goes out to battle against those who hate him, and he kills kings and rulers; he reddens the mountains from the blood of their slain; and he whitens his hills from the fat of their mighty ones; his garments roll in the blood, and he is like one who presses grapes.” See M. Ginsburger, *Pseudo-Jonathan (Thargum Jonathan ben Uziel zum Pentateuch Nach der Londoner Handschrift*, Brit. Mus. add. 27031), Berlin 1903, 92–93 on Tg. Ps.-J.: “...like one who treads grapes” (even though a different Aramaic verb is used than in Ms. V cited above). Cf. M. L. Klein, *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, Cincinnati 1986, I, 168–169 (= Cambridge University Library, MSS T-S AS 71.216, 281).

details. The *targum*, however, adds the image of treading grapes. This, of course, is reminiscent of Isa 63,1–6 and it is possible that Neofiti (and the other Palestinian *targumim*) is dependent on the verses in Isaiah, although this need not definitely be so.<sup>49</sup> There is a good deal of discussion as to the dating of the various *targums* such as Pseudo-Jonathan, Neofiti and Fragmentary Targum but a common assumption today is that even the earliest ones dating to the first or second centuries C. E. (or perhaps even earlier) underwent revision, editing and even further compilation during the Late-Roman or Byzantine periods and even in some cases afterwards.<sup>50</sup> This would fit in very well with our claims regarding the anti-Christian tenor of many of the Jewish wine press traditions.

The Aramaic *targum* on Isaiah also provides a number of interesting additions to the Biblical text:

“He is about to bring a stroke upon Edom, strong avenger upon Bozrah... Just as He swore to them by his *Memra*... Why will mountain be red from the blood of those killed, and plains gush forth like vine in the press? Behold, as grapes trodden in the press, so shall slaughter increase among the armies of the peoples and there will be no strength for them before Me. I will kill them in My anger and trample them in my wrath. I will break the strength of their strong ones before me, and I will annihilate all their wise ones.”<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> See P. Grelot, *L'Exégèse Messianique D'Isaie LXIII, 1–6*, RB 70 (1963). Grelot sees a connection between the *targum* and the verses in Isaiah. It is important to remember, though, that in Isaiah it is God doing the treading, while in the *targum* it is the Messiah who presses grapes. Grelot considers the *targum* to be a Jewish manifestation of Jesus' grape treading in Revelation. We shall return later on to deal with Revelation. For the moment, suffice it to say that there is enough wine imagery in Gen 49,11 to allow for the introduction of the wine press motif without having to make extensive searches for external sources. See, however, the medieval *midrash* of Tuviah b. Eliezer known as *Lekah Tov* on Gen 49,11 (236 ed. Buber). Tuviah clearly connects Gen 49 with Isa 63, interpreting both as punishment against the nations in general and Edom in particular. All of this, however, is at the hands of God, unlike the *targum* which transferred Gen to the Messiah.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, P. S. Alexander, *Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures*, in: M. J. Mulder (ed.), *Mikra: Text, Translation and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, Assen/Maastricht 1988, I, Section 2,1, 217–253. See also J. Komlosch, art. *Tanach-Targumim-Jewish Aramaic Targumim* in: EB(B) 8 (1982) 740–770 (Hebrew). Needless to say, there are still those scholars who insist on an early dating and far be it from us to come to final conclusions within the framework of this study. In such a case, these Aramaic traditions could still refer to early Christianity or to the nations in general in keeping with the general eschatological nature of the exegesis on those verses in Genesis.

<sup>51</sup> Tg. Isa 63,1–3. See B. D. Chilton, *The Aramaic Bible, Vol. 11: The Isaiah Targum*, Edinburgh 1987, 120–121. Chilton wonders why the *targum* does not make specific reference to the Edom=Rome motif (as it does, for instance, in Isa 34,9), but it is possible that the author just assumed that this would be understood.

Some of the changes could be attributed to the tendency of the *targum* to try and avoid anthropomorphisms, as is clear from the reference to the *Memra*. The specific references, though, to armies, strong ones and wise ones seem to reflect a more realistic situation and perhaps Roman or Byzantine times.<sup>52</sup> Might not the “wise ones” refer to the Church Fathers who, as we shall see, had many a Christological explanation for the verses we have cited above? The future slaughter described in this *targum* would rid the Jews not only of physical oppression, but also of the “intellectual” or “spiritual” kind.

