

Changes in Emotions in Greek-Speaking Judaism of Late Antiquity: The New Functions of Compassion and Envy*

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Finally he bonds with the one he had envied, does not condemn those who love him, and so ceases from envy.

Καὶ λοιπὸν συμπαθεῖ τῷ φθονουμένῳ, καὶ οὐ καταγινώσκει τῶν ἀγαπώντων αὐτόν, καὶ οὕτως παύεται τοῦ φθόνου. (T. Sim. 3:6)

Early Jewish (and Christian) texts written in Greek, in the late Hellenistic and early Imperial periods, tend to display a marked interest in emotions. The affective life figures prominently in this body of texts. Narratives, for example, expand emotional descriptions and even add emotions where none are present in corresponding scriptural texts. Both wisdom literature and philosophical texts encourage some emotions and warn against others. Early Jewish (and Christian) authors also depict how emotions emerge, to which actions they lead, and how they can be transformed—as the above epigraph illustrates. Recent studies—in particular, Teresa Morgan’s *Roman Faith and Christian Faith*, David A. Lambert’s *How Repentance Became Biblical*, and Françoise Mirguet’s *An Early History of Compassion*—have focused on discourses based on specific emotions.¹ In this paper, however, I am interested in the broader

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¹ Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early*

change that affects emotions in late antique Jewish (and Christian) communities and underlies the above discourses. I suggest that an important aspect of this change consists in the new functions that emotions receive and the new roles that they start performing. While I focus on early Jewish literature, I include in this inquiry some texts on the border between Judaism and Christianity, such as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs; these texts are used by both communities, at a time when the distinction between them is still in the making.

To explore these new functions of emotions, I concentrate on texts that rewrite, expand, or evoke scriptural texts—in particular, Philo, Josephus, and the pseudepigrapha. I have chosen to focus on narratives, as they are often the most explicit on both the contexts where emotions occur and the scenarios that these emotions tend to follow. I develop two sets of emotions: the pain felt for others' distress—often labeled as pity, compassion, or sympathy—and the pain felt for others' well-being—often labeled as jealousy or envy. These emotions are appraised in opposite ways: compassion and its related emotions are generally promoted, while painful feelings for others' well-being are mainly discouraged. Texts, at times, contrast the two emotions. For example, in the above epigraph, sympathy (*συμπαθεία*)—here an attunement to the other person and a concern for that person's well-being—is the culmination of an exercise by which the self eradicates its own envy (*φθόνος*). Case studies will show that emotions, which become more strictly defined in the late Hellenistic, early Roman period, progressively take on new roles, both in continuation with and in contrast to the Hebrew Bible. In line with a transforming conception of the human being, emotions are increasingly used to reveal the actual motives of actions, to validate others' pain or well-being, and to provide a space for self-fashion-

Roman Empire and Early Churches (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); David A. Lambert, *How Repentance Became Biblical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Françoise Mirguet, *An Early History of Compassion: Emotion and Imagination in Hellenistic Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

ing. Emotions, in other words, become a point of access to the inner self, a reinforcement of the social fabric, and a technique of self-transformation.

COMPASSION

Compassion and Other Emotional Responses to Others' Pain: Notes on Vocabulary

Compassion tends to be defined today primarily as an emotion. An oft-cited definition states that compassion is “the feeling that arises in witnessing another’s suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help.”² By contrast, in the Hebrew Bible, no single Hebrew term refers to compassion strictly as an emotion, although many biblical texts address human suffering and recommend its alleviation. The noun רַחֲמִים and its cognates tend to designate a constant bond or attachment, especially as it is activated in situations of suffering and vulnerability. These terms, however, do not denote distress felt for others’ pain. Verbs like חָמַל and חָסַד at times indicate an emotional experience, but also frequently designate the action of sparing someone and refraining from killing.³ More generally, ancient Hebrew terms translated by emotions in modern languages usually display a broader extension than the modern concept of emotion. These so-called emotional terms often include physical sensations, postures, acts, rituals, often in a way that engages social status.⁴ These terms thus designate a more capacious experience than the modern concept and possess more fluid boundaries.

² Jennifer L. Goetz, Dacher Keltner, Emiliana Simon-Thomas, “Compassion: An Evolutionary Analysis and Empirical Review,” *Psychological Bulletin* 136/3 (2010): 351–374 (quotation from page 2).

³ The verbs seem to refer to an emotion in Deut 19:21; Mal 3:17; 2 Sam 12:6; Isa 13:18, while they rather evoke an action in Gen 45:20; 1 Sam 15:9, 15; 2 Sam 12:4; 21:7.

⁴ See Françoise Mirguet, “What is an ‘Emotion’ in the Hebrew Bible? An Experience That Exceeds Most Contemporary Concepts,” *BI* 24/4–5 (2016): 442–465.

By contrast, Hellenistic literature as a whole, and Greek-speaking Jewish literature in particular, exhibits a narrower vocabulary for emotional responses to others' pain and even includes some lexical innovations. The term *συμπαθεία*, originally a scientific term rendering an attuned harmony between objects or bodies, receives an affective charge: it is first used to express affection between family members, and is then expanded to an empathic reaction to others' pain, both within and beyond the family. The Greek terms *ἔλεος* and *οἶκτος*—the standard terms expressing the emotions felt for others' pain—also tend to be used more broadly, in response not only to undeserved pain (as in Aristotle's definition) but also to all kinds of unfortunate situations.⁵ In Jewish literature specifically, and then in early Christian texts, different terms based on *σπλάγγνα* (the "inner organs") are used to designate an embodied—gut-felt—response to others' pain. Beyond this lexical expansion, a comparison between biblical and early Jewish narratives reveals that an affective reaction to others' pain tends to be added where no such response is explicitly mentioned in corresponding biblical material. Rather than presupposing that something is missing in the Hebrew texts, I attempt to understand the functions of this emphasis on affective reactions to others' pain.

