

A Parable of the Lost Temple? Archaeology, Intertextuality, and Rhetoric in Matt 21:33–46

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Realism and its rhetorical function remain a core issue in parable research. In his discussion of the parables of Jesus, Adolf Jülicher writes: “Nicht gedeutet will das Parabelbild werden, sondern angewendet”¹ In his perception, the parable story provides a lucid and naturalistic pattern, perfectly illustrating the lesson to be grasped, and it does so without further comment or explanation. The huge impact of Jülicher’s approach notwithstanding, Gregory Lanier comes to a remarkable conclusion in his recent assessment of scholarship on the parable of the Bad Tenants (Matt 21:33–46//Mark 12:1–12//Luke 20:9–19//Gos. Thom. 65): whereas the majority of scholars express their allegiance to Jülicher’s proposal to read parables as realistic tales, this parable being a litmus test for this new approach, they still keep searching for allegorical elements. In explaining the motif of the vineyard, or the identity of the tenants, servants, or son, they look for a theological message, referring to the fate of Jesus and the concomitant fates of the “church” and the Jewish people.² Indeed, while recent scholarship has characterized the parable’s basic tale of a landowner-tenants confrontation as “realistic fiction,” in the assessment of the legal backgrounds, the ramifications of this characterization in terms of the parable’s rhetoric remain a matter of debate.³ This study seeks to assess the archaeological realism of the vineyard as well as the way this reality “translates” into a religious

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- 1 Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, vol. 1, *Gleichnisreden Jesu im Allgemeinen*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1910; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), 87.
 - 2 Gregory R. Lanier, “Mapping the Vineyard: Main Lines of Investigation Regarding the Parable of the Tenants in the Synoptics and Thomas,” *CBR* 15 (2016): 110. Joachim Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 6th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 68, voices a *communis opinio* that Mark (and Matthew even more so) presents an allegory, with the owner as God, the vineyard as Israel, the tenants as its leaders, the slaves as the prophets, and the son as Christ himself! The “other people” (Matt 21:43) is the church of the gentiles.
 - 3 The term “realistic fiction” is suggested in John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine*, WUNT 195 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 106; cf. Lanier “Mapping the Vineyard,” 80; Ernest van Eck, *The Parables of Jesus the Galilean: Stories of a Social Prophet*, Matrix 9 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 191, offers a fine overview of the debate on the parable as “realistic narrative” and focusses on the motif

message in Matthew, in particular through the intertextuality with Isa 5:1–6. Why did Matthew—following Mark, but unlike Luke—depict the planting of the vineyard in more detail? Would the intended audience have perceived this detailed opening of a spatial reality, depicted visually, as it were? We will focus on the material culture of the elements presented in the opening of the parable: “There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower” (Matt 21:33).⁴

In the following, we will first briefly discuss contemporary theory of metaphor (1) to show that metaphors merge and fuse different realities. A second section reviews the archaeological data, focussing on the three elements mentioned in the parable: the press (2.1), the field walls (2.2), and the tower (2.3). It then discusses the social setting (2.4). These findings will then be compared to extant readings of Isa 5:2 in early Judaism, and located in the performative setting of Matthew’s Gospel (3). In our conclusions (4), we will suggest that the vineyard metaphor is an intertextual as well as archaeological landscape commenting on the visual reality of the temple and, pressingly, its absence for Matthew’s readership.

1 Realism and Metaphor

Clearly, social realism is not the prime aim of parables. The lurking social conflict between landowners and tenants serves metaphorical operations and rhetorical strategies, addressing pressing issues of identity and belonging in the environment of the parable performer, whether we locate the roots of this performance in the life of the historical Jesus or, following the basic insights of both form criticism and redaction criticism, see it as a reflection of the social reality of the gospel editor. So, without falling into the trap of reading a parable’s metaphor as allegory, alleged “allegorising” elements should rather be

of the violence in Gos. Thom. 65. However, not all parables are, by necessity of their genre, to be understood as realistic performances.

4 Unless noted otherwise, Bible translations follow the NRSV. Matthew features a householder (*anthropos oikodespotes*), in departure from Mark 12:1, which reads *anthropos*. We assume this parable to have been performed in a Judean cultural context, and with Judean material realities in mind. The spatial location—the temple—is as important as it is in Mark and Luke, but its ramifications differ from Mark; where Mark situates Jesus in the temple amidst the developing conflict with the temple leadership, Matthew broadens the conflict to address communal issues. Indeed, Matthew connects story and application with the transfer signal “therefore,” δὲ τούτο. This strengthens a *Sitz im Leben* of this parable as reflective of scribal culture. See on this Ruben Zimmermann et al., *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007), 388.

assessed as referential possibilities of metaphors deployed in the parable's narrative and realized in oral or textual performance.⁵ Current theory on metaphor stresses its lingering indebtedness to social, cultural, economic, legal, or historical reality. Crucial in these theories is the understanding that echoes of underlying realities never cease to have their impact on a metaphor's rhetorical meaning and rhetorical effectiveness. Harald Weinrich's *Bildfeld* theory assesses a metaphor as combining a *Bildspendende Bereich*, which refers to cultural or material realities, with a *Bildempfangende Bereich*, the linguistic target domain, and it is only in the combination of both dimensions that a metaphor receives its meaning. The recognizability of a metaphor as embedded in such a shared cultural reservoir of traditional meanings hinges on the presence of more or less standardized combinations.⁶ Whereas this *Bildfeld* theory focusses on language as a system (*langue*) which becomes tangible only in realized speech (*parole*), Conceptual Blending Theory, as advanced by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, takes its departure in cognitive processes of the human mind. Cognitive processes are the source not only for our conceptualization of reality but also for metaphorical operations, as different mental input fields are continuously combined and reconfigured by the human mind in metaphors.⁷ This approach proposes that elements of the input space, such as material reality, economy, or social reality, while being merged with other input fields, nonetheless continue to inform the metaphorical value, and

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- 5 See a similar observation in David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 11–12. A different approach traces the continuities of the parable, the stage of allegorising individual elements in editorial stages of gospel (and rabbinic, as Stern notices) documents, and the theologically wrought allegory of church teachers; see Hans-Josef Klauck, *Allegorie und Allegorese in synoptischen Gleichnistexten*, 2nd ed., NTAbh 13 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978).
- 6 This “Bildfeldtradition” is a treasury of meanings accessible to the average public; see Petra von Gemünden, *Vegetationsmetaphorik im Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt: Eine Bildfelduntersuchung*, NTOA 18 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), as well as her contribution to this volume. Catherine Hezser offers an analysis of vineyard “Bildfelder” in rabbinic sources and compares these with the synoptic parable of the Workers in the Vineyard; see Catherine Hezser, *Lohnmetaphorik und Arbeitswelt in Mt 20,1–16: Das Gleichnis von den Arbeitern im Weinberg im Rahmen rabbinischer Lohngleichnisse*, NTOA 15 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990). In our contribution, we focus on the material culture rhetoric as part of the performance.
- 7 Blake E. Wassell and Stephen R. Llewelyn, “Fishers of Humans,’ the Contemporary Theory of Metaphor, and Conceptual Blending Theory,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 628, “Here distinct mental spaces (input spaces) are blended to create a new mental space (the blend) where conceptual integration (a) selectively projects and compresses elements and relations from the input spaces and then (b) develops the emergent structure of the blend through composition, completion, and elaboration.”