### 3. Punishment of Israel

Up until now, every post-Biblical wine press tradition which we have examined has been a punishment tradition and has been directed against the nations or against Edom (= Rome = Christianity). This is not surprising, as we have seen, in light of the Biblical prooftexts for these traditions (Isa 63,1–6 and Joel 4,13).

As we remember, though, the Biblical references to the wine press also include punishment motifs in relation to Israel. The Rabbis were, of course, aware of these verses and did not shy away from commenting on at least some of them. It should be stressed, though, that this in no way effects our view above that the nations’ or Edom punishment traditions were polemical in nature. The Rabbis more than once developed different and sometimes even contradictory traditions and motifs on the same persons, places and things, with some being earmarked for internal Jewish consumption and others meant to help the Jews face the harsh pressures of the outside world.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Cf. The *targum* on Joel 4,13: “...go down and tread their warrior dead like grapes that are trodden in the wine press.” This is similar to the “armies” and “strong ones” mentioned above and it is not unlikely that the reference is to the Roman-Byzantine army of occupation in Palestine. For the translation see K.J. Cathcart and R.P. Gordon, *The Aramaic Bible, Vol. 14: The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, Edinburgh 1989, 72–73. The *targum* does not always introduce new or midrashic elements. Surprisingly enough, the *targum* on Psalms knows absolutely nothing about the motifs mentioned in Midr. Ps. and interprets *Gittith* as a lyre from the city of Gath (see n.12 above). This, however, is characteristic of the *targum* on Psalms, which tries to stick to the plain meaning of the text. See the article of Komlosh cited above (n. 50), col. 756.

<sup>53</sup> See Schwartz, *The Encaenia of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre*, (see n. 9 above), 281 on the negative and positive Solomon traditions in *midrash*. The negative traditions have been explained in light of criticism against the Patriarch R. Judah II (who ruled

This was apparently also the case regarding the development of the wine press traditions.

Lam 1, 15 ('The Lord has trodden as in a wine press, the virgin daughter of Judah') clearly refers to punishment against the people of Israel. The Rabbis, however, introduce a new element:

"The excision of the young men (of Judah) is worse than the destruction of the Temple, as it is written, 'The Lord has trodden as in a wine press, the virgin daughter of Judah'." <sup>54</sup>

Moreover, not only does God punish the people in the wine press, but even the Temple suffered the Divine treading:

"I have made my House into My wine press". <sup>55</sup>

The Temple indeed suffered the greatest humiliation imaginable in the wine press. When it was set ablaze by the Babylonians:

"The Temple went up (= to reach safety in the heavens) and they (= angels) trod upon it from the heavens (= lowering it back to the earth) as it is written 'The Lord has trodden'." <sup>56</sup>

This type of motif could, of course, never appear in the anti-Christian wine press traditions of Midr. Ps.

#### 4. The Altar

A number of early wine press motifs found in Tannaitic literature are not found or repeated in Amoraic material. These early traditions were not composed with any polemical intent. However, they would have undoubtedly made the Rabbis uncomfortable later on when the wine press took on polemical significance and when these traditions would have been considered too close to the Christian way of thinking.

Thus, for example, Isa 5, 1–2, the beginning of the Parable of the Vineyard is interpreted by R. Jose in relation to the Temple and the wine vat there is specifically interpreted as the altar:

approximately between 230–270 C.E.) while the positive ones were meant to stress the importance of the Jewish Solomon and his Temple as against the "Christian" one (= Constantine) and his "Temple" (Church of the Holy Sepulchre).

<sup>54</sup> Lam. Rab. 1, 15, 78 ed Buber. See, however, Buber's comments *ad loc.* The version in the manuscript which served as the basis of his edition is corrupt and Buber reconstructed the text based on other versions and the standard printed edition.

<sup>55</sup> Lam Rab., Petiḥta 32, 34, ed. Buber. The punishment was the result of the fact that the people did not study Torah. God was upset over the stiff punishment which He meted out, but this did not stop Him from inflicting it.

<sup>56</sup> BT Sanhedrin 96b.

