

# New Testament and Rabbinic Slave Parables at the Intersection between Fiction and Reality

*Catherine Hezser*

In antiquity, parables were ideal media of moral and theological teaching because they employed images that were based on the ancient audience's own experiences. They do not simply replicate social reality, however, but are fictional constructs that play with and subvert reality for ideological purposes. As John Dominic Crossan has already emphasized, New Testament parables "involve fictional characters in fictional stories."<sup>1</sup> While he concedes that realistic locations may be used ("factual geography"), he argues that "all else is fiction."<sup>2</sup> This statement seems to be an overgeneralization, however. While parables feature anonymous stock characters, who lack individual characteristics, some aspects may be based on actual practice and lived experience. Unusual elements that lead to the meaning of a parable are identifiable only on the basis of their difference from ordinary life. In the words of John Kloppenborg, "one of the hallmarks of at least some of Jesus' parables is that they tell of unusual actions or unexpected reactions. But they do so by setting a context which invokes the typicalities and commonplaces of ancient Mediterranean life."<sup>3</sup> What is crucial for the proper interpretation of parables is the identification of unconventional and transgressive elements. This task can be accomplished only through the study of parables in the context of ancient Jewish daily life.

Each individual parable requires its own contextualization. The methodological approach of comparing details of the parable as a literary text with what we know historically about everyday life in Roman Palestine applies to all parables. Everyday life encompasses many different realms, ranging from social and family relations to work conditions, meal practices, and etiquette. The historical investigation of these areas varies and depends on the available

1 John Dominic Crossan, *The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction about Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 2012), 142.

2 Crossan, *The Power of Parable*, 142.

3 John S. Kloppenborg, *Synoptic Problems: Collected Essays*, WUNT 329 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 557.

evidence.<sup>4</sup> For a specific topic, archaeological and literary evidence may be abundant or rare. A certain phenomenon may have been researched more in Graeco-Roman than in Palestinian Jewish society. Conflicting evidence may prove difficult to resolve. Last but not least, circular arguments may evolve if literary sources are used to reconstruct daily life. Taking these considerations into account, I shall investigate the fictionality and historical embeddedness of selected parables that thematize the slave-master relationship.

**1 Slave Parables in the Gospel of Mark (Mark 12:1–9; 13:34–37//  
Matt 21:33–41// Luke 20:9–16)**

In English translations of the Gospels, the Greek word δούλος is usually translated with “servant” (and in German translations with “Knecht”) to mitigate the common practice of slavery in early Christian society.<sup>5</sup> Yet the proper translation is “slave” and the references must be understood in the context of ancient slave practices. The Gospel of Mark contains only two parables featuring slaves, and both have christological purposes (Mark 12:1–9 and 13:34–37). In both cases, the owner of the property (a vineyard in Mark 12:1 and a house in Mark 13:34) is said to have travelled abroad. In the first parable, he is said to have entrusted his farmers, probably tenants (12:1; γεωργούς), with the task of continuing the work; in the second parable, he expects his slaves (13:34; δούλους) to do various household tasks in his absence. These general scenarios seem rather ordinary. The first parable establishes a tripartite hierarchy with the householder at the top, the tenants below him, and the slaves at the very bottom of the pyramid of authority. Wealthy landlords, who often lived in cities, had their agricultural holdings leased to tenants or administered by stewards on a regular basis, not only when travelling abroad.<sup>6</sup> The differences in power between these status-unequal social groups were expressed through violent behaviour towards subordinates, reflected in the parable in Mark 12. As Kristina Sessa has pointed out, “some landlords treated their *coloni* as servile workers and regularly disciplined them with physical beatings as if

4 For a general overview of daily life in Roman Palestine, see Catherine Hezser, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). See also Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

5 On slaves in ancient Christianity, see Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

6 That the parable seems to refer to an absentee landlord is also stated by John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), 338.

they were slaves. In either case, the elite householder undoubtedly treated the bonded tenant as a dependent, even if his dependency was less absolute than a slave's.<sup>7</sup> Such "horizontal relations of power within a heated competitive environment" are evident in the tenants' beating and stoning of the slave and in the landlord's harsh punishment of the tenants at the end of the narrative (12:9).<sup>8</sup> In Mark 13:34 the term ἐξουσία is used to express the householder's authority over the various types of subordinates. If they refrain from heeding his commands, they must reckon with severe punishment, the loss of their livelihood or even their lives.

Within this narrative depiction of hierarchical relationships some aspects seem unusual, although, perhaps, not impossible. In Mark 12:1 the vineyard owner is said to have planted the vineyard and done the initial work himself before handing it over to his subordinates. In general, elite city-based landowners did not do any physical work themselves and had (servile) stewards available for the supervision of labourers. Owners of smaller estates, on the other hand, would have adopted a more direct hands-on approach.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps also unusual is the sending of one slave at a time (changed in the parallel version in Matt 21:33–41 to a plurality of slaves), and the eventual replacement of the slave by the landowner's son. The sending of the slave into the vineyard seems to be connected to the harvest season (explicated in the parallel version in Luke 20:10 but not in Mark). The statement that he "might receive from the farmers of the fruit of the vineyard" (Mark 12:2) probably relates to the collection of the vineyard owner's percentage of the harvested fruits from the tenants. If so, the slave would function as a substitute for the owner himself, representing his demands. Masters often used slaves in business transactions, especially those that were challenging.<sup>10</sup> Since the collection of seasonal duties would have upset the tenants, their expression of anger is not unexpected. By using the slave as an intermediary, the vineyard owner could avoid direct confrontation with his tenants. The tenants' anger would be directed at the slave instead, that is, the slave would suffer beatings as a substitute for his master.

The reference to the vineyard owner's "beloved son" (Mark 12:6, Luke 20:13, and Matt 21:37 has "son" only), who was sent into the vineyard after the

7 Kristina Sessa, *The Formation of Papal Authority in Late Antique Italy: Roman Bishops and the Domestic Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 47. See also her section on "The Householder's Intermediaries: Stewards and Domestic Agents," 47–53.

8 Sessa, *The Formation of Papal Authority*, 53.

9 On agricultural work in antiquity, see Kristina Sessa, *Daily Life in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 27–29.