subsequently, the parable and its application as well. Concomitantly, a parable, approached as extended metaphor, remains indebted to the input of material realities and to cultural or intertextual input in order to be rhetorically effective.⁸ This explains, theoretically, why the parable of the Bad Tenants is not a mere “realistic fiction” of a social conflict of vineyard owners and tenants, but a tale to comment on the implied reader’s religious reality as well. Indeed, any discussion on the degree of Matthew’s “allegorising” should be evaluated within the performative context of the parable. This performance includes its indebtedness to the Song of the Vineyard in Isa 5 (LXX) and traditional readings of this passage, some of which also show a degree of “allegorising.” These insights nuance the opposition between realism and allegorical meaning: the vineyard is both a visual reality and a stock metaphor, steeped in intertextuality and in subtle allusiveness to the reader’s spatially perceived realism.⁹ Decisive is the way the blend of the metaphor of the vineyard appeals to the audience or reader’s social location and imagination within the performance at hand.¹⁰

2 The Parable’s Vineyard: Archaeological Data and Debates

It would appear indeed that the addition of technical details in the parable under discussion is intended to add some rural flavour, a realistic dimension, to enhance its credibility within its spatial performance. The reader of the parable in antiquity, whether a rural dweller or a city resident, would certainly have been familiar with the agricultural reality of those days. Buildings, installations, and facilities connected to the wine industry, as agricultural estates, complete with wine-presses, stone walls, and protective towers of one form or another, were part of the common reality in the land of Israel’s countryside during the Roman period.¹¹ Wine indeed proves to be a prime commodity in

8 Wassell and Llewelyn, “Fishers of Humans,” 645: “The source domain of an effective metaphor must be tangible, because it is chosen specifically in order to elucidate a less familiar concept in a certain way. Familiarity and relevance are basic criteria in the selection. More than simply decorating language, the metaphor structures a new idea(s) and experience(s). Without intuitive, and even intimate, knowledge of the source domain, the intended structure of the target domain is elusive and the metaphor can be unsuccessful.”

9 George J. Brooke, “4Q500 1 and the Use of Scripture in the Parable of the Vineyard,” *DSD* 2 (1995): 294, concludes that “the allegorical character should not be downplayed as secondary and insignificant.”

10 Cf. Lanier, “Mapping the Vineyard,” 90.

11 Boaz Zissu, “Rural Settlement in the Judean Hills and Foothills from the Late Second Temple Period to the Bar Kokhba Revolt” (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001), 249–270 (Hebrew).

the economic and social reality of late antique Judea and Galilee.¹² Harvesting and processing vineyard crops was an event surrounded by social and religious anxieties, and demanded physical labour and precautionary measures. During the vintage season (August–September), the farmers transferred the clusters of grapes they had gathered to the winery/winepress. From the Bronze Age to the Byzantine period, most wineries in the land of Israel were hewn in the bedrock (fig. 1). The production of wine consisted of three phases:¹³ 1) treading; 2) pressing the grape skins (optional phase); and 3) fermentation. The grapes were first trodden on a treading-floor—usually square in shape, sloping towards the collecting vat; the must flowed with the force of gravity into the collecting vat. Most of the wine production process took place in this installation, without the need for additional features. The majority of scholars agree that the liquid produced in this way remained covered in the collecting vat for several days, until the end of the initial fermentation of the must and its transformation into wine. Yet Yehoshua Dray disagrees, claiming that the initial fermentation took place on the treading-floor, and that it was only then that the wine flowed into the collecting vat.¹⁴ Either way, the wine was transferred from the winery to a jar, kept in the adjacent farm under relatively constant temperature

- 12 Wine, along with olive oil and bread, were the Mediterranean staples in antiquity. It is estimated that an adult male drank an average of between 0.7 and 1 litre of wine per day (Magen Broshi, “The Diet of Palestine in the Roman Period,” *Cathedra* 43 [1987]: 21–23). Wine accounted for about a quarter of caloric intake and about a third of the average man’s iron intake. It has been proposed that women drank about half of what men did, and children even less (Ze’ev Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine* [London: Routledge, 1994], 128–136). In antiquity wine was usually mixed with water and consumed daily. Under reasonable conditions, wine could be stored for several years, thanks to its alcohol content. In times of scarcity, wine was a substitute for water or was added to water in order to improve its taste (cf. Michael Decker, “Water into Wine: Trade and Technology in Late Antiquity,” in *Technology in Transition AD 300–650*, ed. Luke Lavan, Enrico Zanini, and Alexander Sarantis, LAA 4 [Leiden: Brill, 2008], 121–148; Nizar Ali Turshan and Mathew Cox, “Ya’amun Main Wine Press from Roman to the End of Umayyad and Early Abbasid Periods in Northern Jordan,” *MAA* 15 [2015]: 131–139). Wine had various medicinal uses and was considered a remedy for many diseases (Jacques Jouanna, “Wine and Medicine in Ancient Greece,” in *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen: Selected Papers*, ed. Jacques Jouanna and Philip van der Eijk, trans. Neil Allies, SAM 40 [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 173–193).
- 13 For the following, see Rafael Frankel, “Presses for Oil and Wine in the Southern Levant in the Byzantine Period,” *DOP* 51 (1997): 73–75; Rafael Frankel, *Wine and Oil Production in Antiquity in Israel and Other Mediterranean Countries* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 2–28.
- 14 Yehoshua Dray, “The Wine Making Process in the Improved Byzantine Wine Press,” in *Olive Oil and Wine Production in Eastern Mediterranean During Antiquity*, ed. Adnan Diler, Ahmet Kaan Şenol, and Ümit Aydınoglu (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 2015), 191–198.



FIGURE 1 Simple winery (winepress) at H. Bet Shana, northern Judean Foothills
PHOTOGRAPH: B. ZISSU

conditions for continued fermentation lasting several weeks. A more advanced type of press also had an intermediate settling or sieving vat, located between the treading-floor and the collecting vat, whose purpose was to filter the must (fig. 2). These advanced wineries were first hewn in the late Iron Age, but they were particularly common from the Hellenistic period to the Byzantine period.¹⁵ Another technological advancement that appeared in the late Iron Age was the introduction of a beam with weights, for secondary extraction of must. The most advanced wineries, of the Roman and Byzantine periods, also had a true press located in the centre of the treading-floor and sometimes additional, smaller treading-floors and compartments around the treading-floor.¹⁶

15 Vladimir Wolff Avrutis, *Wine Presses at the Neshet-Ramla Quarry: A Thousand Years of Winemaking*, ed. Etan Ayalon (Jerusalem: Printiv, 2015).

16 Frankel, "Presses for Oil," 73–76; Frankel, *Wine and Oil Production*; Rafael Frankel, "Introduction," in *Oil and Wine Presses in Israel from the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods*, ed. Etan Ayalon, Rafael Frankel, and Amos Kloner (Oxford: ArchoPress, 2009), 1–16.



FIGURE 2 Winery located between two ancient farms at Soreq Ridge, Judean Hills. Treading floor (1), intermediate settling vat (2), collecting vat (3). In a later stage, the winepress was converted into an olive press (op).

PHOTOGRAPH: B. ZISSU

2.1 *The Winepress*

The above process is evoked in the parable by the term “winepress.” This basic winery (which in the archaeological literature is also labelled a “winepress”) is identified with the biblical Hebrew גַּת or יֵקֶב. A textual examination shows that the גַּת (*gat*) is chiefly the treading-floor, while the יֵקֶב (*yekev*) refers to the collecting vat. In the Septuagint, both terms are commonly translated as ληγός.¹⁷ In Isa 5:2, however, יֵקֶב is translated as προλήνιον, “in front of the winery,” and in the parable under discussion as λήνιον (Matt 21:33), or ὑπολήνιον, “below the winepress” (Mark 12:1).¹⁸ These winepresses are found in large numbers in the countryside outside ancient settlement sites, demonstrating that they were a common feature of the vineyards (Isa 5:1–2, Matt 21:33, and Mark 12:1). Relatively few installations were integrated into farms and agricultural estates.