“R. Jose says – a pit (Hebrew: *sit*)<sup>57</sup> was dug into the depths as it written, ‘...My well-beloved had a vineyard... And he digged it and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vine and built a tower in the midst of it and also hewed out a vat therein...’ ‘And built a tower in the midst of it’ – this is the Temple. ‘Hewed out a vat therein’ – this is the altar. ‘And also hewed out a vat therein’ – this is the pit.”<sup>58</sup>

As we shall see, a common motif in Christian exegesis of the wine press, not the wine press of Isa 5, but that of Ps, Isa 63 and Joel 4, was that the wine press represented the altar of the Temple and later on the altar of churches. The tradition we have just cited probably pre-dates this Christian interpretation. Later on, though, the Rabbis would probably have avoided an explanation or motif which could have been applied or used by Christians and, therefore, this Jewish motif did not become very popular.

## 5. Individual

All the Rabbinic wine press traditions we have examined have been of a “national” level, whether referring to the nations, Edom or Israel. The Rabbis had hardly anything to say about the wine press on a personal level. Christian exegetes and commentators had much more to say on this topic, as we shall shortly see. The single comment of the Rabbis referring to the individual is on the verse in Job: ‘They tread the wine presses, but suffer thirst’ (24,11). The sages understood the verse in its entirety as referring to the owner of the vineyard who was punished because of evil deeds and not as referring to a worker being tormented by the owner of the vineyard. Sin and you will suffer thirst in your own vineyard.<sup>59</sup>

## 6. Visions of Plenty

The Rabbis also had nothing whatsoever to say about the wine press in relation to bounty and abundance: present, future or otherwise. The only reference in ancient Jewish literature to this motif appears in Sir 33,16, and even this refers to intellectual abundance and not physical bounty:

<sup>57</sup> The hole or pit in the altar into which libations were poured.

<sup>58</sup> T Sukkah 3,15 (270 ed. Lieberman); T Meilah 1,16 (558, ed. Zuckermann); PT Sukkah IV, 54d. In BT Sukkah 49a: “... ‘And built a tower in the midst of it’ – this is the altar. ‘And also hewed out a vat therein’ – this is the pit.” Cf., however, S. Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshutah*, New York 1962, IV, 880.

<sup>59</sup> Gen. Rab. 31,2, 278 ed. Theodor-Albeck.

“...I was like one who gleans after the grape-gatherers; by the blessings of the Lord I excelled, and like a grape-gatherer I filled my wine press.”

The verse refers to the acquisition of wisdom. The author began to seek out wisdom at a late date (“after the grape-gatherers”), but succeeded in any case in becoming wise (“I filled my wine press”).

Apparently a different outlet was found for wine press abundance motifs. A frieze at the ancient synagogue of Khorazin in the Galilee depicts two men in a wine press treading grapes with both feet, with a bunch of grapes between them.<sup>60</sup> It is unlikely that there was any esoteric symbolism inherent in these treaders. They undoubtedly represented agricultural blessing and fertility and perhaps God’s power as provider of sustenance. This, however, is the only representation of grape treaders or a wine press in synagogue art or architecture.<sup>61</sup> Depictions of nature motifs *per se* were not very common in synagogue art and this is most likely the reason for the absence of this motif in other synagogues,<sup>62</sup> although there may have been other ancient wine press representations which did not survive. It should be stressed, though, that the absence of this motif in Jewish synagogue art has apparently nothing to do with Christians usage, since the wine press was apparently not a very common motif in Church art either.<sup>63</sup> Both Christians and Jews preferred to use wine for different purposes.

<sup>60</sup> See E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, New York 1953–1968, I, 194. The vintagers face the spectator and not each other, indicative of proportions and attitudes of Oriental and not Hellenistic art. See M. Avi-Yonah, *Art in Ancient Palestine: Selected Studies*, collected and prepared for republication by H. Katzenstein and Y. Tsafir, Jerusalem 1981, 151 and Pl. 25, 2. I see no reason to accept Goodenough’s contention that the treaders were either satyrs or *sileni*. I also see no reason for Goodenough’s extreme Dionysiac interpretation (cf. *Jewish Symbols*, VI, 46–53), although in the final analysis, the Dionysiac symbolism also deals with fertility and abundance, undoubtedly the message of the frieze.