10 On the use of slaves in business transactions, see Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 275–284.

mistreatment of the slaves, is probably the main unusual element in the parable and is indicative of its christological meaning. While one cannot rule out the possibility that a landlord might use his son as a representative of the family's power vis-à-vis the tenants, he would probably send an overseer first or even go himself.<sup>11</sup> The reference to the "beloved son" creates tension and raises the suspicion that the tenants might attack him in the same way they had attacked the slaves before. In Mark 1:11 it is stated that after Jesus's baptism "a voice came forth from heaven, saying: 'You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased'" (cf. Mark 9:7). The connection between the "beloved son" in the parable and the reference to Jesus as the "beloved son" in Mark 9:7 and elsewhere would have been evident to the gospels' readers and audiences. The tenants' desire to kill the son and claim his "inheritance" seems to be formulated on the basis of the author's theological views. From the perspective of logic and everyday life, the vineyard's fruits were not the son's inheritance but the annual levy his father charged his tenants. Even if they killed the son, they would not be able to take possession of the fruits or some other "inheritance" without incurring severe punishment from the landlord. This element therefore does not fit the logic of the narrative and must have been inserted for theological reasons by an author who belonged to the post-Easter community, to suggest that the current tenants (imagined as Jewish leaders: Pharisees or priests) will be punished for their alleged opposition to the son (Jesus) by being replaced by a new set of tenants (Jesus's followers).<sup>12</sup>

The concrete realm of the narrated world of parables is shaped by the spiritual realm they are meant to elucidate. In parables as extended metaphors, these two dimensions form a unit that cannot be easily disentangled. As Emilio Rivano Fischer has emphasized, "[m]etaphor works with dualism, that is, two irreducible sides, like mind-body, spirit-matter, idea-thing, concept-experience. And metaphor works by creating bridges, pairings, between them. Metaphor

11 John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine*, WUNT 195 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 40, thinks that "the sending of the son was not an act of parental madness but a predictable and perfectly appropriate strategy in a culture where status displays form part of the lexicon of power arrangements." Yet the tenants would have known that the son was a) subordinate to his father and therefore lacking in independent power, and b) particularly dear to his father and therefore vulnerable. When the parable was told, the listeners must have suspected that the son would be attacked as well.

12 On this theological framework, see Donahue and Harrington, *Gospel of Mark*, 340. See also Eve-Marie Becker, *Das Markus-Evangelium im Rahmen antiker Historiographie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 168, who considers Mark 12:12 a foreshadowing of the alleged decision of the "Pharisees/priests" to kill Jesus, in line with Mark 3:6, 11:8, and 14:1.

makes a leap between these two irreducible sides.”<sup>13</sup> Just as the landlord has authority over his dependents, the spiritual dimension of the parable determines the way in which the narrated world is presented, that is, art and creativity transform reality. The ambiguity between real and unreal, that is, the creation of a narrated world that stands at the margins of the possible while foreshadowing the impossible, is one of the hallmarks of parabolic speech.

In the first parable (Mark 12:1–9) the vineyard owner stands for God. Rather than an ordinary vineyard owner who is mainly interested in his profits, the parable assumes that God has planted a vineyard to provide sustenance to its workers. While an ordinary landowner would hardly expose his son to a dangerous confrontation with unruly subordinates, God would give the tenants another chance. In Mark 12:8–9, where the killing of the son is mentioned, the christological meaning of the parable becomes evident, especially when read in the context of the gospel’s following passion narrative. The storyteller was guided by the christological belief in Jesus as God’s “beloved son” and his alleged mistreatment by his contemporaries. The reference to the death of the son suggests that the parable was not formulated by Jesus himself but by his followers after his crucifixion.

The author of the second parable in Mark 13:34–37 was guided by a belief in Jesus’s resurrection and return in the near future. Both parables have their *Sitz im Leben* in the post-Easter community.<sup>14</sup> The domestics’ required readiness for and alertness to their master’s homecoming fits the mentioned hierarchical power structures. So does the absence of knowledge about the time of the householder’s return from a distant journey. Many variables are involved here, such as the weather conditions, the availability of ships or caravans, unforeseen interruptions, and the behaviour of travel companions. In their master’s absence and without strict surveillance, domestics might be inclined to neglect their duties.

In the context of the Gospel of Matthew (21:33–41), where the first parable appears with few changes (two groups of slaves are sent out into the vineyard and mistreated by the tenants), its anti-Jewish impact is expressed more openly. After the parable, the following statement is attributed to Jesus:

13 Emilio Rivano Fischer, *Metaphor: Art and Nature of Language and Thought* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2011), 55.

14 See also Dean B. Deppe, *The Theological Intentions of Mark’s Literary Devices: Markan Intercalations, Frames, Allusionary Repetitions, Narrative Surprises, and Three Types of Mirroring* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 326: “Mark is speaking metaphorically and theologically to his community”; Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 104, points to Mark 13:37, where “this parable [is] immediately applied to the readers.”

“Therefore I say to you: The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to an *ethnos* that brings forth these fruits” (Matt 21:43). Those who formulated this sentence lived at a time when it had become clear that most Jews did not believe in Jesus as the predicted Messiah. In this context, the parable is used to express Christian disappointment about their unsuccessful missionary activities amongst Jews.<sup>15</sup> Jewish-Christian leaders may have identified with the slaves sent into the vineyard, who were not welcomed by its custodians. Consequently, they threatened their fellow Jews with divine punishment.