17 Philip Mayerson, “The Meaning and Function of ληγός and Related Features in the Production of Wine,” *ZPE* 131 (2000): 161–165.

18 We would like to suggest that Mark’s awkward choice of terms, ὑπολήνιον instead of the more common ληγός, supports this concept. Since the Septuagint employs the uncommon term προλήνιον, the author(s) of our parable in Mark used ὑπολήνιον instead, strengthening the shared knowledge of material realism behind the production processes and thus intending to be clearer than the Septuagint, with its common ληγός, followed here by Matthew.



FIGURE 3 Aerial view of a traditional farming compound surrounded by a field wall north of H. Burgin, Judean Foothills; it includes a tower, some buildings, and a cistern.
PHOTOGRAPH: B. ZISSU

Most wineries were small and were used by the owner of a nearby vineyard. Wineries were usually found near or inside the vineyards due to the grapes' sensitivity to transportation, pressure, shaking, or other ways of processing.¹⁹ Many rock-hewn presses were used for generations by the farmers who lived nearby, as the technology remained unchanged for thousands of years. Grape syrup production in ancient wine presses was still documented in the 1970s in the Hebron area.²⁰

However, from the parable under discussion the exact type of winery cannot be determined, nor its degree of sophistication. What is clear is that the compound was surrounded by a wall (φραγμὸν) and that it included a tower (πύργον). What does our author have in mind? What type of walled compound is he referring to? In our opinion, there are two main options: 1) a walled vineyard compound with a field tower; and 2) a farm, consisting of a more

19 Avrutis, *Wine Presses*, 4, fig. 1.4; Carey Walsh, *The Fruit of the Vine: Viticulture in Ancient Israel*, HSM 90 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000).

20 Frankel, *Oil and Wine Presses*, 8–9; Avrutis, *Wine Presses*, 55–78.

substantial building, protected by a true tower, with a vineyard and winery nearby. Remarkably, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars and visitors to the Holy Land were already impressed by traditional vineyards, surrounded by walls and protected by towers (fig. 3), and intuitively identified them with the description in Isaiah.²¹ In the next section, we shall see that the situation is not so simple and that there are other identification possibilities. Crucial here is our understanding of the character of the tower and the wall mentioned in Mark's and Matthew's version of the parable.

2.2 *Field Walls*

In archaeological research there is some confusion and ambiguity regarding field walls, terraces, etc. One type is the agricultural terrace, common throughout the mountainous parts of the country. The purpose of a terrace is to hold and support the earth fill behind it, and in fact to create a level surface, suitable for agriculture, on a hill or mountain slope.²² On the other hand, there are various systems of stone walls and fences, which cross the countryside, divide it, and demarcate plots of various sizes and shapes.²³ The agricultural landscapes were always adapted to the topography and local conditions; in the mountainous parts of Judea, Samaria, and the Galilee, for example, significant terrace construction along the slope is required to enable agriculture. On a level area or plateau, such as the Golan Heights and certain parts of Judea and Samaria, the agricultural plots are more or less flat. Yet other issues impeded the owners engaged in dry land farming, including stone excess, drainage, ownership, thieves, the neighbour's goats, etc. In these areas, one encounters systems of stone walls and fences meant to solve these problems by defining ownership, demarcating areas and roads, and sometimes preventing in or out passage. The field walls also hold excess stone cleared from the fields, allowing for ploughing

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- 21 See, e.g., Philip J. Baldensperger, *The Immovable East: Studies of the People and Customs of Palestine*, PEFQS (London, 1913), 293: "The vineyards are always surrounded by a dry stone wall (jedur), and a kasr built in it. On the top of this loose-stone building they put a hut, which in summer only is covered by branches. Here the family lives, and from this elevated place the guardian can survey the vineyard, which, though fenced all around with thorn bushes laid on the walls, is often visited by foxes, badgers, jackals, and sometimes thieves. Similar proceedings are referred to in Isaiah 5, 2.;" see Philip J. Baldensperger, *The Immovable East: Studies of the People and Customs of Palestine*, PEFQS (London, 1913), 293.
- 22 Zvi Ron, "Agricultural Terraces in the Judean Mountains," *IEJ* 16 (1966): 34–35; Shimon Gibson and Rafael R. Lewis, "The Origins of Terracing in the Southern Levant and Patch Cultivation/Box Fields," *JLE* 10 (2017): 258–260. For Galilee, compare Avrutis *Wine Presses*, 209–2020 and various sites presented in Ayalon, *Oil Presses*.
- 23 Shimon Gibson, "Landscape Archaeology and Ancient Agricultural Field Systems in Palestine" (PhD diss., University of London, 1995), 59–143.

and farming. This phenomenon has been studied as part of the discipline of “landscape archaeology,” in various parts of Israel.²⁴

The field systems are first and foremost functional, and as such analysis of the system’s layout, location, type of land, and other features sheds light on their original use and the identification of crops. Sometimes the relative location, size, and shape of the plot may indicate connection to a certain settlement site. The distance from the locality is a critical factor: the closer the cultivated area is to the settlement, the more developed and sophisticated the field systems are. Within a range of five to six kilometres, the farmer can access his land in the morning and return at the end of the working day, while still having enough time to farm his plot. The social component is also reflected in the layout and location of field systems: for example, more distant systems, large and planned compounds on difficult terrain, or fringe areas all require leadership, cooperation, and a certain level of security, administration, and communication.²⁵

- 24 Land of Israel: Shimon Gibson and Claudine Dauphin, “Landscape Archaeology at er-Ramthaniyye in the Golan Heights,” in *Archéologie et Espaces*, ed. Sander van der Leeuw and Jean-Luc Fiches (Antibes: Actes des Xe Rencontres Internationales d’Archéologie et d’Histoire d’Antibes, 1990), 435–465; Shimon Gibson, “From Wildscape to Landscape: Landscape Archaeology in the Southern Levant—Methods and Practice,” in *The Rural Landscape of Ancient Israel*, ed. Aren M. Maeir, Shimon Dar, and Ze’ev Safrai, BAR 1121 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2003), 1–26; and abroad, e.g., in England, Derrick N. Riley, *Early Landscape from the Air: Studies of Crop Marks in South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire* (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1980), 25–26. Dating the field systems or parts thereof is problematic; these can be dated relatively and indirectly, by examining the stratigraphic relationship between them and dated elements in the landscape. Is the system early or late for a particular settlement site that is short-lived? What is the relationship of the wall system to a Roman road or a particular, dated facility? Sometimes it is possible to date the systems directly by collecting potsherds from them and attempting to excavate certain components (e.g., Steve Ford, Mark Bowden, Geoff Mees, and Vince Gaffney, “The Date of the ‘Celtic’ Field-Systems on the Berkshire Downs,” *Britannia* 19 [1988]: 401–404). More recently, the OSL technique has been employed with mixed results (Uri Davidovich et al., “Archaeological Investigations and OSL Dating of Terraces at Ramat Rahel, Israel,” *JFA* 37 [2012]: 192–208; Yuval Gadot et al., “The Formation of a Mediterranean Terraced Landscape: Mount Eitan, Judean Highlands, Israel,” *JASR* 6 [2016]: 397–417).
- 25 Gibson, “Landscape Archaeology,” 59–143. We should also keep in mind that the geopolitical circumstances of a certain period and region or climate changes are significant. A central and sought-after area may be transformed into an abandoned fringe area, or areas that at one time were considered marginal became central in other circumstances. These changes enabled the preservation of ancient field systems in certain areas, like the Negev desert or Western Samaria; see Shimon Dar, *Landscape and Pattern: An Archaeological Survey of Samaria 800 BCE–636 CE*, BARIS 308 (Oxford: BAR, 1986); Eli Ashkenazi, Yoav Avni, and Gideon Avni, “A Comprehensive Characterization of Ancient Desert Agricultural Systems in the Negev Highlands of Israel,” *JAE* 86 (2012): 55–64; Yoav Avni, Gideon Avni, and Naomi Porat, “A Review of the Rise and Fall of Ancient Runoff