Additions of Emotional Responses to Others' Pain: Examples in Josephus and Philo

In Genesis 18, the divine character lets Abraham overhear that he is heading to Sodom and Gomorrah to determine their transgressions. Abraham's reaction is rendered by both his physical position—"Abraham approached..."—and by his words—"Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" (Gen 18:22–33). Facing the potential

⁵ Aristotle defines pity [*ἔλεος*] in the following terms: "a pain about a perceived, destructive or painful, harm, happening to someone not deserving it, which one, or one of one's own, might expect to suffer oneself, and when it seems near" (*Rhetoric* 2.8.2, 1385b).

suffering of others, most of whom are unrelated to him (but including his nephew, Lot), Abraham immediately—and literally—steps in. The scene comprises no explicit emotion to explain Abraham's obstinate argument; what matters, rather, is his persistence and the deity's acceptance of his zealous disputation. Flavius Josephus, however, when he rewrites the scene in his *Antiquities*, imagines what Abraham is feeling: "Hearing this, Abraham felt grief [ἤλγησεν] for the Sodomites; arising, he entreated God..." (*Ant.* 1:199). Although Josephus condenses the whole conversation between Abraham and the divine character into two sentences, he nevertheless adds Abraham's emotional reaction to the Sodomites' fate. Here, the patriarch's courage in beseeching the deity stems from his distress at the prospect of Sodom's annihilation. This addition has been interpreted as an apologetic note, responding to anti-Jewish polemics.⁶ While establishing a positive portrayal of the ancient Israelites was no doubt part of Josephus' endeavor, such an emotional addition seems to me wider in purpose; compassion, as we will see, is not limited to patriarchs. Here, Abraham's grief signals what motivates his concern for the Sodomites.

The encounter between King Saul and the necromancer of Ein Dor, both in the Hebrew scriptures (1 Sam 28) and in Josephus' retelling (*Ant.* 6:329–342), announces the impending demise of the king. At the end of the biblical story, the woman, noticing that Saul is "very agitated [נְבֹהֵל מְאֹד]" (28:21), urges him to eat and prepares her fatted calf, along with unleavened bread (28:21–25). Josephus expands this final scene; he stresses that the calf had been the object of the woman's care, fed by her, and her only possession (6:339). He continues with a full-fledged encomium of the necromancer, centered on her emotion: she "sympathized [συνεπάθησέ] and comforted him [Saul]" (6:341). In the scriptural narrative, the necromancer's care is prompted by what she sees—

⁶ See Louis H. Feldman, *Judean Antiquities 1–4: Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 75, and, more generally, Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 546–551, 557–558.

“she saw that he was very dismayed” (1 Sam 28:21). In Josephus, her care is explained by what she feels. Sympathy is the impulse that brings the woman to show kindness to Saul—a complete stranger to her—who, furthermore, has made her livelihood illicit. Her sympathy also validates Saul’s anguish: if the necromancer shows such emotional distress, then the king must really be in agony!

Philo, too, adds emotional responses to others’ pain in his retelling of scripture—for example, in the narrative of baby Moses’ rescue. The biblical narrative presents a two-step sequence, where visual perception is directly followed by action. Pharaoh’s daughter, preparing to bathe in the Nile, catches sight of a basket: “She opened and saw him, the child—behold, a boy crying! And she spared [וַתַּחַמַּל עָלָיו] him...” (Exod 2:6). The scene does not contain any strictly emotional terms, although the verb “to spare” (חַמַּל), as noted above, may entail an affective dimension. The experience of Pharaoh’s daughter is conveyed, rather, by what she sees. “Behold” (וַתַּחַמַּל) introduces her point of view and renders the scene as if it were seen through the girl’s eyes.⁷ Moses, heretofore referred to as “the child” (הַיֶּלֶד), in connection with the one who gave birth (יָלַד) to him, is at this point called “a boy” (נֶעַר), without the definite article, thus from the perspective of Pharaoh’s daughter. This visual perception leads the girl to transgress her father’s command to kill all male Hebrew infants. Philo, by contrast, inserts an emotion into the sequence of events: “Then, having examined him [baby Moses] from head to foot, she [Pharaoh’s daughter] admired his beauty and health; seeing him cry, she pitied [ἔλεειν] him, her soul already turning towards a maternal emotion as if he were her own child” (*Mos.* 1:15). In Philo’s retelling, Pharaoh’s daughter not only sees the baby, but also feels for him. Her compassion moves her to save the child and disobey her father’s order.

⁷ On the use of הִנֵּה and its function in shifting points of view, see for example Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), 43–82.