The use of the term *ethnos* is interesting here. The reference to “another *ethnos*” probably indicates the change of focus toward missionary activity amongst gentiles. Or Christians (of any background) considered themselves a new *ethnos* on religious grounds.<sup>16</sup> The terminology may suggest a Jewish-Christian perspective: Jews would have considered themselves an *ethnos* and may have viewed others in the same vein.<sup>17</sup> According to Matt 21:45, priests and Pharisees identified with the wicked tenants mentioned in the parable (cf. Luke 20:19; chief priests and scribes). The shift to another *ethnos* is not mentioned by Luke, perhaps because the new focus on mission amongst gentiles had already been accomplished in his community.<sup>18</sup>

- 
- 15 George Wesley Buchanan, *The Gospel of Matthew*, vol. 2 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 835, confirms that “the most normal way to read Matthew 21:43 is to assume the message was directed to the chief priests and Pharisees mentioned in Matt 21:45.” See also Klyne Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants: An Enquiry into Parable Interpretation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 68–70, 91–94. According to Kloppenborg, *Tenants in the Vineyard*, 193, “it is possible to understand Matt 21,43 as addressing a priestly *ethnos*, threatening it with dispossession by a similar *ethnos* represented by the Jesus movement.”
- 16 On early Christian self-identification as an *ethnos*, see Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 69: “If we adopt an approach to ethnicity/race as fluid ..., it is no longer necessary to sharply differentiate early Christian appeals to being an *ethnos* from those of any other group.”
- 17 On this issue, see Dennis C. Duling, “Ethnicity, Ethnocentrism, and the Matthean Ethnos,” *BTB* 35 (2005): 125–143; Martha Himmelfarb, “Judaism in Antiquity: Ethno-Religion or National Identity,” *JQR* 99 (2009): 65–73. Steve Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512; Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 457, writes that Jews “were understood until late antiquity as an ethnic group comparable to other ethnic groups with their distinctive laws, traditions, customs, and God.”
- 18 Cf. Stephen G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts*, SNTSMS 23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 251: “the end of Acts seems to indicate the end of the Jewish mission and usher in the era of Gentile Christianity.”

## 2 The *Peculium* Parable in Matt 25:14–30 and Luke 19:12–26

In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark's short second slave parable (13:34–37) is replaced by a much longer and more complex parable that seems to reflect the Roman institution of the *peculium*, money given to slaves to do business with.<sup>19</sup> As Robert T. Kendall has already pointed out, the Greek *τάλα-ντα* means “money,” not “a gift or ability.”<sup>20</sup> Luke's version uses the term *μνά* (*mina*), a weight and sum of money equal to one hundred drachmae. What the two versions of this parable share with Mark is a householder who went on a journey and entrusted (some of) his property to his slaves. Mark briefly mentions that the slaves were engaged in various types of (domestic) work before focussing attention on the doorkeeper meant to be alert at the time of his master's return (Mark 13:34). Yet the distinction between the slaves is much more complex in Matthew and Luke. An earlier version of this parable may have been part of the Sayings Source Q. Due to the significant differences between Matthew and Luke, such an earlier version is no longer recoverable, however.<sup>21</sup> According to Matthew's version, the slaves received different amounts of money, “each according to his ability,” without any further instructions as to what to do with it (Matt 15:15). In Luke's version, on the other hand, ten slaves receive ten coins each, with an explicit instruction: “Trade with these until I return” (Luke 19:13).

While Matthew envisions an ordinary (wealthy) householder, Luke turns him into an aristocrat and royal contender. He allegedly “went into a far country to receive a kingdom and then return” (Luke 19:12). But the citizens of his own country “hated him and sent an embassy after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us’” (19:14). This unusual element of the householder

19 This aspect seems to be misunderstood by David Flusser, “Aesop's Miser and the Parable of the Talents,” in *Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Clemens Thoma and Michael Wyschogrod (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 9–10, who views the talents as a deposit and writes: “The meaning of the text is that God has bestowed upon each one of us our individual abilities and everyone is obligated to fully develop his special talent which has been graciously granted to him, in order that it may be productive” (10). If so, the third slave's action of safekeeping the money should have been acknowledged as in line with his character.

20 Robert T. Kendall, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2008), 321.

21 For an attempt to reconstruct an earlier version, see Adelbert Denaux, “The Parable of the Talents/Pounds (Q 19, 12–27): A Reconstruction of the Q Text,” in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Andreas Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 429–460. See also Hildegard Scherer, “Coherence and Distinctness: Exploring the Social Matrix of the Double Tradition,” in: *Gospel Interpretation and the Q-Hypothesis*, ed. Mogens Müller and Heike Omerzu (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 195.

having been appointed king abroad upon his return becomes relevant later, with regard to the reward he is able to bestow upon his slaves (in Luke 19:17, the slave whose money has increased most is made governor over five cities), and the threatened punishment of his fellow-citizens who initially rejected him: “But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me” (Luke 19:27).

Whereas the king is used as a common metaphor for God in rabbinic parables,<sup>22</sup> here the aristocrat appointed king seems to stand for Jesus as the Messiah.<sup>23</sup> This added detail seems to be motivated by Luke’s christological perspective. On the metaphorical level, the citizens of his own home country who rejected him seem to represent Jews. The threat of violence against these alleged “enemies” (Luke 19:27: “slay them before me”) would then have a strong anti-Jewish significance. This interpretation seems to be supported by the following narrative about Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem and his eventual passion and crucifixion (Luke 19:28ff.). Lloyd Gaston points to Luke’s presentation of the people as Jesus’s enemies in his version of the passion narrative.<sup>24</sup> According to Luke 23:24, “He [Pilate] delivers him [Jesus] up to the will [of the Jews].”<sup>25</sup> Pilate is thereby exculpated from the execution of Jesus. Altogether, the kingship detail seems artificial, since it is not necessary for the plot of the parable. It is absent in Matthew’s version, which lacks christological and anti-Jewish aspects and is more likely to have been told by Jesus himself.

In Matthew’s parable, the slaves are appointed as their master’s business representatives during his absence. This was a common role with which masters entrusted their better educated slaves. Slaves were allocated variable amounts of money, the so-called *peculium*, to do business with and ideally increase their master’s property. In imperial times, the *peculium* “had become a ubiquitous feature of Roman economic life ... Particularly slaves ... actively traded with their *peculia*, in effect operating as managers of quasi-independent ‘firms’ although still within the ambit of the familiar.”<sup>26</sup> In their role as businessmen, slaves remained subordinate to the householder and had to render him

22 Ignaz Ziegler, *Die Königsgleichnisse des Midrasch beleuchtet durch die römische Kaiserzeit* (Breslau: Schottlaender, 1903).

23 See also Frank Stern, *A Rabbi Looks at Jesus’ Parables* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 129, who points out that in Luke the parable appears before Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem.