2.3 Towers

Field towers are an integral part of these field systems. An agricultural field tower (Heb.: שומרה מגדל) is a structure used to watch the agricultural plot in the harvest season, often located in vineyards (fig. 4). Field towers were built from antiquity to modern times in various shapes and architectural plans.²⁶ A full-fledged field tower usually has two floors and thick walls made of field-stones, cleared from the neighbouring plot (fig. 5). The lower floor is used for the storage of grapes and the upper floor serves as a guard hut, for watching over the vineyard and the harvested agricultural produce. Thanks to the thick walls of the lower floor, which are up to one metre in thickness, the temperature in the field tower remains relatively low, and the harvested grapes, which under normal conditions ferment quickly, are kept fresh. During the vintage season, it was sometimes customary for the workers, or even the owner's family, to live in the tower temporarily until all the fruit had been harvested and



FIGURE 4 Qasr Mansura, Hellenistic–Early Roman (?) field tower explored by S. Dar in western Samaria.

PHOTOGRAPH: D. RAVIV

Agriculture in the Negev Highlands—A Model of the Southern Levant Deserts,” *JAE* 163 (2019): 127–137.

- 26 Zvi Ron, “Stone Huts as an Expression of Terrace Agriculture in the Judean and Samarian Hills” (PhD diss., Tel Aviv University, 1977), 401–531 (Hebrew).



FIGURE 5 Well preserved traditional field tower near Ba'al Hazor, eastern Samaria
PHOTOGRAPH: D. RAVIV

processed (transformed into wine, raisins, or syrup), rather than return home each day.²⁷ In the hilly areas of the land of Israel, many well-preserved field towers are still visible where remnants of ancient agriculture have survived destruction and modern development. Remains of field towers from various periods are commonly found in archaeological surveys and excavations.²⁸

2.4 *Social Setting: Judean Farms and Rural Settlement Types*

According to our parable, the owner of the vineyard compound rented the place to the tenants. We assume they lived on the spot for a certain period, felt “at home,” and developed self-confidence, leading to their criminal behaviour. The simpler setting of a walled compound with a field tower and winery does not provide the basic living facilities required by the tenants. More sophisticated

²⁷ Dar, *Landscape and Pattern*, 64–72.

²⁸ For some recently excavated examples, see a Byzantine tower at Benei Deqalim in the Judean Shephelah (Vladik Lifshits, “Benei Deqalim: Final Report,” *HA* 129 [2017], http://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.aspx?id=25301&mag_id=125); an Ottoman period tower in a terraced compound including a winery at ‘En Kerem, west of Jerusalem (Igal Radashkovsky, “Jerusalem, En Kerem: Final Report,” *HA* 130 [2018], https://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.aspx?id=25407&mag_id=126); and an undated field tower on a slope, with two wineries, a Byzantine tomb, and additional features nearby, at Nahal Gillo, south of Jerusalem (Meidad Shor, “Jerusalem, Nahal Gillo: Final Report,” *HA* 131 [2019], https://www.hadashot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.aspx?id=25562&mag_id=127).

field towers with adjacent rooms and facilities are much rarer (fig. 6a and 6b). Therefore, we might assume that the compound which they rented provided more than just the basic facilities of wine production. Perhaps it was a rural settlement with a protective tower of one type or another. Accordingly, we need to present and examine the various types of rural settlements in order to try to understand the setting.

During the late Second Temple period, various types of settlements could be found in Judea. Several settlement types are mentioned in contemporary sources, but the terminology in them is not consistent.²⁹ Despite extensive research on rural settlements, there is still no scholarly consensus regarding the terms in the early sources and their correspondence to the archaeological data. Josephus and the New Testament distinguish between a city (πόλις) and a village (κώμη). Josephus also mentions the πολίχθιον, a settlement that, based on its size, importance, and institutions, must be ranked somewhere between a village and a city. For example, Josephus refers to “En Gedi” once as a πολίχθιον and once as a πόλις. Mark 1:38 uses another term—κωμοπόλεις—to denote cities with the legal status of villages. The Mishnah, too, draws a distinction between *kerakh*, *ir*, and *kefar*.³⁰ At the top of the settlement hierarchy were big cities, corresponding to the non-Jewish πόλεις. In the Talmudic sources, the term used to refer to these cities is *kerakhim* (sing. *kerakh*). They controlled a number of large localities, known in the Talmudic sources as *ayarot* (sing. *ir*). Judean *ayarot* had organized community services, as discussed in a *baraita* in tractate Sanhedrin (b. Sanh. 17b). Our present interest goes out to the physical form of much smaller types of rural settlements, following a previous study which proposed the following classification of rural settlement patterns:³¹

- 1a. Ordinary farmhouses: farmhouses with no tower
- 1b. Protected farmhouses: farmhouses with an unfortified corner tower
2. Manor houses (local versions of the Roman villa)
 - 2a. Manor houses lacking fortifications
 - 2b. Fortified courtyard manor houses (fortified villas or roadside fortresses?)
3. Villages
4. Fortified settlements built on earlier sites

29 For a discussion of this typology, see Zissu, “Rural Settlement,” 249–270; Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine*, 17–99.

30 m. Meg. 1:1, 2:3; m. Ket. 13:10; m. Qidd. 2:3; m. B. Met. 4:6, 8:6; m. Arak. 6:5, 9:3; m. Kelim 1:7.

31 On this proposal, see Zissu, “Rural Settlement,” 249–270.



FIGURE 6A Field tower at Kh. esh Sherkiyeh, Refaim Valley, Judean Hills. The tower is part of a protected compound which includes rooms and additional facilities.

PHOTOGRAPH: B. ZISSU

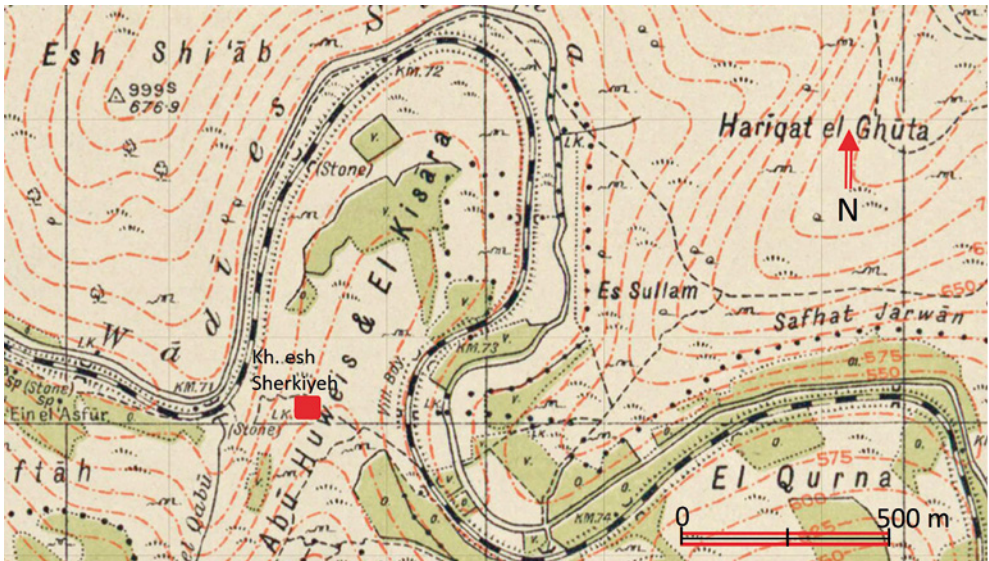


FIGURE 6B Map (1:20000; 1932): the surrounding farming areas are enclosed by field walls and included vineyards (v) and olive orchards (o).