The Testament of Abraham: Abraham Has to Learn Compassion

Other texts are even more explicit in promoting compassion. I start with the Testament of Abraham, likely composed in the first centuries CE, probably in a Jewish milieu, although the text was later edited and transmitted by Christians. In one of its many facets, the Testament suggests that Abraham's actions of care—such as his hospitality toward and entreaty on behalf of others—are not quite sufficient on their own, but should proceed from an actual feeling: compassion. The Testament tells about Abraham's last days and, in particular, his attempts to delay the moment of his death. In one of these efforts, Abraham asks to look at the entire inhabited world, and God grants his request. During his trip, Abraham is appalled at sinners about to commit crimes; for each, he requests lethal punishment. The deity does not appreciate Abraham's ruthless justice: "For if he sees all those who live in sin, he will destroy all creation; for, behold: Abraham has not sinned, so he does not have pity [οὐκ ἐλεεῖ] for the sinners" (T. Ab. 10:13, long recension). Later in the text, Abraham learns to be compassionate. He implores the deity for the salvation of a soul, for the lives of the sinners he condemned, and finally for the lives of his servants, who were struck dead on seeing Death (14:1–9, 10–15; 18:9–10, long recension). The vocabulary of compassion is not explicit, but Abraham's tears betray his emotional involvement (14:12).

The Testament of Abraham thus suggests that Abraham has one last thing to learn before the end of his life: the felt partaking in others' pain. The scriptures portray his actions of care; the Testament tells how he eventually learns to be touched by human vulnerability. The Hellenistic narrative illustrates a new attitude towards emotions. First, acts of assistance are not sufficient in themselves; they must arise from an intimate sense of distress for the pain affecting others. Second, the Testament of Abraham also shows that an emotion like compassion is not only spontaneous; it can also be acquired. Through his visit to the heav-

ens and his encounter with Death, Abraham learns this felt participation in others' pain.

The Testament of Zebulun: Compassion as the Primary Response to Others' Pain

The most developed example of compassion in early Jewish literature (on the border with Christianity) is found in the Testament of Zebulun. The text is part of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, a collection of pseudepigraphic deathbed discourses attributed to the twelve sons of Jacob.⁸ The consensus is that the collection developed from a Jewish core, probably composed during the first centuries CE, and was then expanded by Christians.⁹ Each testament in the collection deals with one virtue, vice, or emotion; the Testament of Zebulun focuses on emotional responses to others' pain. It begins with an imaginative interpretation of what Zebulun felt when his brothers threatened to kill Joseph:

“I was moved to pity [οἶκτον], and I began to cry, and my liver was pouring out within me, and all the foundation of my inner parts [σπλάγγων] became porous in my soul. And Joseph cried, and I with him, and my heart was humming, and the joints of my body were shaken, and I was not able to stand.” (T. Zeb. 2:4–5)

⁸ See Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

⁹ See James L. Kugel, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture* (ed. L. H. Feldman, J. L. Kugel, and L. H. Schiffman; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2013), 1697–1855; Robert A. Kugler, “The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Not-So-Ambiguous Witness to Early Jewish Interpretive Practices,” in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism* (ed. M. Henze; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 337–360; Robert A. Kugler, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 31–39; Jarl H. Ulrichsen, *Die Grundschrift der Testamente der zwölf Patriarchen. Eine Untersuchung zu Umfang, Inhalt und Eigenart der ursprünglichen Schrift* (Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum 10; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1991); Harm W. Hollander and Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1985).

The physical symptoms that Zebulun describes suggest that he experienced—bodily—the very terror felt by his brother Joseph, as if he himself were threatened. In contrast with the previous stories, the emotion, here, does not lead to action; Zebulun is unable to rescue Joseph (another brother, Reuben, does; see 2:7–8). Compassion plays a different role. While other examples in the Testament of Zebulun illustrate that compassion can prompt actions of care (see chapters 6 and 7), the vicarious pain felt by Zebulun distinguishes him from the murderous brothers. Even if Zebulun did not *do* anything, his gut-felt compassion manifests his “choice” or “inclination” (προαίρεσις; 5:2) and also protects him against sickness and other dangers (5:2, 4, 5). Further on in the text, Zebulun explains that, sometimes, compassion can be the only possible response to others’ pain:

“And if, at one time, you do not have anything to give to the one in need, suffer [with him] in inner feelings of pity. I know that my hand did not find anything available to give to the one in need; for seven stadia, walking with him, I cried and my inner parts turned towards him in sympathy.” (T. Zeb. 7:3–4)

As we just saw, the Testament of Abraham suggests that actions of care alone are not sufficient to achieve virtue; they should be accompanied by sympathetic feelings. The Testament of Zebulun goes even further: sometimes compassion is the only available way to respond to others’ pain. This new function of compassion stands in marked contrast to the more unitary view of experience in the Hebrew Bible, where actions, feelings, and sensations are rarely strictly dissociated from each other. Greek-speaking Jewish texts of late antiquity, by contrast, tend to distinguish different facets of experience. In the case of compassion, they hold that actions of care should proceed from a felt sensitivity to others’ pain; in some instances, feelings are the only possible response.

The Testament of Zebulun, even more than the Testament of Abraham, makes clear that compassion can be actively cultivated and learned. Zebulun urges his descendants:

“And now, my children, I declare to you to keep the commandments of the Lord and to do pity [ποιεῖν ἔλεος] to the neighbor and to have compassion

[εὐσπλαγγίαν] for all, not only for human beings, but also for animals.” (T. Zeb. 5:1)

Compassion is thus associated with the other commandments; like them, it needs to be practiced. The narrative scene at the beginning of the text, where Zebulun describes the physiological symptoms of compassion—internal confusion, weakness, elevated heart rate—may even provide readers with actual bodily training. By minutely describing these sensations, the text teaches readers how to pay attention to what compassion actually feels like. Readers can then observe the same sensations in their own bodies as they cultivate sensitivity to others’ distress.