<sup>61</sup> See R. Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel*, Leiden 1988, 340; 344.

<sup>62</sup> On the few rural or nature scenes depicted in the mosaic floors of ancient synagogues see Hachlili, 392–393.

<sup>63</sup> Christian mosaic art did include more representations of the “world as is” than did Jewish synagogue mosaic art. See Hachlili, 371. The wine press is found in the mosaic floors of the Church of SS. Lot and Procopius at Mekhayyat (= Nebo) and in Room L of the sixth century C. E. Byzantine Monastery at Beisan. In Nebo there are two men treading grapes with a press screw in the background. See also B. Bagatti, *The Church from the Gentiles in Palestine*, Jerusalem 1971, 270–271 and 289–290. Bagatti sees the wine press as a symbol of sustenance provided by God the creator and preserver. This, though, is certainly not inherently Christian and as we have suggested above, could just as well have applied to



#### IV. The Christian Wine Press

So far we have examined only the Jewish wine press traditions and have attempted to show how many of them, and particularly the punishment traditions in Midr. Ps., are part of the Judaeo-Christian polemic of the Byzantine period. In view of this, the ancient Jewish traditions can be fully understood only in light of contemporary Christian wine press motifs. We do not wish to claim, of course, that the authors of the Jewish material were familiar with the particulars of the individual Christian traditions which we shall now examine. The Rabbis, however, did have a general knowledge of common Christian motifs and exegesis<sup>64</sup> and there is no reason why this should not include important wine press traditions. It is our contention that many of the anti-Christian traditions in the writings of the Rabbis repond to or reflect anti-Jewish wine press traditions in the writings of the Church Fathers or even in earlier Christian material. Some of the Jewish traditions were probably also reactions to particularistic Christian usages of the wine press motif, even if they were not always inherently anti-Jewish.

##### 1. The Book of Revelation

The earliest Christian usage of the wine press motif and apparently even the earliest post- Old Testament occurrence of the punishment motif is found in Rev 14, 14–20:

Khorazin. This represents a retreat from Bagatti's original views on the subject in which he did attempt to find a deeper Christological meaning, but apparently was not satisfied with his conclusions. See S. J. Saller and B. Bagatti, *The Town of Nebo (Khirbet El-Mekhayyat) with a brief survey of ancient Christian Monuments in Transjordan*, Jerusalem 1949, 95–98. Even then, though, Bagatti was quite adamant in stating that the representation in Nebo was not to be interpreted in light of the suffering Christ motif which became quite popular in medieval art (and, therefore, could not be the reason why the Jews refrained from the depiction of the wine press in ancient synagogues) which represents a suffering being crushed under the cross of a mystical wine press. See H. Leclercq, *Dictionnaire D'Archéologie Chrétienne et De Liturgie*, Paris 1940, 14/2, art. *pressoir*, 1731–1734 and G. Bornkamm, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* Grand Rapids, Michigan 1967, IV, art. *ληνός, ὑπολήνιον*, 254–257. Bagatti also rejects the claim that the mosaic at Qabr Hiram in Phoenicia depicts the suffering Christ. See also S. Melitonis Clavis, *De Lignis and Floribus*, CVI, cited in n. 82 below. On the scene at Beisan see A. Ovadia, *Corpus of the Byzantine Churches in the Holy Land*, Bonn 1970, 38 #23 and the bibliography cited there. See also Hachlili, 392 and Pl. 107.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, J. Schwartz, Ben Stada and Peter in Lydda, JSJ 21 (1990) 1–18.



"Then as I looked there appeared a white cloud, and on the cloud sat one like a son of man...and in his hand a sharp sickle. Another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud-stretch out your sickle and reap...then another angel came out of the heavenly temple and he also had a sharp sickle. Then from the altar came yet another...and he shouted to the one with the sharp sickle-stretch out your sickle and gather in earth's grape harvest, for its clusters are ripe. So the angel put his sickle to the earth and gathered in its grapes and threw them into the great wine press of God's wrath. The wine press was trodden outside the city and for a thousand and six hundred furlongs around blood flowed from the press to the height of the horses' bridles."