We will describe types 1 and 2, which are relevant to the present discussion. Due to their size and social complexity, we assume that types 3 and 4 are not relevant to the present discussion.

2.4.1 Farmhouses

The farmhouse was a closed compound on agricultural land in which farm workers lived and performed some of their work. It was essentially a small, no-frills agricultural production unit situated by itself in the agricultural landscape. The farmhouse was primarily residential; the farm owner and his family lived there, as did labourers, tenant farmers, and/or slaves. Farmhouses also contained storerooms, water cisterns, and facilities for processing agricultural produce such as a winery, olive-press, columbaria for manure, etc. Farmhouses were common in the rural landscape of the land of Israel from the Iron Age on. Farmhouses varied widely in terms of their layout and size, depending on specific geographic characteristics and the needs and means of the owners. The topography, too, might dictate the plan of the farm buildings. Sometimes the layout of the farm was influenced by the presence of earlier buildings that could be utilized. In an earlier study we distinguished between “ordinary” farmhouses, with no special defence facilities (like the farms at Soreq Ridge, fig. 7), and “protected” farmhouses, which had a tower in one corner or along one of the walls (fig. 8a).³² When we examine designs of settlements that



FIGURE 7 Aerial view of two farmhouses at Soreq Ridge. The winery shown in fig. 2 is located between them. Five additional winepresses were documented nearby.
PHOTOGRAPH: B. ZISSU

32 Zissu, “Rural Settlement,” 249–263.



FIGURE 8A Protected farmhouse at H. Qasra, Judean foothills, with a tower along the northern wall.

PHOTOGRAPH: B. ZISSU



FIGURE 8B Proteichisma surrounds the base of the tower at H. Qasra.

PHOTOGRAPH: B. ZISSU

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include towers, we should distinguish between fortified and unfortified towers. The fortifications consisted of a *proteichisma*, that is, an outwork, sometimes sloped, surrounding the base of the tower (fig. 8b). Although “protected”

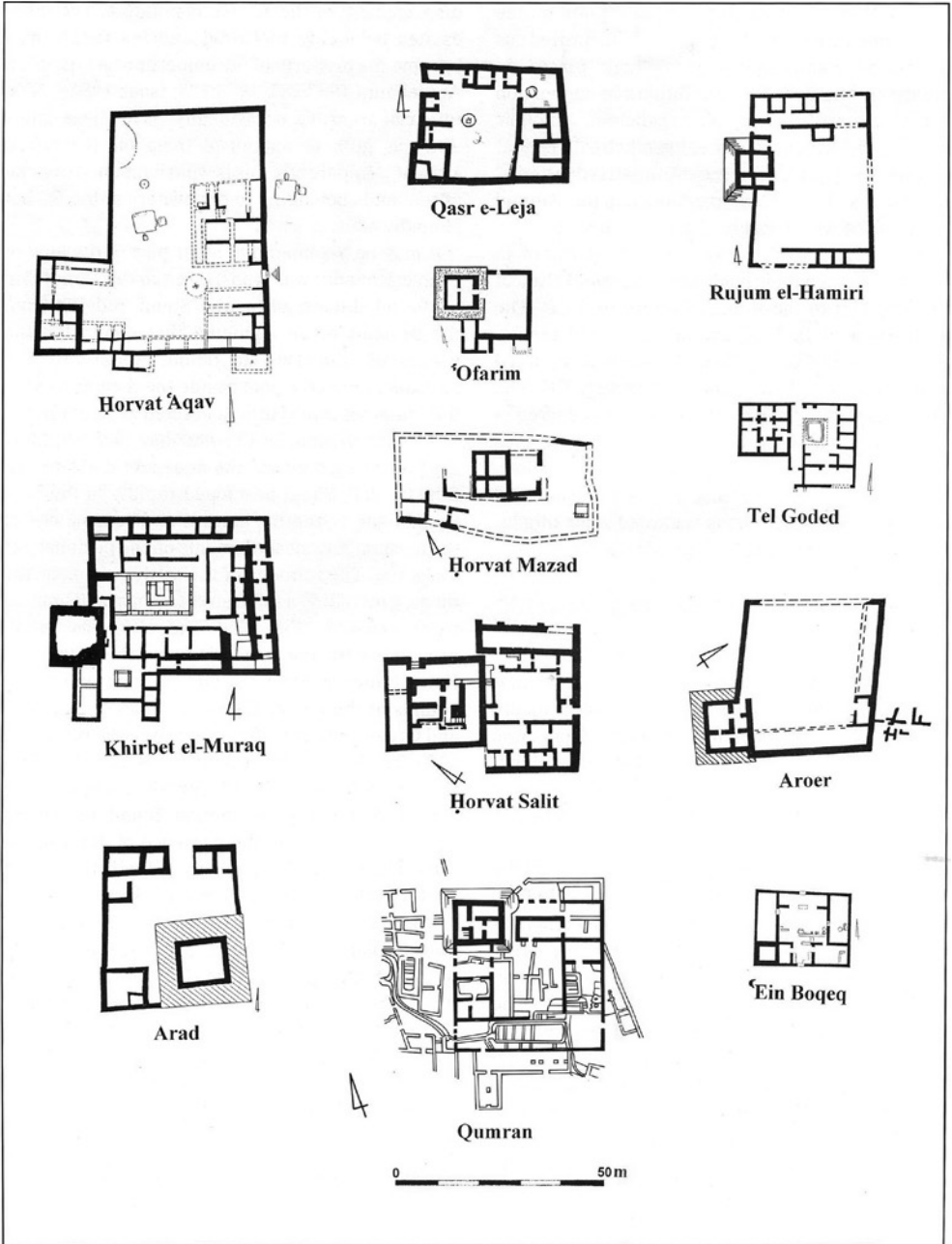


FIGURE 9 Judean manor houses with protective towers, after Hirschfeld 2000: 719, pl. 40.

farmhouses could have various layouts, they all had an unfortified corner tower. The protected farmhouse was built in the centre of the property, usually in a dominant location. This was probably the “*ir* having a single owner” mentioned in the Mishnah.³³ In the centre of the farmhouse was a courtyard surrounded by residential rooms, storerooms, workrooms, industrial facilities, ritual baths, cisterns, and other facilities.³⁴ The tower in one corner of the compound was stronger than the rest of the structures; it was used as the farm owner’s residence, as an observation point from which the surrounding agricultural plots could be seen, and as a “security house,” when necessary, for protection against bandits. Yizhar Hirschfeld used the term “fortified estates,” or manor houses, to refer to a diverse group of field buildings that includes farmhouses protected by unfortified towers and those protected by fortified towers. His table underscores the difference between the two categories (fig. 9). In our opinion, the unfortified group represents a separate settlement pattern.³⁵

2.4.2 Manor Houses as Local Versions of the Roman Villa

According to Ze’ev Safrai, the manor house in Palestine was a structure similar to the Roman villa. Villas were located in the centre of agricultural estates in prominent, convenient locations. The owner lived in the city and had a manager to take care of his estate. The owner also had quarters in a fancier building on the estate—the *oikos*—for when he came to visit. Dozens, or even hundreds, of slaves, labourers, and tenant farmers worked on the estate, depending on its size.³⁶ The manor house is referred to in the Talmudic literature as *יר*, *ir*. The Mishnah (m. Eruv. 5:6) mentions an *ir shel yahid* (an *ir* having a single owner), which could become an *ir shel rabbim* (an *ir* having many owners) and vice versa. The physical components of the *ir* that are mentioned in the Mishnah (m. B. Bat. 4:7) have been identified, either fully or partially, in sites investigated by archaeologists. According to this Mishnah, “If a man sold an *ir*, he has sold also the houses, cisterns, trenches, vaults, bathhouses, dovecotes, olive presses, and irrigated fields, but not the movable property.” Another

33 m. Eruv. 5:6; see also y. Yevam. 8 (8d).