New Functions of Emotional Responses to Others’ Pain

Emotional responses to others’ pain, very rarely expressed as such in the Hebrew scriptures, take on three major new roles in Greek-speaking early Jewish literature. First, the very consistency with which compassion and sympathy are added in narratives suggests that they have become a necessary component of social life. Compassion validates the other person’s pain and gives it a social reality. It tightens the social fabric, beyond social status and ethnicity (as the examples of the necromancer and Pharaoh’s daughter show). Second, emotional responses to others’ pain are presented as impulses to perform actions that are costly or even dangerous to the self. Often, a sensory perception in the Hebrew scriptures is converted in its Hellenistic retelling into an emotion; not simple awareness, but rather the actual experience of distress moves the character to assist or care. In the Testament of Abraham, the emotion is necessary to give action its full value; in the Testament of Zebulun, the emotion may even *replace* action as an appropriate response. Emotions serve as an indicator of one’s motivations and give access to the inner self. Third, compassion is constructed as an opportunity for self-transformation. Human beings can acquire compassion: the Testament of Abraham tells how its hero finally learned to experience the emotion, at the

threshold of death; the Testament of Zebulun trains its readers to notice and develop the bodily sensations that accompany compassion. Compassion and sympathy are tools for building a desirable self.

ENVY AND JEALOUSY

Envy and Jealousy: Notes on Vocabulary

With distress felt at the well-being of others, our perspective is broadened beyond socially appropriate emotions. In contemporary English, two words, “envy” and “jealousy,” express this distress with a slight difference in meaning. Envy is caused by the realization of what another person has, whether one desires to possess it or not; the Oxford English Dictionary defines the term as “the feeling of mortification and ill-will occasioned by the contemplation of superior advantages possessed by another.” Jealousy, by contrast, is mainly a fear; the same dictionary defines it as “[the] fear of losing some good through the rivalry of another”—for example, the affection of a loved one.

In the Hebrew Bible, the motif is expressed by the root אָנַן. Cognates in Syriac and in Arabic evoke the color red, perhaps suggesting that אָנַן initially described a physiological symptom: the reddening of the face.¹⁰ Terms based on the root אָנַן function in two different ways, basically (but not exactly) fitting the modern uses of jealousy and envy.¹¹ In its first and most common use, the root אָנַן expresses a desire

¹⁰ See John H. Elliott, “God—Zealous or Jealous but Never Envious: The Theological Consequences of Linguistic and Social Distinctions,” in *The Social Sciences and Biblical Translation* (ed. D. Neufeld; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 79–96, esp. 85.

¹¹ On the root אָנַן and its different uses, see John H. Elliott, “Envy, Jealousy, and Zeal in the Bible: Sorting out the Social Differences and Theological Implications—No Envy for Yhwh,” in *To Break Every Yoke: Essays in Honor of Marvin L. Chaney* (ed. R. B. Coote and N. K. Gottwald; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 344–364, as well as Elliott, “God—Zealous or Jealous but Never Envious.” Elliott distinguishes three uses of the root—jealousy, envy, and zeal. I understand the different uses of the root in a way

for the exclusive enjoyment of a possession or status (the root often has this meaning when its subject is the deity). For example, Joshua requests that Moses prevent Eldad and Medad from prophesying in the camp. Moses demurs: “Are you jealous for me [המקנא אתה לי]?” (Num 11:29). Moses suspects that Joshua wants him to be the only one in possession of the divine spirit. The root קנא, here, expresses a desire for exclusivity: someone has a special status, and the jealous person does not want others to enjoy this prerogative. The same applies to the “spirit of jealousy” [רוח־קנאה] that animates the husband of the Sotah, the woman suspected of adultery (Num 5:14). The husband wants to be the only one to have sexual access to his wife. His קנאה is a response to a threatened sense of exclusivity. Positive connotations can also be attached to this use of the root קנא (which then tends to be translated as “zeal”). For example, the deity praises Phinehas for “being zealous of my own zeal” [בקנאו את־קנאתי] (Num 25:11)—as if Phinehas had internalized the divine desire for exclusivity.¹² In its second (and perhaps later) use, words based on קנא connote a desire to have what someone else has, but that one does not currently have oneself. A paradigmatic example is Jacob’s sons’ attitude towards their brother Joseph (Gen 37:11). The brothers perceive that Jacob loves Joseph more than he loves them; they are also annoyed at Joseph’s dreams predicting his future dominance. They are envious [ויקנאו־בו]: they resist the idea of Joseph having more than they have; they also probably want for themselves this additional power and fatherly love. In its two uses, terms based on the root קנא exceed a strict emotion in the modern understanding; they refer, rather, to a negotiation of social standing and authority—who has it, over whom, and in exclusion of whom.¹³

that is less dependent on current English terms and rather is based on the situations in which the terms occur in biblical texts.

¹² Phinehas’ zeal or jealousy is recalled in several Hellenistic texts (Sir 45:23; 1 Macc 2:25; 4 Macc 18:12—all using the verb/adjective *ζηλόω/ζηλωτός*), which thus continue this scriptural tradition of positive zeal.

¹³ See Elliott, “God—Zealous or Jealous but Never Envious,” 79, 94–96.