The wine press is also mentioned in Rev 19, 15:

"Then I saw heaven wide open and there before me was a white horse; and its rider's name was Faithful and True...his eyes flamed like fire...and he was robed in a garment spattered with blood... and the armies of heaven followed him... from his mouth there went a sharp sword with which to smite the nations; for it is he who shall rule them with an iron rod and tread the wine press of the wrath and retribution of God the sovereign Lord" (Rev 19, 11–15).

These two selections have elicited countless theories and hypotheses. Who are the grapes being trodden in Rev 14? What city is mentioned and what is its connection to the grapes? Who is in the wine press of Rev 19 and what is the relationship of this tradition to that in Rev 14?

It has long been recognized that Rev 14 seems to reflect the wine press tradition in Joel 4, 13 and Rev 19 seems to reflect that of Isa 63, 1–6.<sup>65</sup> It is also fairly commonly accepted that those in the wine press in Rev 14 are not the same as those there in Rev 19, even if the first chapter is seen as pre-figuring the second.<sup>66</sup> Although, there is also some discussion as to exactly who is suffering in the first wine press, there are many scholars who interpret the grape harvest as Israel and thus it follows that the Jews are being trampled. Some even add that the city mentioned by John is Jerusalem and that the description of destruction pertains to Palestine, perhaps even as a result of the War of Destruction.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> See Grelot, *L'Exégèse Messianique* (see n. 49) and the literature cited there. Grelot also shows, however, that there are differences between Rev and the Biblical verses which supposedly serve as the basis for the traditions. See also G. Bornkamm in TDNT, IV, 254–257 (cited in n. 61 above) and *idem*, *Die Komposition der apokalyptischen Visionen in der Offenbarung Johannis*, ZNW, 36 (1937) 140–141.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Bornkamm, TDNT, IV, 255.

<sup>67</sup> See for example, A. J. Beagley, *The «Sitz im Leben» of the Apocalypse with Particular Reference to the Role of the Church's Enemies*, Berlin 1987, 82–84 and the literature cited *ad loc.* For a different view, though, see C. Bruetsch, *Die Offenbarung Jesu Christi, Johannes-Apokalypse*, 2. Band: Kapitel 11–20 ZBK 1970, 185 and J. Ellul, *Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation*, translated by G. W. Schreiner (New York, 1977), 179.

Those being trampled in the wine press in Rev 19 are not the Jews, but rather the nations.<sup>68</sup> Revelation then has both Israel and the nations in the wine press, in spite of a reversal in the usage of the Biblical selections in Joel and Isaiah. Joel 4,13 refers to the punishment of the nations, but serves Rev 14,14–20 as the basis for the punishment of Israel and the Jews. Isa 63,1–6 refers to the punishment of Edom, but in Rev 19,11–15, it is used for the punishment of the nations. This is not much of a problem since Christian exegesis did allow for the use of Old Testament passages originally referring to Gentiles to be applied to those Jews who persecute Christians.<sup>69</sup>

The passages in Rev would seem to indicate that the original usage of the punishment wine press motif was not Jewish, but rather Christian. Rev seeks to encourage the Christians of the late first century C.E. to endure the persecutions of both Jews and Gentiles and to assure them of eventual victory over the Anti-Christ.<sup>70</sup> Later on, when the Jews began to be persecuted by Christians, persecution by Gentiles was never that unusual, they took over the wine press motif, used the same biblical selections and came up with the same ideas regarding punishment of their enemies. There is, of course, no way of knowing whether the Jews were familiar with the traditions in Rev. The work was, after all, popular among Judaeo-Christian circles and it is not inconceivable that the Jews were aware of the early Christian traditions. It is more likely, though, that if the Jews were familiar with any of the Christian usages of the wine press, it was the traditions of the Church fathers which concerned or irritated them. In any case, the earliest evidence regarding the use of the wine press punishment motifs of the Bible relates to Christians who utilized those Biblical traditions, after some changes, for more or less the very purposes that the Jews would use them later on.

## 2. *Fathers of the Church*

If the Rabbis were aware of just a few of the Christian interpretations of the wine press, they would have had good reason, at least in their view, to

<sup>68</sup> See, for instance Bruetsch, 306. Some scholars claim that the blood which splattered the robe of Christ was his own which was shed for his enemies, but see Grelot (see n. 49 above), 371–372 n. 4.