34 As described in m. B. Bat. 4:7; see also below.

35 Yizhar Hirschfeld, “Jewish Rural Settlement in Judaea in the Early Roman Period,” in *The Early Roman Empire in the East*, ed. Susan E. Alcock, OMO 95 (Oxford: Oxbow, 1997), 72–85; Yizhar Hirschfeld, “Early Roman Manor Houses in Judea and the Site of Khirbet Qumran,” *JNES* 57 (1998): 161–189; Yizhar Hirschfeld, “General Discussion: Ramat Hanadiv in Context,” in *Ramat Hanadiv Excavations: Final Report of the 1984–1998 Excavations*, ed. Yizhar Hirschfeld (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 679–735. The table can be found in Yizhar Hirschfeld, ed., *Ramat Hanadiv Excavations: Final Report of the 1984–1998 Excavations* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 719, pl. 40.

36 Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine*, 17–99.

term that may have described manor houses in the centre of large agricultural estates is בִּירָה, *bira* (or *birta* in Aramaic), which gave rise to the Greek word βίρις. Although Roman villas were common in the western part of the Empire and have been studied thoroughly, they were rare in the eastern part of the Empire, including Palestine. Their form and function varied widely in terms of their facilities, ornaments, and sophistication. Manor houses in Palestine were not always fancy buildings, but to be considered villas, they must have signs of Roman influence.

A few rural sites from the early Roman period, including Kh. el-Muraq, Tel Goded, Artas, Duweimeh, and Horbat 'Alef, are known to have contained certain luxuries and conveniences according to the standards of the Roman world. It is clear that these buildings were planned meticulously, and the standard of construction is better than at other sites. The manor houses sometimes have mosaic floors or architectural ornamentation, whether carved, moulded, or painted. In the centre of the residential unit are a peristyle and various luxuries and conveniences such as a bathhouse or even swimming pools. These features qualify the buildings as local versions of the Roman villa.³⁷ The design of the villas and even their architectural details are comparable to features known from Herod's palaces.

2.4.3 Fortified Courtyard Manor Houses: Fortified Villas or Roadside Fortresses?

Sites of this type constitute a distinct settlement pattern with a unique architectural element: the fortified tower. Among the sites in this group are Rujm el-Hamiri, Rujm ed-Deir, and Kh. el-Qasr, all located in the Hebron Hills and H. Qasra in the Judean Shephelah. The fortified tower sites are approximately rectangular, planned compounds with rooms arranged around a central courtyard. The tower is built in the outer wall of the compound. The elements of the tower are fortified with an outwork made of large stones (i.e., the *proteichisma*), a type of fortification that came into use in the Hellenistic period in order to seal tunnels dug into the building by the enemy and to keep battering rams away from the walls.³⁸

It is not at all clear whether the fortified sites started out as rural settlements in which agricultural produce was grown and processed. Their location

37 Shimon Dar, "The Roman Villa in the Land of Israel," *JEI* 12/13 (2020): 245–270.

38 It should be recalled that there is no *proteichisma* in the simple towers of "protected farmhouses." Furthermore, the towers of the protected farmhouses are flush with the building as a whole. In contrast, the fortified towers protrude both inward and outward from the line of the rooms.

in places that dominate their surroundings and control roads has led scholars to view them as roadside or other fortresses. The similarity among these buildings may indicate an initiative by the central government to improve security on the roads. Although fortified towers provide some security against robbers, they cannot withstand a siege by an army. If the enemy tried to break in, the tower was supposed to protect the inhabitants' lives and enable them to hold out for a few hours until help arrived. Hirschfeld maintained that all these structures were agricultural buildings, but it is hard to decide whether they were roadside fortresses or fortified agricultural estates. The argument that they were fortified agricultural estates is supported by some fortified sites at which flimsier buildings that look like village structures were constructed around the reinforced, closed compound (e.g., the Horbat Zalit, 'Aro'er, and Nahal Yattir sites). Unfortunately, the excavations have focussed on the prominent tower and have not yet uncovered the humble village buildings. We therefore do not have sufficient information to understand the relationship between the "village" buildings and the fortified structure in the centre. In any case, it is more likely for a village of tenant farmers to have grown up around the lord's house than around a roadside fortress.

To conclude this part of our discussion, it seems that as long as the settlement site includes a walled compound, a (true) tower, a tower-like structure (a second-storey building), or one or more field-towers, and a winery, it could represent the settlement type described by the author of our parable. If we can agree that the tenants in the parable live on location, we should also expect to find some residential facilities.

3 Realism, Intertextuality, and Rhetoric

How do these landscapes "blend" in the vineyard metaphor? Our discussion has not only shown how the three motifs mentioned by Matthew indeed reflect a visually distinct reality, but also suggest how a vineyard could be associated with human dwellings such as towns or fortified manor houses. Of course, textual signals should alert us to the performative effects of these elements within Matthew. We will begin by looking at Matthew's textual performance, after which we will assess the biblical echoes of the three motifs (wall, winepress, tower). Matthew's parable of the Tenants is the second in a line of three, all elicited by the question of the "High Priests and the Elders of the people (*tou laou*)" regarding Jesus's authority (Matt 21:23). Spatially situated in the temple (*eis to hieron*, Matt 21:23), this clash between Jesus and the temple authorities the last stage before his arrest and subsequent execution.

The issue of the current and future caretaker of the “vineyard” links the parable to this frame, and the sequence of three parables shows the editor’s focus on this evolving crisis. Taking away and giving the vineyard to others reiterates the conclusion voiced by the elders in their response to the parable: “They said to him, ‘He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the appointed time.’” (Matt 21:41 NRSV [adapted]). With this answer to Jesus’s rhetorical question in Matt 21:40, the “elders of the people” (21:23) utter the verdict over themselves.³⁹ With the *nimshal* or application of 21:43, Matthew completes his performance of the parable by directing his reader’s attention to the fate of the vineyard again, which now becomes a metaphor for the kingdom of heaven, the core of Jesus’s preaching in this Gospel.

Scholars agree on the parable’s indebtedness to the Song of the Vineyard (Isa 5:1–15). However, Matthew, like Mark, does not quote Isa 5:2 (LXX), but merely assumes his readers to be knowledgeable of the Isaian vineyard as a stock metaphor. This is noticeable as well in Matthew’s protracted allusions to Isa 5:1–7 (LXX) in the rhetorical question (Matt 21:40), and in the answer from the “chief priests and the elders of the people” (see 21:23) in Matt 21:41.⁴⁰ Matthew does not aim at exegesis, and the allusions to Isa 5 serve a different role. Previously, scholars assessed this intertextuality as well as Matthew’s additions to the parable as the reflection of a conflict between church and synagogue. Recently, scholars have argued that Matthew took part in a protracted sectarian conflict between Christian-Jewish scribal elites and Pharisaic-rabbinic elites after the demise of the Second Temple in 70 CE.⁴¹ Crucial in this debate is the referential potential of the vineyard itself. Both in MT and in LXX, the vineyard of Isa 5:1–6 symbolizes the fate of Israel as a covenantal people (Matt 5:7), but Matthew’s “parable” first and foremost criticizes temple

39 Wim J.C. Weren, “The Use of Isaiah 5,1–7 in the Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12,1–12; Matthew 21,33–46),” *Bib* 79 (1998): 19, suggests that *κακούς κακῶς ἀπολέσει αὐτούς* shows Matthew interpreting a Hebrew word play in Isa 5:7.