Distress caused by the well-being of others frequently occurs in Greek-speaking early Jewish writings.¹⁴ Several terms are used to express this emotion in Greek. The verb ζήλω and the noun ζήλωσις are regular matches, in the Greek scriptures, for Hebrew terms based on the root זנך. According to Aristotle, ζήλος (or ζήλωσις) refers to the pain arising from the perception that others possess certain goods, because the self does not possess them (*Rhet.* 2.11, 1388a). The noun ζηλοτυπία (absent in the texts examined in this article) is used in the Greek scriptures in only one text (Num 5). It refers to the pain felt when one realizes that someone else also has what one has; it thus suggests a desire for exclusivity. The verb βασκαίνω is used twice (Deut 28:54, 56) in the Greek scriptures. It translates the Hebrew תרע עיניו/עינה ("his/her eye will do evil"); it tends to designate resentment at what the other has. The verb φθονέω, the noun φθόνος, and their cognates start appearing in later texts, such as Tobit (4:7, 16) and Sirach (14:10), and are then frequently used in texts first written in Greek. Aristotle distinguishes φθόνος from ζήλος: φθόνος designates the pain arising from the perception of others' good fortune, not because one desires this success, but because one cannot accept that others may enjoy it (*Rhet.* 2.10, 1387b).¹⁵ The early Jewish texts that I quote here, however, use these terms with little distinction between them.¹⁶

¹⁴ For an outline of the motif of envy in early Jewish and Christian literature, see Benjamin Lappenga, "James 3:13–4:10 and the Language of Envy in Proverbs 3," *JBL* 136/4 (2017): 989–1006.

¹⁵ On jealousy and envy terms in ancient Greek, see David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 219–243.

¹⁶ For a similar observation about the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, see Tom de Bruin, *The Great Controversy: The Individual's Struggle between Good and Evil in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and in their Jewish and Christian Contexts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 126; Kugler, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 45; Hollander, de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 109–110. About Josephus' treatment of envy, see Louis H. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Joab," *Estudios Bíblicos* 51 (1993): 323–351, esp. 337–350. Feldman's review suggests that Josephus

I will highlight here what I perceive as three of the most prominent functions of envy and jealousy in a selection of late antique Jewish narrative texts (in Greek, or translating a Greek text). These functions are parallel to those observed for compassion: 1) a validation of the well-being of others; 2) an indication of the impetus of an action; 3) an occasion for self-fashioning. None of these functions are emphasized as such in the Hebrew Bible. The following examples successively illustrate these three functions.

Envy Validates the Well-Being of Others

Josephus frequently inserts envy in his retelling of scriptures, often with a similar pattern: the happiness, wealth, or status of a character—often an Israelite—is followed by the envy of others. After Abraham consents to the sacrifice of his (here compliant) son, God promises that Isaac will live “happily” to an advanced age, that his family will increase, and that his descendants will possess the land of Canaan. The deity then concludes, “they will be envied [ζηλωτούς] by all human beings” (*Ant.* 1:235). Regarding Jacob, Josephus asserts that “he came to greatness of happiness such that does not happen easily to someone else; he exceeded the inhabitants of the country in riches and he was envied [ζηλωτός] and admired for the virtues of his children” (*Ant.* 2:7). The Egyptians are seized “with envy” [κατὰ φθόνον] for the Hebrews, because of their happiness, number, and possessions (*Ant.* 2:201–202). Pharaoh is so envious [φθόνου] of Moses’ leadership skills that he attempts to kill him (*Ant.* 2.255). David and Jonathan, when they part from each other, “lamented ... their companionship, which was envied [ἐφθονημένην]” (*Ant.* 6:241). Daniel, too, is envied: “[Held] in so great honor and in sumptuous care by Darius, alone entrusted with everything by him,... [Daniel] was envied [ἐφθονήθη] by the rest, for those who see others

uses the Greek terms as synonyms. The Epistle of James, however, makes a distinction between the terms, according to Lappenga, “James 3:13–4:10.”

[held] by kings in greater honor than themselves envy [βασκαίνουσι] them” (*Ant.* 10:250; see also 10:251, 256, and 3 Macc 6:7).

Commentators have interpreted Josephus’ emphasis on envy in two complementary ways. First, they have perceived in Josephus’ additions a representation—and perhaps a condemnation—of the envy to which the Jewish community of his time was subjected.¹⁷ Second, they have understood the motif as Josephus’ own identification with scriptural characters, since, in his *Life*, he frequently reports being the object of his rivals’ envy (e.g., *Life* 85, 122, 189, 204, 423, 425).¹⁸ It seems to me that the passages quoted above and these two cases of envy—for the Jewish people’s (relative) prosperity and for Josephus’ own success—actually serve to illustrate the same, broader function of envy. In all these instances, envy validates the well-being of a person or community. As Steve Mason writes about Josephus’ *Life*, the envy of others reinforces the prestige of the self.¹⁹ Just as compassion may confirm the pain of someone in distress, envy functions as an effective proof of good fortune.²⁰ In all the previous examples, envy contributes more to describing the character who is envied than the character who feels envy. Those who feel envy—when even mentioned—are often a vague, undefined group of people: “all human beings” (*Ant.* 1:235), “the inhabitants of the country” (2:7), “the Egyptians” (2:201), and “the rest” (10:250). The emotion contributes to building a set of social relations, where

¹⁷ See Feldman, *Judean Antiquities 1–4*, 130 (about the envy directed against Jacob): “Since Jacob is the direct ancestor of the Jewish people the envy directed toward him is probably to be viewed as predictive of the envy directed toward the Jews after him.” See also Louis H. Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Moses: Part Two,” *JQR* 83/1–2 (1992): 7–50.

¹⁸ See Feldman, *Judean Antiquities 1–4*, 130: “This emphasis on the theme of envy is doubtless influenced by Josephus’ own experience in being subjected to the envy of his arch-enemy John of Gischala.”

¹⁹ Steve Mason, *Life of Josephus: Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 11 and 78–79, as well as Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees: A Composition-Critical Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 225–227.