24 Lloyd Gaston, “Anti-Judaism and the Passion Narrative in Luke and Acts,” in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, vol. 1, *Paul and the Gospels*, ed. Peter Richardson and David Granskou, SCJ 2/1 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 148.

25 Gaston, “Anti-Judaism,” 149.

26 Bruce W. Frier and Thomas A.J. Mc Ginn, *A Casebook on Roman Family Law*, CRS 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21.



account of their actions. If they were particularly successful in their trades, they would be rewarded by their master and could accumulate a certain amount of wealth with which they could eventually purchase their freedom.<sup>27</sup> Although the term *peculium* is not used in ancient Jewish literary sources, rabbinic literature indicates that a similar practice existed in Jewish society.<sup>28</sup> The Tosefta stipulates that “the slave who does business with what belongs to his master, behold ... [the proceeds] belong to the master” (t. B. Qam. 11:2).

A master would carefully assess his slave’s business acumen before entrusting his property to him.<sup>29</sup> In Matt 25:15, this differentiation between slaves is expressed in the comment that money was given “to each according to his ability.” The different amounts of money given to the slaves (five-two-one talents) would have created a hierarchy amongst them. The audience would already suspect the third slave to be less business-oriented than the first and second. In the course of the narrative, this suspicion is confirmed. While the first and second slave are able to increase the capital by one hundred percent through trading, the third slave was anxious about a possible loss and merely hid the coin in the ground, a common way of safekeeping valuables in antiquity.<sup>30</sup>

Since masters would be interested in and reward their servile businessmen’s ability to make a profit, even if this involved risk-taking, the homecoming householder’s reaction is understandable. He praises and elevates the slaves who were able to double his property. The character of a typical householder is expressly described in the third slave’s statement: “Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow” (Matt 25:24; cf. Luke 19:21). His anxiety also indicates the risks that servile businessmen took when using their master’s property. A loss would be considered their own responsibility and have severe consequences. Therefore,

27 On the *peculium*, see also Kyle Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275–425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 127, who shows that the church fathers were familiar with this institution.

28 See Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 276–280. See also Boaz Cohen, “Peculium in Jewish and Roman Law,” *PAAJR* 20 (1951): 135–234.

29 See also Sam Tsang, *Right Parables, Wrong Perspectives: A Diverse Reading of Luke’s Parables* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 136, with regard to Luke’s version: “With such a large sum, the slaves were obviously trusted stewards in the nobleman’s household. People didn’t just leave large sums of money for slaves to handle if the slaves didn’t have financial skill.”

30 See Catherine Hezser, “Finding a Treasure: The Treasure Motif in Jewish and Christian Parables and Stories in the Context of Jewish and Roman Law and Social Reality,” in *Overcoming Dichotomies: Parables, Fables, and Similes in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Albertina Oegema, Jonathan Pater, and Martijn Stoutjesdijk, WUNT 483 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 295–325.

the audience would have sympathized with the third slave and understood the reasons for his behaviour. The householder's reaction confirms the slave's assumption about his hard character. Since the slave should have known that he was meant to increase the entrusted money, he should have acted wisely and invested it instead (Matt 25:27). His foolishness consists in his avoidance of risk and is punished with the loss of his *peculium*. By contrast, the slaves who took the risk and invested the money are praised and rewarded at the end.

Luke, who has increased the number of slaves and the coins they were given to ten (19:13), nevertheless focusses on the actions of three in the confrontation between slave and master. The increase to ten slaves is entirely irrelevant to the plot and was likely added by Luke or at a pre-redactional stage. In contrast to Matthew, who attributes the same one hundred percent increase of the capital to the first and second slaves, Luke creates a hierarchy between them as far as their business success and reward is concerned (the second slave makes a profit of only fifty percent and is set over five cities). In both Gospels the third slave is punished by being left empty-handed. Altogether, Luke's version is much less realistic than Matthew's. The aspects of the kingdom, hostile citizens, and cities are irrelevant for the progression of the plot-line. These motifs belong to an entirely different field of images (*Bildfeld*) than the slave-master-*peculium* narrative. They seem to have been imposed on an earlier parable that Luke shared with Matthew.<sup>31</sup>

Since the same *nimshal* follows both Matthew's and Luke's version of the parable, it is likely to have been attached to the parable already in their shared source. The sentence "For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away" (Matt 25:29; cf. Luke 19:26, where the added introduction, "I tell you," attributes this statement to Jesus)<sup>32</sup> could be understood as a critical commentary on social reality: the wealthy become ever more rich, whereas the poor can easily lose the little they own. Applied to the slave experience, this would mean that the most capable servile businessmen are rewarded by their masters by being given a share of the proceeds and eventual freedom, whereas the less capable slaves are used for hard physical labour and exploited more. Such an understanding would fit the social context of Jesus's preaching amongst the uneducated and poor members of Jewish society.

31 On Luke's transformation of the parable, see Merrill Kitchen, "Rereading the Parable of the Pounds: A Social and Narrative Analysis of Luke 19:11–28," in *Prophecy and Passion: Essays in Honour of Athol Gill*, ed. David Neville (Adelaide: Australian Theological Forum, 2002), 227–246.

32 The saying also appears in Gos. Thom. 41, where it is attributed to Jesus.

In the post-Easter context of the gospels, the meaning was probably different. The daring slaves who increase the master's profits may have stood for Christian community leaders ready to carry out missionary activities. While the time of Jesus's return was uncertain, they were urged to make the most of the pre-eschatological period.<sup>33</sup> The risk-averse slave may have been identified with those who tried to maintain the *status quo* in the face of Roman repercussions. If so, early Christian community leaders may have turned a social-critical parable into a call for adventurous community-building in a hostile political environment. In Luke, the added element of the enemies of the new king adds an anti-Jewish aspect. This may be a foreshadowing of the subsequent part of the gospel, where Jesus enters Jerusalem (Luke 19:28ff.) and is called "king" by his adherents (Luke 19:38, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"). With the addition of the kingship element to the parable, those who reject the new king are symbolically destroyed by him at the end (Luke 19:27).