40 Weren, “The Use of Isaiah,” 18. Matthew retains the Markan “inverted quotation” of Isa 5:2. Matthew’s dealing with the LXX shows either knowledge of lost versions and/or patterns of creative adaptation; see Maarten J.J. Menken, *Matthew’s Bible: The Old Testament Text of the Evangelist*, BETL 173 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).

41 See the discussion of this parable in Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993); see also recent proposals in Anders Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic intra-Group Conflict,” *JBL* 127 (2008): 95–132; Eric Ottenheim, “Matthew and Yavne: Religious Authority in the Making?” in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: The Interbellum (70–132 CE)*, ed. Joshua J. Schwartz and Peter J. Tomson, CRINT 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 378–400.

leadership. Matthew 21:44–45 offers the response to the three parables Jesus has told of the “chief priests and the Pharisees,” the latter category clearly alluding to non-temple elites in the surroundings of Matthew’s community. It is at this point that our discussion of the landscape realities of vineyards contributes to the debate. The elements mentioned—i.e., wall, press, and tower—serve a visual realism which is highly recognizable, but due to this ubiquity it easily allows for blending with religious notions. The blend realizes a metaphor denoting not only physical reality, but also inherent functions. As we saw, vineyards featured surrounding walls, fortified towers, residential space, as well as production installations (winepress). Matthew’s architectural features of the vineyard reference the visual elements of the physical temple, including the surrounding walls, its buildings (*stoa*, towers), and, of course, the altar. The Second Temple compound, as testified by Josephus (*J.W.* 5.184–247; *Ant.* 15.380–425) and the rabbis (in particular m. Tamid), hosted and facilitated religious services (e.g., cultic offerings), economic activities (e.g., banking), and temporary residence for actors.⁴² This metaphorical reference is buttressed by readings of Isa 5:2 in early Jewish sources, where we indeed encounter elements of the vineyard in Isa 5:2 as referring to architectural features of the Jerusalem Temple.⁴³ Qumran fragment 4Q500 1 offers a triple allusion to Isa 5:1–7 (line 2 mentions a “winepress,” line 6 “your vineyard,” and line 4 has “planting”), but its reference seems to be the temple. The “High Gate” mentioned here is either the heavenly gate or a Jerusalem-based gate imagery, in any case an allusion to Ps 102:20.⁴⁴ Targum Jonathan on Isa retains the ethnic imagery of the vineyard, but also interprets the “tower in its midst” (Isa 5:2) as “I built My sanctuary amidst of them,” and explains the winepress as the altar. Here the semantic proximity between the Hebrew “blood” and “juice of the grapes” may have played a role. These readings became a trope, as this focus on the temple’s layout also recurs in a rabbinic midrash of the early to mid-second-century R. Jose, in a discussion of the temple water installations:

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- 42 E.g., officiating priests, m. Tamid 1:1; cf. Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.108f. Josephus’s descriptions are suggestive of the temple’s ongoing importance after 70 CE; see Jan-Willem van Henten, “Josephus on the Temple from a Post-70 Perspective,” in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: The Interbellum 70–132 CE*, ed. Joshua J. Schwartz and Peter J. Tomson, CRINT 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 357–377.
- 43 Scholars agree that our parable was modelled after Isa 5:2; see Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Recent Research on the Parable of the Wicked Tenants: An Assessment,” *BBR* 8 (1998): 187–216; Weren, “The Use of Isaiah,” 1–26.
- 44 Brooke, “4Q500 1 and the Use of Scripture,” 270.

[It goes down into the pit and cleans it⁴⁵ and is absorbed into it, as it is said: “In the Holy place you shall pour out a drink offering” (Num 28:7): for one has made the place (so) that it may be absorbed in holiness.⁴⁶

R. Jose says: The cavity of the pits descended into the abyss, as it is said: “Let me sing a song of my well beloved, a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. And he dug it out and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vine and built a tower in the midst of it and also hewed out a vat therein” (Isa 5:1–2):]

“And he built a tower in the midst of it”: this is the sanctuary (זה היכל);

“And he hewed out a vat therein”: this is the altar (זה מזבח);

“And he *also* (גם) hewed out a vat therein”: this is the pit (זה השית).⁴⁷

T. Sukkah 3:15 [MS Vienna]⁴⁸

The midrash interprets “tower” in Isa 5:2 as the “Sanctuary” (*Heikhal*), and the winepress, or vat, as the altar, similar to what we saw in the Targum and possibly alluded to in the Qumran fragment as well. R. Jose adds his interpretation of the Hebrew “also” (*gam*), in “and *also* the winepress,” as an allusion to something extra beyond the altar, which must be the pit,⁴⁹ draining water and wine of the cultic libations (m. Sukkah 4:9).⁵⁰ R. Jose expands an exegetical tradition

45 Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-fshutah: A Comprehensive Commentary on the Tosefta* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1955), 880 (Hebrew): MS Erfurt and Yerushalmi read “cleans it”; MS Leiden lacks this word; and printed editions correct it to “breaks through it” (followed by Neusner: “and splits it”).

46 See the discussion of variants in Lieberman, *Tosefta*, 880.

47 Cf. t. Meil. 1:16; y. Sukkah 4:7 (54d); b. Sukkah 49a offers a deviating exegesis, adapting the innovation of R. Jose: vineyard = temple, tower = altar, winepress = pits, but Lieberman, *Tosefta*, 880, judges our reading to be the correct one.

48 Translation follows Jacob Neusner and Richard S. Sarason, ed., *The Tosefta*, vol. 1 (New York: Ktav, 1977), 577 (adapted).

49 Tosefta Sukkah discusses the issue of the water pit below the altar, commenting on the mishnaic description of wine and water libations (m. Sukkah 4:9) on a spot near the altar, and the rabbis want to show how the water installations in the temple, especially the cavities used to drain the water and the wine, called “pits,” were in accordance with the biblical prescription for libations to take place in the sanctuary, and how no water or wine would leave the precincts but rather be absorbed by the depth below it.

50 This midrash follows the hermeneutical principle of R. Akiva that there are no superfluous words in the Torah. The opening of the Tosefta offers rabbinic knowledge on architectural techniques for draining the water and the wine after the libations, by means of two vessel-like structures located near the altar (m. Sukkah 4:9). The texts depict the water channel installations as being in accordance with divine law. Lurking behind these readings may be memories of innovations of water channels in the Herodian Temple, which

TABLE 1 Architectural elements Isa 5:2

Isa 5:2 (MT)	Isa 5:2 (LXX)	4Q500 1	Tg. Jonathan Isa. 5:2	t. Sukkah 3:15	Mark 12:1// Matt 21:33
	wall				X
tower	tower	?	X	X	X
winepress	winepress	X	X	X	X

which is in its core elements—tower = temple;⁵¹ winepress = altar—reflected in Qumran and the Targum. These readings blend Isaiah with architectural elements and cultic installations and material realities. Matthew very probably knew this exegetical tradition, blending Isa 5:2 with Temple architecture.⁵²

The blend of the “realistic” dimensions of vineyards with religious notions as offered by readings of Isa 5 offers a sense of pending crisis, or of a memory of a building lost due to a past crisis, as the reader “sees” these elements as absent in his days. Moreover, the fate of the vineyard/temple is also the fate of its governing elite, and here the prophetic rhetoric of Isaiah comes to the fore again. Matthew locates Jesus’s eschatological as well as polemic teachings (Matt 21:23–23:39), albeit with a change of audience (Matt 23:1), within the temple compound, and this stage of performance allows us to explain the tower and the wall as visually evoking the impressive walls and buildings surrounding and inside the Herodian Temple.⁵³ The altar recurs in the polemical motif of the “killing of the prophets” in the temple (Matt 23:35–38), and in connection with the foretelling of the temple’s demise.⁵⁴ Matt 24:15–16 shows Jesus warning his disciples that they will see the “abomination” erected in the

may be alluded to in the foregoing t. Sukkah 3:14: “for through them would the water flow into the channel which the one who built the Sanctuary built” (Neusner 577).