<sup>69</sup> See, for instance, E. E. Ellis, *Biblical Interpretation in the New Testament Church*, in: M. J. Mulder (ed.), *Mikra: Text, Translation and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, Assen/Maastricht 1988, I, Section 2,1, 716 n. 128.

<sup>70</sup> See W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, translated by H. C. Kee, Nashville, 1975.

respond with the anti-Christian motifs we have discussed above. Many of the wine press traditions of the Church Fathers could certainly be described as anti-Jewish, as we shall see below, and even those not specifically so were often so Christological that the Jews would certainly have been upset by them, at the very least.

Before we discuss these traditions, though, it should be pointed out that the relative dating of the Jewish and Christian material is not an easy matter. Technically speaking, most of the Church Fathers we shall cite pre-date late *midrashim* such as Midr. Ps. or the targumic material we have utilized. However, this is not to say that individual traditions in these late works, attributed to earlier sages or even unattributed, were not earlier than some of the Church Fathers we shall cite. Thus, it is possible that there were Christian traditions which developed in response to Jewish motifs. It is also just as possible that some of the Jewish and Christian motifs developed independently as a result of the general hostile relationship between the two religions. There is no end to the speculation on these matters and we shall try and refrain from unnecessary conjectures.

It is also difficult to know exactly with which motifs the Jews were familiar. The chances are, though, that they had at least a passing knowledge of the popular motifs of such important Palestinian Church Fathers as Eusebius and Jerome.<sup>71</sup> The longest discussion of the wine press is found in the writings of the latter and these shall serve as the basis for our study of the Christian traditions.

Jerome's most detailed wine press exposition is found in his homily on Psalm 80.<sup>72</sup> Jerome begins by stating that there are no wine presses unless there is a vineyard and a plentiful harvest of grapes. This, of course gives Jerome the opportunity to discuss the mysteries of grape and wine symbol-

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, N. R. M. De Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine*, Cambridge 1976, 103 who mentions a continuing mutual flow of ideas between Jews and Christians. See also p. 114 in relation to Origen and other Church Fathers who often saw certain key words in the Bible as a reference to something else. This was the case regarding both Christian and Jewish interpretation of "*Gittith*", perhaps indicating knowledge of common or similar traditions.

<sup>72</sup> The numbering of the chapters of Psalms differs somewhat in the Vulgate. Ps 80 of Jerome is Ps 81 of the Hebrew Bible and Ps 83 of Jerome is Ps 84 of the Hebrew Bible. The homily is found in Hieron., *Tractatus de Psalmo LXXX*, 1 (CCSL 78, 76-78). As mentioned above, Jerome and the other Church Fathers base their traditions on the *Gittith* = *gat* = wine press of the LXX (or in Latin: *pro torcularibus*). See n.18 above. *lamenaseah* is translated as "to (or unto) the end" in accordance with the Greek (or in Latin: *in finem*). See n.11 above. This, of course, allows for an eschatological interpretation.

ism which is beyond the purview of our study.<sup>73</sup> Suffice it for the moment to state that Israel was the original vine and also had the first chance to enjoy the benefits of the wine but of course was not capable of understanding. Thus, for example, Noah a *typos* of Christ imbibed of the wine. His eldest son did not understand the true meaning of this wine and mocked him. His younger sons did and were blessed accordingly. The Jews are identified by Jerome with Ham, the father of Canaan who is then cursed. Shem and Japhet are identified with the Gentiles. All of this is plainly absurd, from the point of view of the Bible at least, in which the Jews were descendants of Shem. What is more important is that Jerome claims that the curse against Canaan = Jews still applied in his own time:

“Behold, that condemnation continues down to this day. We, the younger people, give orders to the older people, the Jews.”<sup>74</sup>

Jerome then proceeds to his explanation of the wine press (or *Gittith*) found in the three chapters of Psalms discussed above. Chapters 8 and 80 are considered symbols of the resurrection. Chapter 83 is seen also as a symbol of the Trinity and the three wine presses together all belong to the mystery of the Trinity.<sup>75</sup> The same is true of the three “choirmasters” – David, Asaph and sons of Core (= Korah). David also symbolizes the victory of the believers; Asaph relates to the gathering together with the Lord (based on the Hebrew root *’sp*) and the sons of Core pertain to Calvary. These are the wine presses found in Psalms. Jerome also mentions these central motifs a number of other times.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Origenes, *Selecta in Psalmos* VIII, 1 (PG 12, 1181–1184).