### 3 The Parable in the Gospel of the Hebrews

The apocryphal Gospel of the Hebrews is known only through quotations and references in the texts of some church fathers.<sup>34</sup> In his *Theophania*, Eusebius refers to an alternative version of the *peculium* parable:

For the gospel that has come to us in Hebrew characters does not bring condemnation on the one who hid [the money] but on the one who lived dissolutely. For he had three slaves: the one who squandered the wealth of the master with prostitutes and flute-players, the one who greatly

33 See also already Günther Bornkamm, "Enderwartung und Kirche im Matthäusevangelium," in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: Studies in Honour of C.H. Dodd*, ed. William D. Davies and David Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 231: "Auch das Talentgleichnis rechnet, ... mit dem langen Ausbleiben des Herrn ... Durchweg ist der Gerichtsgedanke in diesen Gleichnissen auf die Kirche angewandt." Lane C. McGaughey, "The Fear of Yahwe and the Mission of Judaism: A Postexilic Maxim and its Early Christian Expansion in the Parable of the Talents," *JBL* 94 (1975): 238, also associates the householder's absence with "the interval between the ascension and the second coming."

34 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Disc. Mary Theot.* 12a; Origen, *Comm. Jo.* 2.12.87; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.9.45.5, 5.14.96.3, and Jerome, *Comm. Isa.* 4; Jerom, *Comm. Eph.* 3; Jerome, *Comm. Ezech.* 6; Jerome, *Vir. Ill.* 2. On the nature and development of the text, see especially James R. Edwards, *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

increased the principal sum, and the one who hid the talent. One of them was praised; another was merely rebuked; the other was locked up in prison. As for the last condemnation of the slave who earned nothing, I wonder if Matthew repeated it not with him in mind but rather with reference to the slave who caroused with the drunks.<sup>35</sup>

EUSEBIUS, *Theoph.* 4.22

The Gospel of the Hebrews, to which Eusebius refers, allegedly transmitted an alternative version of the parable. Eusebius seems to be summarising that version rather than quoting it. He knew Matthew's version too and tries to correct Matthew on the basis of the Hebrew version. James R. Edwards follows Rudolf Handmann in considering this Hebrew version the simplest and earliest known version of the parable.<sup>36</sup> Such a view is problematic, however, because we lack direct access to the text of this alleged gospel. Eusebius may have summarized a more detailed version of the parable. There is no indication that he quoted from the text itself. In any case, his Greek rendering of an originally Hebrew text would have constituted an interpretation. His own commentary is interwoven into his rendition of the parable.<sup>37</sup>

In Eusebius's rendering of the Hebrew parable we are not told how much money the slaves were given by their master. The focus is on the slaves' different behaviours. In contrast to Matthew and Luke, who feature two business-worthy slaves who increased their master's property, and one anxious slave who merely preserved the money entrusted to him, this parable presents three different reactions on the part of the slaves: one who increased his master's profits, one who preserved the capital, and one who deliberately squandered it for his own benefit. From a literary point of view, such a tripartite division of characters seems preferable. In the synoptic parables the second slave, who increased the property to a lesser degree and is praised like the first, seems superfluous. This difference changes the meaning of the parable, however.

In contrast to the wicked slave, whose behaviour was illegal, the third slave who hid and preserved the money to return it to his master intact is

35 Translation with Edwards, *Hebrew Gospel*, 63–64.

36 Edwards, *Hebrew Gospel*, 64, with reference to Rudolf Handmann, *Das Hebräer-Evangelium: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Kritik des Hebräischen Matthäus* (PhD diss., Theologischen Fakultät Marburg, 1888), 103.

37 For a more critical approach to reconstructions of the Gospel to the Hebrews, see also Guido Baltes, *Hebräisches Evangelium und synoptische Überlieferung: Untersuchungen zum hebräischen Hintergrund der Evangelien*, WUNT 2/312 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 145–146, and 145n519 for a summary of earlier scholarship.

exculpated. Eusebius assumes that what he did was perfectly legitimate. His master's reaction to his behaviour is said to have been less devastating: he is "merely rebuked," whereas the truly wicked slave is imprisoned. The contrast reveals the overreaction of the master in the synoptic versions. A slave who was expected to do business with his master's property but did not receive more detailed instructions may have been at a loss on how to proceed, especially if he lacked trading experience. The master's harsh reaction, although befitting his character, seems overly strict in view of the fact that he recovers his money upon his return. From this perspective, the master's treatment of the three slaves in the Gospel of the Hebrews seems more plausible. Only the slave who deliberately loses his master's property is punished severely, whereas the slave who preserved the property is admonished so that he might change his behaviour in a similar situation in the future.

These differences in the plot suggest that the parables had different meanings within the social contexts in which they were used. As noted above, Matthew's parable may have been used to motivate missionary activity in the post-Easter community. A small success in gaining adherents would be considered better than inactivity. The Christians who told the version transmitted by Eusebius would have had a different type of behaviour in mind. According to Edwards, "the dissolute servant in the Hebrew Gospel citation is a mirror image of the prodigal younger son in Luke 15:13, 30 ... both lexically and thematically."<sup>38</sup> This is an interesting observation, for both slaves and sons were dependents of the householder and lacked legal authority over the property given to them.

Like slaves, sons could be given a *peculium*, but the property ultimately belonged to the father and master, who would be affected by its increase or decrease.<sup>39</sup> Thomas Collett Sandars writes: "The son might have a *peculium* or property under his control, which, so far as third persons went, who could sue and recover to the extent of the *peculium*, was like the son's property; but the father remained the legal owner of it, and it was only under the son's control because the father permitted this."<sup>40</sup> For cases where the son or slave incurred losses or debts, Roman law discusses complex liability issues.<sup>41</sup> The Tosefta similarly stipulates: "The son who does business with what belongs

38 Edwards, *Hebrew Gospel*, 65.

39 See Adolf Berger, "Peculium," in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, ed. Adolf Berger (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1953; repr. 1991), 624.