51 Brooke, “4Q500 1,” 272, mentions 1 En. 89:50 as an early attestation for this association.

52 Johannes C. De Moor, “The Targumic Backgrounds of Mark 12:1–12: The Parable of the Wicked Tenants,” *JSJ* 29 (1998): 63–80; Brooke, “4Q500 1,” 268–294; partly as a possibility in Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, vol. 3, *Mt 18–25*, EKKNT 1/3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag; Zurich: Benziger, 1997), 222 (referring to 1 En. 89:50, 54, 56, 67f., 73); David Roger Aus, *The Wicked Tenants and Gethsemane. Isaiah in the Wicked Tenant’s Vineyard and Moses and the High Priest in Gethsemane. Judaic Traditions in Mark 14:12:1–9 and Mark 14:32–42*, ISFCJ 4 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996); Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 330.

53 There may be more continuity here with LXX Isa 5:2–3, which underlines visual architecture, whereas MT Isa 5:2–3 elaborates the owner’s toil in preparing the soil.

54 This passage again ends by quoting Ps 117 (LXX), referencing temple-related imagery.

temple, inaugurating the apocalyptic crisis.⁵⁵ The spatial setting and the subtle temple references in the speeches inculcate a social dimension of Matthew's rhetoric: the temple as a locus of identity is rather a locus of pending crisis. Its function will, after its fall, be replaced by the Jesus community, the *ekklesia*.⁵⁶ This interpretation finds confirmation in the ensuing dialogue between Jesus and his pupils, after exiting the temple:

As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. Then he asked them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

Matt 24:1–2

Referencing the physical space of the temple likewise occurs in early Christian traditions on Jesus's fate in Jerusalem: both Matthew (21:39) and Luke expand this spatial rhetoric of the temple in their version of the parable's narrative, adding that the son is being thrown out of the vineyard before he is killed.⁵⁷

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- 55 This warning, inspired by, e.g., Dan 8:13, is not satisfactorily explained; see the extensive discussion of this passage in Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 573–583. Possibly the passage echoes the crisis before the war of 66–70 CE, or the crisis revolving around Caligula in 40 CE.
- 56 Functionally, this claim is not so different from those of the rabbis who criticize the violence on the temple, sectarianism, or corruption as a cause for its downfall; see Shaye J.D. Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," *HUCA* 55 (1984): 27–53. Initially, the Christian response to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE was limited; see James Carleton Paget, "Jewish Revolts and Jewish-Christian Relations," in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries*, ed. Schwartz and Tomson, 286–287. However, some Christian voices expected the restitution of the temple as a result of their piousness (!); see David Levine, "70 CE or 135 CE—Where was the Watershed? Ancient and Modern Perspectives," in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries*, ed. Schwartz and Tomson, 171–172. In the wake of the Bar Kokhba War (e.g., Justin), the anti-Jewish rhetoric would gain ground (Paget, "Jewish Revolts," 276–306). Our findings hint at a somewhat different strategy for Matthew: his parable buttresses a new communal ethos as a response to the crisis. This, together with christological beliefs, replaces the temple.
- 57 Also note how the "stone" that was rejected by the builders (!), a quote from LXX Ps 117:22f., in Matt 21:42 figures as application of the parable and as an allusion to the fate of Jesus. On the text critical and tradition critical issues here, see Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 217–218. The quote as well as the addition operates with *paranomasia* stone (*even*) and son (*ben*), overlooked by the builders but becoming the corner or capstone. The stone probably marked the final stage of the building process, and may have been placed in a visible, high place on a wall or fortified tower, as a coping stone; Michael Cahill, "Not a Cornerstone! Translating Ps 118,22 in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures," *RB* 106 (1999):

This motif, according to most scholars, alludes to the fate of Jesus who was killed outside the Temple Mount and outside Jerusalem, and it is echoed in Heb 13:12–13. The killing of the “tenants,” as expressed in the self-condemnatory verse of Matt 21:41, reiterates Isa 5:7 and alludes to the demise of the temple leadership. Finally, the motif of the vineyard as the son’s inheritance, which the tenants seek to grab in the parable narrative, may subtly allude to the temple as well. The first-century BCE collection Pss. Sol. 7:2 shows the temple as a divine inheritance, belonging to the people of Israel but now left to the gentiles: “For you have rejected them, o God; let their feet not trample the inheritance of your sanctuary (κληρονομίαν ἀγιάσματός σου).”⁵⁸ Matthew’s performance thus realizes three dimensions of the vineyard’s metaphorical potential: the vineyard as a location of production, economy, and residence; the vineyard as an intertextually triggered religious reality of the Temple; and the vineyard as a stage for social religious conflict.

4 Conclusions: Realism, Metaphor, and Rhetoric of the Vineyard

Matthew’s vineyard is a blend of Isa 5, read as alluding to the temple, with known landscape features of rural or residential vineyards. As we suggest, the mention of the wall as well as the tower and the vat evokes the imagery of a vineyard within the compounds of an elaborate settlement such as a fortified courtyard manor house, or another type of fortified residence with an embedded winepress facility. The ramifications of this assessment for the metaphorical blend are huge. In performing a vineyard parable within the compounds of the temple, intertextual readings and material realism buttress the vineyard as a combination of crucial economic activities as well as diverse forms of human habitation operating the facilities. The transfer of such a vineyard to “another nation” (Matt 21:43) indeed has implications for those operating it, and the metaphorical blend must have deep impact on the audience of the parable. Our findings gain relief in light of the narrative context of the parable in Matthew’s Gospel, especially with regard to its fate (Matt 24:2) and the fate of its leadership (Matt 21:44). The vineyard parable subtly addresses the crisis

345–357. In a secondary application, Matt 21:44 adds the imagery of being crushed by this stone, inspired by Dan 2:44 and Isa 8:14. Again, the metaphor blends the fate of Jesus with the memory of the temple. The stone, or “topstone,” of Ps 118:22 (LXX Ps 117:22) received a lot of attention in rabbinic lore, identifying the stone with, e.g., David or the Messiah; cf. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 225; Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 515.

58 Cf. Aus, *Wicked Tentants*, 35–36, who counters the “realistic” reading in Van Eck, *Parables of Jesus*, 190.

evolving around Jesus as a crisis of the temple itself, and here we may have been offered a look into the oldest stage of the parable. However, the vineyard, due to its ubiquity in rural as well as village or even urban settings, also offered an appealing metaphor to comment on the temple building itself. Its absence for Matthew's readers, like we saw in the rabbinic reading of Isa 5, served to address new religious realities and reflect social realities responding to the demise of the temple.⁵⁹ It is in this intersection of material, textual, as well as intertextual dimensions that we see the opening verse realising its sublime rhetorical effectiveness. The realism of the vineyard metaphor evokes the lingering presence of a lost temple, whose heritage is fiercely contested among competing new elites.

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59 This may clarify why, as scholars have noted, Matthew hints at the Temple while simultaneously redirecting the vineyard metaphor to comment on social realities as well; see Weren, "The Use of Isaiah 5,1–7 in the Parable of the Tenants," 22; Brooke, "4Q500 1," 279.

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