<sup>74</sup> *Ecce maledictio illa usque hodie perseverat. Nos, minor populus, imperamus maiori populo Iudaeorum* (see n. 72). Cf. J. Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian-Jewish Argument in Fourth Century Iran*, Leiden 1971, 119 (= Demonstration XXIII, On the Grapecluster [Excerpts]): «After sixty-two weeks the Messiah was born and killed. The grapecluster of the blessing (= to Israel) was taken from the branch, and the entire branch was given over to destruction. The vineyard was so destroyed that it could no longer be worked, and brought forth thorns and bitter fruits. The twig was destroyed, and the leaf was eradicated.»

<sup>75</sup> *Haec torcularia ad Trinitatis mysterium pertinent.*

<sup>76</sup> See, for instance, Hieron., *Commen. in Ps.* VIII, 1 (CCSL 72, 191). The three wine presses refer to the mystery of the Church and the mystery of the Trinity. See also Hieron. in *Ezech.* XLV (PL 25, 452). Here the wine presses refer to the sacraments of the Church. Cf. also the comments of the Venerable Bede (672–735 C.E.) on Ps 84 in J.M. Neale and R.F. Littledale, *A Commentary on the Psalms: from Primitive and Medieval Writers: And From the various Office-Books and Hymns of the Roman, Mozarabic, Ambrosian, Gallican, Greek, Coptic, Armenian and Syrian Rites*, London 1879/87; New York 1976, III, 36.

Isa 63,1–6 is also given a Christological explanation by Jerome.<sup>77</sup> God of the wine press of Isaiah becomes Christ. Gen 49,11 ('He washeth his garments in wine, and his vesture in the blood of grapes') which the Jews explained as the Messiah also is Christ according to Jerome. The bloody garments of Isa 63 are stained with the blood of Christ.<sup>78</sup> Bozrah is interpreted symbolically as strong fortifications referring either to Jerusalem or hell. The wine press here is explained by Jerome in two manners. Either it is a symbol of punishment as in the case of Isa 63 or Lam 1,15 or a symbol of good based on the wine press of Psalms. In any event, though, it is the Lord or Christ who is doing the treading alone in the wine press.

Were the Jews familiar with any of this? Jerome studied with Jewish masters and in the course of his fairly extensive travels throughout Palestine came into more contact with Jews from all walks of life.<sup>79</sup> It is not impossible, therefore, that the Jews were aware of some of the traditions and motifs cited above in some form or fashion.<sup>80</sup>

Eusebius' comments are not as extensive as those of Jerome later on, but his central motif did become quite commonly accepted. Eusebius sees the wine presses as referring to the Church in general or the churches having been built in his time.<sup>81</sup> Eusebius, however, goes further in his analogy. The people of Israel had a Temple and the altar there was the – *prolenion* (= technically the vat before the wine press). Now, according to Eusebius, there are many wine presses or many altars, tabernacles, *atria* and the like within the many churches of the Empire. This combines the common Christian anti-Temple motif with the Christian tendency to transfer Jewish motifs to their own institutions.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Hieron., *Comm. in Isaiam Prophetam* LXIII,1–3 (PL 24,610–612; CCSL 73A,720–722).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. n.68 on the bloody garment in Rev 19. Jerome, however, makes no reference to Rev here. See also Athanasius, *Questiones in Scripturam Sanctam* LXXVII (PG 28,744) who interprets the verse both in terms of the blood of Christ as well as the blood of his enemies. The attribution to Athanasius is not accepted and the work is of unknown origins.

<sup>79</sup> See J. Schwartz, *Jewish Settlement in Judaea after the Bar-Kochba War until the Arab Conquest 135 C.E. – 640 C.E.*, Jerusalem 1986, 195–201 (Hebrew) and the literature cited there.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. De Lange, Origen, 103 (see n.71 above)

<sup>81</sup> Eusebius, *Comm. in Psalmos* VIII,1 (PG 23,125–127).