40 Thomas Collett Sandars, *The Institutes of Justinian*, 5th ed. (London: Longmans Green, 1874), 522.

41 See Frier and McGinn, *Casebook*, 282–286.

to his father, and likewise the slave who does business with what belongs to his master, behold, they [the proceeds] belong to the father, behold, they [the proceeds] belong to the master” (t. B. Qam. 11:2). The fact that sons and slaves could do business on behalf of their fathers and masters but were not owners of the property and could not be sued was an advantage in certain business transactions.<sup>42</sup> In all likelihood, slaves would have been punished severely if they incurred losses or wasted the householder’s property.

The threat of imprisonment, mentioned in the version of the parable according to the Gospel of the Hebrews, would have come from the master rather than an external legal authority. Luke’s prodigal son aspires to fill the position of a labourer in his father’s household (Luke 15:17; μίσθοιοι). In contrast to the severe punishment of the slave in the Hebrew Gospel, the son is pardoned, re-admitted into the household, and reacknowledged as his father’s son and eventual heir. Both the real-life status difference between sons and slaves and the son’s acknowledgement of his misbehaviour would have justified the father’s mercy on him in the perception of the audience.

For whom, then, did the wicked slave in the Gospel of the Hebrew’s version stand? That depends on what the hiding of the money means and in which social contexts the parable would have been told. If the motif of hiding the money refers to Christians who tried to keep the Christian message hidden amongst themselves rather than engaging in public missionising activities, the tolerance—but also criticism—of such behaviour would fit some early Christian circles. Some Christians may have tried to emulate the idea of the kingdom of God as a hidden treasure, expressed in the treasure parable in Matt 13:44.<sup>43</sup> Although the authors and tradents of the parable in the Gospel of the Hebrews would have preferred a more active propagation of the Christian message to gain more adherents, they did not outright condemn the views of (crypto-?)Christians who took a more guarded approach.

#### 4 Rabbinic Analogies

That the safekeeping of entrusted property was a Jewish moral value is evident from rabbinic texts:

<sup>42</sup> See Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 276.

<sup>43</sup> On treasure parables, see Hezser, “Finding a Treasure.”

When the son of R. Yohanan b. Zakkai died, his students went in to console him ... R. Elazar b. Azariah entered ... He entered and sat before him. And he said to him: I shall tell you a parable: To what can the matter be likened? To a person to whom the king entrusted a deposit. Every day he wept and cried and said: "Alas, when shall I go out from [the duty of keeping] this deposit intact? You too, Rabbi, had a son. He recited Torah, Scripture, Prophets and Writings, Mishnah, Halakhot, and Aggadot and [then] departed from the world without sin. And you should receive consolation, for you returned your deposit intact."

Avot R. Nath. A 14

משול לך משל למה"ד לאדם שהפקיד  
אצלו המלך פקדון בכל יום ויום היה  
בוכה וצועק ואומר אוי לי אימתי אצא מן  
הפקדון הזה בשלום אף אתה רבי היה  
לך בן קרא תורה מקרא נביאים וכתובים  
משנה הלכות ואגדות ונפטר מן העולם  
בלא חטא [ויש לך לקבל עליך תנחומים  
כשחזרת פקדונך שלם]

While the literary context relates the parable to the death of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai's son, suggesting that children are deposits entrusted to their parents, when seen as an independent unit the parable may well relate to Israel's safekeeping—and study—of the Torah. Lane C. McGaughey writes: "This parable typifies the rabbinic attitude which prevailed in Jesus' day. This attitude was driven by Torah ... Central to this rabbinic world was the unquestioned notion that Israel's calling was to guard the sacred tradition ... and to preserve it intact" until future messianic times.<sup>44</sup> Although the rabbinic movement had not emerged yet in Jesus's time, the notion of safeguarding the Torah was a Pharisaic-rabbinic value that existed before 70 CE and was emphasized after the destruction of the Temple, that is, at the time when the gospels were written. Whether imagined as a deposit, *peculium*, or treasure, the Torah would then have been contrasted with the new Christian message of the kingdom of God. Whether this new message should be kept safe in hiding or propagated publicly may have been contested amongst Christians.

Rabbinic documents also transmit parables that focus on the behaviour of slaves who receive something from their master. The following parable is transmitted in the Tannaitic midrash Sifre Deuteronomy:

44 McGaughey, "Fear of Yahweh," 243.

A parable concerning a king who gave a field as a gift to his slave. He gave it to him just as it is [i.e., barren]. The slave went and improved it and said: "What I have was given to me just as it is." He [the slave] returned and planted a vineyard and said: "What I have was given to me just as it is."

Sifre Deut. 8

משל למלך שנתן לעבדו שדה אחת במתנה ולא נתנה לו אלא כמות שהיא. עמד העבד והשביחה ואמר: מה בידי לא נתנה לי אלא כמות שהיא. חזר ונטעה כרם אמר מה בידי לא נתנה לי אלא כמות שהיא

The emphasis here is on the contrast between the barren plot of land and the cultivated vineyard that is the outcome of the slave's hard work. In its praise of the slave's own initiative to make the field profitable, the parable resembles the *peculium* parable in Matthew and Luke. The distinction between the *peculium* and the gift means that the slave in the midrashic parable improved the field for his own benefit, whereas the profits made by the slaves in the New Testament parable benefited their master.

In Roman law, slaves could not own property and this rule seems to have been common knowledge in Roman Palestine.<sup>45</sup> Yet there were exceptions to this principle, for example, if the master rewarded his slave's good work or decided to include him in his will.<sup>46</sup> In the latter case, slaves could become free. The Mishnah states:

[If] he writes over his property to his slave, he becomes a free person. [But if] he [the master] maintains any amount of landed property, he [the slave] does not become free. R. Shimon says: "In any case he becomes a free person, unless he [his master] says: 'Behold, all of my property shall be given to So-and-so, my slave, except for one ten-thousandth of it.'"

M. Peah 3:8

הכותב נכסיו לעבדו יצא בן חורין. שיר קרקע כל שהוא לא יצא בן חורין. רבי שמעון אומר לעולם הוא בן חורין עד שיאמר הרי כל נכסי נתונין לאיש פלוני עבדי חוץ מאחד מרבוא שבהן

The rabbinic controversy over the issue is also evident in the Tosefta parallel to this discussion (t. Peah 1:3), which rules that the property excluded from the

45 Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 284.