²⁰ The same motif is found in Philo as well (e.g., *Dreams* 1:223; *Joseph* 5).

states like pain and well-being are defined not only by practical circumstances, but also by the feelings that these circumstances elicit in others.

Such a function of envy or jealousy is not prominent in the Hebrew Bible—if it is present at all. The jealousy [ריוח־קנאה] of the Sotah's husband, for example, does not validate anything. In fact, the very ritual to which the unfortunate wife is submitted aims precisely at determining whether or not she has committed adultery. Joshua's jealous desire for Moses' exclusive status does not validate it; at most, it may suggest Joshua's anxiety about his own future leadership, after Moses' death. The Philistines' envy of Isaac is mentioned just after a report of his flock, cattle, and servants (Gen 26:14); their envy, however, is hardly necessary to confirm Isaac's wealth. More likely, the Philistines' envy introduces Abimelech's request that Isaac go away (26:16).

Envy Indicates the Impetus of an Action

A second prominent function of envy, in Jewish literature of late antiquity, is to reveal the impetus of an action—again, a role parallel to that played by compassion.²¹ To illustrate this function, I turn to the motif of the serpent's envy. Absent in the Hebrew Bible, this theme is mentioned or developed in several different sources—the book of Wisdom, Josephus' *Antiquities*, the Latin version of the Life of Adam and Eve, and, briefly, in the Babylonian Talmud. Rather than following a chronological order (some texts are difficult to date anyway), I trace the motif as it progressively expands. I begin with an early occurrence of the devil's envy, found in the book of Wisdom:

For God created the human being for incorruption,
 And he made him an image of his own eternity;
 But through the envy of the enemy/devil [φθόνω δὲ διαβόλου]
 death entered the world,
 Those who belong to his party experience it. (Wis 2:23–24)²²

²¹ See a similar observation in Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible*, 567.

²² John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch* (JSP

Who is the *diabolos*, and of what is he envious—of divine power or of human privilege? Josephus, in his *Antiquities*, fleshes out the subject:

While all living beings were speaking the same language, at that time, the serpent, living together with Adam and his wife, had envy [φθονερῶς] for them. Supposing that they would be happy believing in God's commands, but would fall into calamity if they were to disobey, he maliciously persuaded the woman... (*Ant.* 1:41–42)

The serpent's envy, in Josephus' account, is at the core of his deception. The serpent cannot stand human beings' happiness—the bliss that they enjoy in paradise and/or the bliss that they will experience by observing divine commands. The serpent devises his scheme of deception in order to deprive them of this happiness. Envy, here, is the inability to accept the well-being of others. It is presented by Josephus as the ultimate motive behind the serpent's deception.²³ A similar idea is found in the Babylonian Talmud, in tractate Sanhedrin, where the serpent is said to be envious [אנאקא] of Adam's glory (b. Sanh. 59b).

The Latin version of the Life of Adam and Eve (itself the translation of a lost Greek text) includes the most developed expression of this motif. The LAE is dated between the first century BCE (by those who attribute the core of the text to a Jewish milieu) and the first centuries CE (by those who locate the origins of the text in the early Christian community).²⁴ The relevant scene is situated shortly after Adam and Eve's expulsion from paradise. The two humans try to repent, but the devil deceives Eve a second time. Upon realizing the subterfuge, Eve addresses the devil, and the following dialogue ensues:

Supp. 1; Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 51–52, raises the possibility that διάβολος, here, may not refer to the devil, but rather to Cain (“the enemy”).

²³ On this passage, see Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism*, 104–105.

²⁴ For the critical edition of the Latin text, see Jean-Pierre Pettoirelli, *Vita Latina Adae et Evae* (Corpus Christianorum; Series Apocryphorum 18–19; Turnhout: Brepols, 2012). I follow Paris ms. 3832 (lat-P), a Latin translation of a Greek text closely related to the Greek source of the Armenian and Georgian versions. Pettoirelli deems that lat-P reflects an earlier text than the common Latin text (lat-V). There are no major variations between the Latin texts for the passage considered here.

[Eve]²⁵ cried out in a great moan: “Woe to you, devil, who fights us without reason. What is there between you and us? What have we done against you, that you pursue us with deceit? Why is your malice against us? Is it we who have taken away your glory, or we who have caused you to be without the glory that you possessed? Why do you pursue us unjustly and enviously [*inuidiose*]?” And the devil cried out, groaned, and said to Adam: “All my enmity, envy [*inuidia*], and deceit are from you, since, because of you, I have been expelled from my glory and my splendor that I had in heaven in the midst of the archangels. Because of you, I have even been thrown onto the earth.” (LAE 11:2–12:1)

The devil explains that God threw him onto the earth on the day humans were created, because he refused to adore Adam. He continues:

“When I understood that it was because of you that I had been expelled, I was moved to sadness because I had been expelled from such a great glory and I was seeing you in the joy of delights. Then, with deceit, I afflicted you through your wife and caused you to be expelled from the delights of paradise. For, as I had been expelled from my glory, in the same way I acted so that you would be expelled from paradise. Indeed, I did not want to suffer to see you there whence I had been expelled.” (LAE 16:2–3)

In his confession, the devil details the genesis of his envy: the grief of losing his glory, the pain of witnessing the joy of others, and the desire not only to deprive others of their joy, but also to cause them the same grief that he suffered. The devil has no hope of recovering his glory; he just cannot bear that others enjoy what he has lost. As in Josephus, the devil’s envy here reveals an inability to accept the happiness of others.