<sup>82</sup> See Schwartz, *The Encaenia of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre* (see n.9 above). The wine press-Church-Temple motif is also found, for instance, in the writings of Athanasius (*Expositio in Psalmum* VIII [PG 27,80]) and Augustine also identified the wine press of Ps 8 with the Church (*Enarr. in Ps. VIII*,1 [CCSL 38,491]). See also the comments of the Venerable Bede on Ps 8 who saw the wine press as both the Church and the members of the



Another common Christian wine press motif is found in the commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428 C.E.) who identified the wine presses with Christ, as opposed to the motifs mentioned above which identified just the treader with Jesus.<sup>83</sup> Theodore did not often depart from explanations based on the plain meaning of the text and in addition to Psalm 8, there are only three other Psalms which he interpreted in relation the coming of Christ.<sup>84</sup> This motif also became quite popular.<sup>85</sup>

The last wine press motif we shall comment upon is one that can be described as the good grapes-bad grapes motif. If good grapes are brought into the press, then the juice and subsequent wine will be of high quality, even if the grapes do have to suffer somewhat in the course of the treading. If the grapes are of poor quality, the results after the treading will be the same. In such a case, there are no rewards for suffering the treading. All of this is usually taken symbolically, with the grapes representing one's life or deeds. Good deeds produce a good wine. The good deeds, of course, are often understood in terms of Christian faith and behavior.<sup>86</sup>

church who are purified in the wine press (Neale and Littledale, I, 141–142). Cf. S. Melitonis Clavis, *De Lignis et Floribus*, CVI (cited in J.B. Pitra, *Spicilegium Solesmense*, Paris 1852; Graz 1962, 458) who identified the wine press of Isa 5, 2 with the altar of the Temple just like the early Rabbis did (see n. 58). There is certainly no connection, though, between the two groups. Melito here is supposedly the late second century C.E. bishop of Sardis (160–170 C.E.). The attribution is spurious and the work is a compilation based on Augustine and later works. See M. Geerard, *Corpus Christianorum Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, I. *Patres Antenicani*, Brepols-Turnhout 1983, 43.

<sup>83</sup> R. Devreesse, *Le Commentaire de Theodore de Mopsueste sur les Psaumes (I–LXXX)*, Città Del Vaticano 1939, 42–43.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. R. A. Green, *The Christian Bible and Its Interpretation*, in J. L. Kugel and R. A. Green, *Early Biblical Interpretation*, Philadelphia 1986, 182. The other three Christological Psalms are 2, 45 and 110.

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, Augustine cited above in n. 82 and the Venerable Bede on Ps 81 (Neale and Littledale, III, p. 1). See also S. Melitonis Clavis, CVI (see n. 82) who connected both Ps 8 and Isa 63 with the passion of Christ.

<sup>86</sup> See, for instance, the comments of Apollinarius of Laodicea (c. 310–c. 390) on Ps 8 in E. Mühlenberg, *Psalmekommentare aus der Katenenüberlieferung*, Berlin 1975, I, p. 3. The wine press represents the harvest of one's actions which have to be collected and judged. See also Didymus the Blind's (313–398) similar views on Ps 8 in Mühlenberg, 145–146. Cf. Eusebius, *Comm. in Isaiam* VIII, 2 (PG 24, 501). The wine press represents punishment of sins. If you repent, though, you still can become the beloved of God. See also Procopii Gazaeni, *Comm. in Isaiam* LXIII, 1–8 (PG 87, 2668). Procopius sees the wine press of Psalms in a positive light and that of Isa 63 and Lam 1, 15 as a symbol of punishment. This is, of course, reminiscent of Jerome's view cited above. See also Augustine on Ps 84 (83) who sees the wine press as a means of purifying those who believe in God of their carnal desires (*Enarr. in Ps. LXXXIII*, CCSL 39, 1146–1150).

Except for this last motif, the major wine press traditions of the Church Fathers are Christological and for the most part polemical. As we have stated above, it is hard to know whether the Jewish traditions respond to the Christian ones or whether some of the Christian ones are a reaction to the Jewish anti-Christian wine press traditions. In any case, though, the wine press offered both Christian and Jew a chance to “punish” their enemies as well as to promulgate their faith. There was a lot more at stake than grapes and their juice.

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