46 Hezser, *Jewish Slavery*, 166–168.



inheritance must be specified to be legally binding. In any case, the parable refers to an unspecified gift rather than an inheritance and there is no indication that the slave was set free.

The slave's improvement of the field is mentioned in two steps. After a general improvement, the vineyard was planted. In both cases, the slave draws attention to the significant change which his own work brought about. In the literary context of Sifre Deuteronomy, the improvement is further extended. The parable is applied to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Quoting Gen 13:17, "Get up and walk around the Land, its length and breadth, for to you have I given it," the slave is compared to Abraham, to whom God gave the land of Israel. First Abraham improved it, then Isaac, and then Jacob, so that it yielded crops "and he [Jacob] acquired a share in the field" (Gen 33:19).<sup>47</sup> As in the case of the king's slave, the patriarchs' work improved the land which ultimately belongs to God. While the slave's participation in the ownership of the field remains dubious, Jacob is said to have shared ownership with God. In the context of late antiquity, when Byzantine rulers claimed the land of Israel as the Christian "Holy Land," this midrash emphasized the divine legitimation of Jewish ownership of the land, tracing it back to ancient patriarchal times.

The most commonly cited analogy to the New Testament parable appears in the post-classical rabbinic work *Seder Eliyahu*, "an ethical discourse consisting of religious teachings, passages of retold Bible, exegesis, and parables."<sup>48</sup> The document is commonly dated to the ninth or tenth century CE and may have been composed in Byzantium.<sup>49</sup> The texts of the parables transmitted in this work could therefore not have been known to the editors of the Gospels. A discussion of the parable is relevant for conceptual reasons, however. Certain images and motifs associated with slave-ownership were probably used in variant combinations over centuries.

The parable in *Seder Eliyahu* is interwoven in a dialogue between a first-person narrator and a stranger he met on a journey, "who approached me in the way heretics do."<sup>50</sup> Since he is said to have had knowledge of Scripture but

47 Martin S. Jaffee's new English translation of Sifre Deuteronomy is available at <https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/book/sifre-devarim/chapter/pisqa-8>.

48 Constanza Cordoni, *Seder Eliyahu: A Narratological Reading*, SJ 100 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 3.

49 See the discussion in Cordoni, *Seder Eliyahu*, 7–15; Cordoni suggests that the author "might have been a Babylonian emigrant who had fled from Abbasid rule" and resided in Byzantium.

50 The translation here and below follows Cordoni, *Seder Eliyahu*, 177. The parable is also cited by Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 91.

not of the Mishnah, Wilhelm Bacher has already suggested that the parable was used in the context of anti-Karaite discourse.<sup>51</sup>

He said to me: Scripture was given to us from Mount Sinai, Mishnah was not given to us from Mount Sinai. And I answered him: My son, were not both Scripture and Mishnah uttered by the mouth of the Lord? What is the difference between Scripture and Mishnah?

They told a parable. What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who had two slaves, whom he used to love with complete love. He gave one a measure of wheat and the other a measure of wheat. He gave one a bundle of flax and the other a bundle of flax. The clever one of the two, what did he do? He took the flax and wove it into a linen cloth. He took the wheat and made a dish of fine flour out of it. He sifted and ground it [the grain], kneaded it [the dough], baked it, set it on the table, and spread the linen cloth over it, but left it [there untouched] until the coming of the king. The foolish one did nothing at all. After some time the king came into his house and spoke to them like this: 'My sons, bring me what I gave you.' One brought out [a loaf of] the dish of fine flour upon the table and the tablecloth spread over it. The other brought out the wheat in a basket and on top of it the bundle of flax.

Oh, for such a shame! Oh, for such a disgrace! Alas, tell me, which of the two was dear to him? The one who brought out the table with [the loaf of] the dish of fine flour upon it.

S. Eli. Zut. 171, lines 16–28

In this parable, the slaves are given certain raw materials rather than money, but the master's expectation resembles that of the householder in the New Testament parable. The slaves are expected to make good use of the wheat and flax to produce something of higher value, namely a meal for the king. The two slaves who are contrasted here seem to stand for the Rabbanites and Karaites of the author's own time. Both had received the scriptural heritage of the Torah from God. Whereas the Rabbanites interpreted and applied it to new circumstances, creating a new body of Oral Torah, the Karaites merely read Scripture, preserving it in its "original" form for future generations. Like the New Testament parable, the "clever" slave's industriousness and enterprise is praised and presented as a model to emulate, whereas satisfaction with the *status quo* is rejected and associated with foolishness. The money or raw material that needs to be used, that is, interpreted, taught, and adapted to contemporary

51 Wilhelm Bacher, "Antikaräisches in einem jüngeren Midrash," *MGWJ* 23 (1874): 268.

circumstances, is the Torah here, in contrast to the early Christian teaching about the kingdom of God in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

## 5 Conclusions

The study of selected slave parables in the Gospels and rabbinic literature has shown that the way in which social reality is presented is always governed by the specific theological, christological or parenetic purpose for which the parable is used. Social reality is the raw material that is transformed into concise fictional artifices. In fact, unreality, that is, the transgression of reality, seems to be crucial for parables to work metaphorically. A narrative that reflects social reality may be used to criticize reality by, for example, exaggerating certain aspects, as has been observed for the Matthean version of the *peculium* parable, which may have been used by Jesus or his early followers in a social-critical way. Nevertheless, for a parable to work on the metaphorical level, a certain degree of the unreal is necessary. In Luke's version, the unusual elements are increased, for instance by using the number ten (ten slaves who receive ten coins each) and by turning the householder into a nobleman about to become king. Tania Oldenhage refers to Ricœur's use of the term "tension" to describe the relationship "between everyday life and what the story narrates, between reality as described and re-described."<sup>52</sup> The message the parable attempts to convey cannot be expressed in any other form.<sup>53</sup>

Parables share the utilization and functionalization of reality with other art forms, such as paintings. Rather than merely depicting reality, art represents it to convey particular social, philosophical, or political meanings. Therefore, theoretical discussions about the relationship between aesthetics and everyday life can be applied to parables as well. As Katya Mandoki has pointed out, "art and reality, like aesthetics and the everyday, are totally entwined, not thanks to the explicit will of the artist, but because there is nothing further, beneath or beyond reality."<sup>54</sup> Theoretical ideas such as the belief in Jesus's second coming or the relationship between the Torah and the Mishnah could be communicated to a wider audience through the creative use of familiar images. While parables cannot be used to extrapolate historically reliable information about

52 Tania Oldenhage, *Parables for Our Time: Rereading New Testament Scholarship after the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 119.