The Greek text of the *Life of Adam and Eve* does not include the motif of the devil’s envy, but does contain an interesting mention of distress caused by the potential advantage of others. The emotion, attributed this time to the divine character, is situated in the scene of Eve’s deception in paradise.²⁶ The serpent tries to convince Eve to eat the fruit; once the humans eat it, he promises, their eyes will be open and they

²⁵ The subject of *clamauit* is not explicit and can be either Eve or Adam. I choose Eve, since she is the subject of the previous verbs.

²⁶ For the critical edition of the Greek text, see Johannes Tromp, *The Life of Adam and Eve in Greek* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005).

will become like gods. He adds: “God, knowing this, that you would be like him, envied/was jealous of [ἐφθόνησεν] you and said, ‘Do not eat of it’ (LAE 18:4).²⁷ The serpent pretends that the divine prohibition of eating from the tree proceeds from jealousy: God is jealous of his own knowledge and cannot stand the idea of humans sharing it. As in the Latin text, the emotion explains an action mentioned by the scriptural text but left without a motivation. Envy and jealousy, whether in a confession or in a false interpretation, provide the “why.”

In these sources, the devil’s envy (and, parenthetically, God’s jealousy) unveils the impetus for an action left unexplained in the Hebrew Bible. These early Jewish texts illustrate a desire to “fill in the blanks” in scripture; more specifically, however, they suggest a shift of interest from acts to their motivations—from what is done to an exploration of the inner reasons that lead human beings (as well as their divine and diabolical counterparts) to behave the way they do. This drive is an emotion—the “why” behind the action. The emotional realm, here, is constructed as a supplemental layer in human experience, where actions find their ultimate motivations.

How new is this function of envy and jealousy? I mentioned above the Philistines’ envy for Isaac’s possessions and Abimelech’s subsequent request that Isaac leave the territory (Gen 26:14, 16). Rachel’s envy of her sister Leah (Gen 30:1) is similarly situated just before her request that Jacob have intercourse with the maidservant Bilhah (30:3). In these two examples, envy precedes a request. Rather than an investigation into a character’s motivations, however, these passages suggest a temporal sequence where a disproportion of possessions or offspring leads to actions aimed at correcting this disparity. The story of Joseph’s brothers’ hate (Gen 37:4, 8) and envy (37:11) presents a more complex tableau, but still displays the same sequential model, where the emotion arises

²⁷ On this passage, see Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta, “The Envy of God in the Paradise Story According to the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve*,” in Flores Florentino: *Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (ed. A. Hilhorst, É. Puech, E. Tigchelaar; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 537–550.

and then leads to the action. The story, which may belong to the later strata of Genesis (as suggested by the motif of the wise adviser in a foreign court, also found in Esther and in Daniel), may offer an early anticipation of the role that emotions take in early Jewish literature. Outside of narrative literature, envy is explicitly presented as a motivation for action in Qohelet: “I have seen all toil and all skill in work—it is man’s envy of another [קנאת־איש מרעהו]” (Qoh 4:4). The function of envy as a motivation for action, therefore, starts appearing in late biblical texts; there is no abrupt transition between scriptural texts and their late antique retellings.

While the Hebrew Bible tends to present a sequential view of human behavior, early Jewish narratives display a layered conception, where actions can be decrypted by their underlying emotions, revealed in confession-like discourses.²⁸ The structure of the Life of Adam and Eve, in both its Latin and Greek versions, reflects this stratified construction: it is only after the fact that the reader learns about the envious dispositions of the serpent (in the Latin version) and, as alleged by the serpent, of God’s jealousy (in the Greek version). This *ex post facto* revelation contributes to an archaeological portrayal of characters; the action appears in plain sight, but a later confession or malicious interpretation may unveil its deeper, hidden motivations.

Envy is an Occasion for Self-Fashioning

In its third function in early Jewish sources, envy becomes an occasion for self-fashioning, with a potential cosmic impact. Envy is presented as an emotion that the self can and should eradicate. As we already noted for compassion, an emotion, by its very malleability, becomes a tool of self-transformation, whether the particular emotion should be cultivated or eliminated. The Testament of Simeon (part of the Testaments of the

²⁸ The vocabulary of the “layered self” (in the case of the Rabbinic conception of the human being) is used by Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: Yetzer Hara and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 132.

Twelve Patriarchs) illustrates how envy should be suppressed.²⁹ It reports Simeon's deathbed discourse, in which he confesses his struggle with envy. The text presents a subtle analysis of envy, in which the emotion plays out both in human bodies and at a cosmic level. Simeon recognizes:

"In that time, I was envious [ἐζήλωσα] of Joseph, because our father loved him."
(T. Sim. 2:6)

The emotion is rooted within the familial context; it arises from Jacob's preferential love for Joseph. However, Simeon also reports that envy was sent to him by the "prince of deceit":

"I strengthened my liver against him [Joseph] to destroy him because the prince of deceit [ὁ ἄρχων τῆς πλάνης], having sent the spirit of envy [τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ ζήλου], blinded my mind, so that I did not care for him as a brother and did not spare Jacob my father." (2:7)

Envy, according to this text, has a dual origin: it is sent by the devil, but also develops within the human being—as Simeon says, within his body (liver) and mind.³⁰ The Testament of Zebulun, as we observed, describes the physical symptoms of compassion. The Testament of Simeon, likewise, depicts how envy feels:

"Because this [envy] makes the soul mad and corrupts the body, it causes anger and war in thoughts; it provokes to blood; it leads the mind into a trance; it does not permit intelligence to work in human beings; it even seizes sleep and causes confusion in the soul and trembling in the body." (4:8)

Simeon goes on to describe the physical practices that, with divine assistance, delivered him from envy:

"Repenting, I wept and I prayed to the Lord that I might be restored and that I might stay away from all defilement and envy [φθόνου] and all foolishness."
(2:13)

²⁹ For a discussion of envy in the Testament of Simeon, see Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 115–118.

³⁰ On the "prince of deceit" in the Testament of Simeon, see de Bruin, *The Great Controversy*, 125–131 and Kugler, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, 46.

“For two years of days, in fear of the Lord, I afflicted my soul with fasting and I knew that the relief from envy [φθόνου] comes through the fear of God. If someone flees to the Lord, the evil spirit runs away from him and the mind becomes light.” (3:4–5)

While the eventual deliverance from envy comes from the deity, the process itself is within human hands. Repentance, tears, prayer, and fasting are all practices that, from within the body, allow the self to conquer envy, despite its strong grip. The emotion—and especially human control over it—constitutes a space for self-fashioning; it provides an opportunity for human beings to transform themselves. In fact, according to the Testament of Simeon, this change involves cultivating positive emotions. The last quote is followed by the epigraph cited at the beginning of this article:

“Finally he bonds with [συμπαθεῖ] the one he had envied, does not condemn those who love him, and so ceases from envy.” (3:6)

I do not read the verb *συμπαθέω* here as a response to pain, since its object is the person who was previously envied and thus enjoys some privilege. Rather, I read it in its classical meaning of “being attuned to” or “bonding with”: the pain caused by the other’s privilege is replaced by a feeling of attunement, which, one can suppose, makes the other’s well-being a source of happiness for the self. Like bonding, generosity, too, can help uproot envy (4:5). This victory over envy, furthermore, extends beyond the human self. Simeon promises his children:

“If you take away from yourselves envy [φθόνον] and all stubbornness..., then all the spirits of deceit will be given to trampling and human beings will reign over evil spirits.” (6:2, 6)

Simeon lists the beneficial effects of eradicating envy from the self; these culminate in the human triumph over evil spirits. Since envy is sent by the prince of deceit, its defeat by human beings, with divine assistance, is an event of cosmic dimensions. Diligently fighting one’s envy is a practice by which the human being not only fashions itself, but also participates in the final victory of good over evil.

This function of envy, as a tool of self-fashioning and, eventually, participation in the cosmic battle between good and evil, is absent from the Hebrew Bible. The book of Proverbs contains a few condemnations of envy, often specifically directed at wicked people (Prov 3:31; 23:17; 24:1, 19), but without developing concepts of self-control and self-fashioning. Envy, in one place, is compared to “rotteness of the bones” (Prov 14:30), but without hinting at its possible eradication. Clearly, the development of envy as an opportunity for the human being to work on and better itself is a new motif in early Jewish literature. These texts innovate particularly by describing the process by which envy can be countered, through the use of spiritual practices (such as prayer), embodied techniques (such as crying and fasting), and positive emotions (such as bonding). A new perception of the human being emerges behind the depiction of such emotional work: a being able to act on itself and transform.

CONCLUSION

A redefinition of the emotional realm—perhaps in part under the influence of the Greek language—allows Jewish (and later Christian) authors of late antiquity to attribute new functions to emotions, in both continuity with and contrast to the Bible. Emotions, in the Hebrew scriptures, tend to overlap with other experiences such as actions, sensations, and ritual practices; in later texts, stricter limits allow the affective realm to serve as a novel resource for building the human self. Each new function of emotion unveils a specific facet of the Jewish (and Christian) view of the human in the late Hellenistic, early imperial period.

First, compassion/sympathy and envy/jealousy are used in early Jewish (and Christian) narratives to validate the pain and well-being of others. These emotions confirm suffering and happiness as interpersonal phenomena: situations like success and destitution, bliss and despair, take on a social dimension, as they tend to be depicted alongside the emotional responses they provoke in others. Emotions tighten the social

fabric; happiness and pain transcend the individual and elicit emotions in others. Compassion and envy suggest an emotionally porous self. Emotions circulate between human beings, at times transgressing boundaries of ethnicity and social status.

Second, compassion and envy are used to reveal the inner motivations of actions—concern and malevolence, respectively. Texts suggest a shift of interest from what is *done* to what is *felt*, as many texts imagine the emotional purposes that compel scriptural characters to act the way they do. Emotions constitute the drive that leads human beings to perform both selfless and cruel actions. In the case of compassion, texts reveal the growing significance of the felt distress that drives an action: Abraham, in the eponymous Testament, is presented as a righteous and hospitable human being, but also as one who needs to learn compassion; Zebulun, in his Testament, insists that feeling compassion can at times be the only possible appropriate response to others' distress. The two emotions, here, unveil an archaeological conception of the human being, in which external actions are prompted by internal, hidden emotional purposes. While the Hebrew Bible displays a sequential view of the human, the early Jewish (and Christian) texts examined here tend to present a layered view.

Finally, compassion and envy are depicted as flexible emotions, which human beings can either cultivate or discourage. Jewish (and Christian) texts from late antiquity portray characters who change—more specifically, who actively *change themselves*. Texts present what can be interpreted as training programs, which detail spiritual, bodily, and emotional techniques for building the most desirable self. In particular, the Testament of Simeon recommends cultivating positive emotions, such as bonding (3:6) and generosity (4:5), as a way to counter envy. The new functions of emotions suggest an evolving perception of the human and sense of self: human beings are able—and ought—to work on and transform themselves.