53 Oldenhage, *Parables for Our Time*, 121.

54 Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of Culture and Social Identities* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 15.

slavery, slave parables need to be studied within the social context of ancient slave practices and the literary contexts they are integrated in. Such twofold social and literary contextualization can guide us toward the meaning and function of the parable at the various stages of its (re)telling.

### Bibliography

- Bacher, Wilhelm. "Antikaräisches in einem jüngeren Midrash." *MGWJ* 23 (1874): 266–274.
- Baltes, Guido. *Hebräisches Evangelium und synoptische Überlieferung: Untersuchungen zum hebräischen Hintergrund der Evangelien*. WUNT 2/312. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011.
- Becker, Eve-Marie. *Das Markus-Evangelium im Rahmen antiker Historiographie*. WUNT 194. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006.
- Berger, Adolf. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953. Repr. 1991.
- Bornkamm, Günther. "Enderwartung und Kirche im Matthäusevangelium." Pages 222–260 in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology. Studies in Honour of C.H. Dodd*. Edited by William D. Davies and David Daube. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.
- Buchanan, George Wesley. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Vol. 2. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006.
- Buell, Denise Kimber. *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Cohen, Boaz. "Peculium in Jewish and Roman Law." *PAAJR* 20 (1951): 135–234.
- Cordoni, Constanza. *Seder Eliyahu: A Narratological Reading*. SJ 100. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018.
- Crossan, John Dominic. *The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction about Jesus*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012.
- Denaux, Adelbert. "The Parable of the Talents/Pounds (Q 19, 12–27): A Reconstruction of the Q Text." Pages 429–460 in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*. Edited by Andreas Lindemann. BETL 158. Leuven: Peeters, 2001.
- Deppe, Dean B. *The Theological Intentions of Mark's Literary Devices: Markan Intercalations, Frames, Allusionary Repetitions, Narrative Surprises, and Three Types of Mirroring*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015.
- Donahue, John R., and Daniel J. Harrington. *The Gospel of Mark*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002.
- Duling, Dennis C. "Ethnicity, Ethnocentrism, and the Matthean Ethnos." *BTB* 35 (2005): 125–143.
- Edwards, James R. *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.

- Fischer, Emilio Rivano. *Metaphor: Art and Nature of Language and Thought*. Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2011.
- Flusser, David. "Aesop's Miser and the Parable of the Talents." Pages 9–25 in *Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity*. Edited by Clemens Thoma and Micchael Wyschogrod. New York: Paulist Press, 1989.
- Frier, Bruce W. and Thomas A.J. McGinn. *A Casebook on Roman Family Law*. CRS 5. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Gaston, Lloyd. "Anti-Judaism and the Passion Narrative in Luke and Acts." Pages 127–152 in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*. Vol. 1. *Paul and the Gospels*. Edited by Peter Richardson and David Granskou. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986.
- Glancy, Jennifer A. *Slavery in Early Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Handmann, Rudolf. *Das Hebräer-Evangelium: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Kritik des Habräischen Matthäus*. PhD diss., Theologischen Facultät Marburg, 1888.
- Harper, Kyle. *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275–425*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Hezser, Catherine. *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Hezser, Catherine, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Hezser, Catherine. "Finding a Treasure: The Treasure Motif in Jewish and Christian Parables and Stories in the Context of Jewish and Roman Law and Social Reality." Pages 295–325 in *Parables and Fables in the Graeco-Roman World*. Edited by Albertina Oegema, Jonathan Pater and Martijn Stoutjesdijk. WUNT 483. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022.
- Himmelfarb, Martha. "Judaism in Antiquity: Ethno-Religion or National Identity." *JQR* 99 (2009): 65–73.
- Kendall, Robert T. *The Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2008.
- Kitchen, Merrill. "Rereading the Parable of the Pounds: A Social and Narrative Analysis of Luke 19:11–28." Pages 227–246 in *Prophecy and Passion: Essays in Honour of Athol Gill*. Edited by David Neville. Adelaide: Australian Theological Forum, 2002.
- Kloppenborg, John S. *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine*. WUNT 195. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006.
- Kloppenborg, John S. *Synoptic Problems: Collected Essays*. WUNT 329. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- Magness, Jodi. *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011.
- Mandoki, Katya. *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of Culture and Social Identities*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.
- Mason, Steve. "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History." *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457–512.

- McGaughy, Lane C. "The Fear of Yahwe and the Mission of Judaism: A Postexilic Maxim and its Early Christian Expansion in the Parable of the Talents." *JBL* 94 (1975): 235–245.
- Oldenhage, Tania. *Parables for Our Time: Rereading New Testament Scholarship After the Holocaust*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Sandars, Thomas Collett. *The Institutes of Justinian*. 5th ed. London: Longmans Green, 1874.
- Scherer, Hildegard. "Coherence and Distinctness: Exploring the Social Matrix of the Double Tradition." Pages 185–200 in *Gospel Interpretation and the Q-Hypothesis*. Edited by Mogens Müller and Heike Omerzu. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018.
- Sessa, Kristina. *The Formation of Papal Authority in Late Antique Italy: Roman Bishops and the Domestic Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Sessa, Kristina. *Daily Life in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Snodgrass, Klyne. *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants: An Enquiry into Parable Interpretation*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011.
- Stern, Frank. *A Rabbi Looks at Jesus' Parables*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.
- Tsang, Sam. *Right Parables, Wrong Perspectives: A Diverse Reading of Luke's Parables*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015.
- Twelftree, Graham H. *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Wilson, Stephen G. *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts*. SNTSMS 23. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- Young, Brad H. *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.
- Ziegler, Ignaz. *Die Königsgleichnisse des Midrasch beleuchtet durch die römische Kaiserzeit*. Breslau: Schottlaender, 1903.