

Sorting out “New and Old” (Matt 13:52) as Changing Money: Rabbinic and Synoptic Parables on Scriptural Knowledge

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A uniquely attested Matthean parable addresses the ideal scribal sage: “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (Matt 13:52 NRSV).¹ In this article I trace the embeddedness of this parable to textual and material culture, focusing especially on sayings and parables on the sage as a “treasure” and on the sage as “money changer” in Christian and rabbinic contexts. This case study actually may help us as well in understanding how these parables organically developed from late biblical wisdom sayings and attest to the early Jewish parable as a regional genre or “ecotype.” I will start discussing the notions of ecotype and social field (1) and assess the debate on the cradle of the parable (2). Following this, I will trace the metaphor of the sage as a “treasure/storage house” in Ben Sira (3), its deployment in Matthew and Rabbinic Judaism (4), and discuss a saying on “changing money” in early Christianity (5) and its appearance in rabbinic parables (6). The resulting textual input dimensions of “treasure” and “changing money” (7), combined with material culture (8), shed light on the expression “new and old” in Matthew.

1 Parable as “Ecotype”

From a folkloristic perspective, parables may be approached as an ecotype. An ecotype is a tale type that is typical for and reflective of a cultural and geographical context, presupposing an already existing literary type made fit to

1 Patrick Schreiner, *Matthew, Disciple and Scribe: The First Gospel and Its Portrait of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 7–36, argues for the translation “discipled scribe” rather than “scribe trained” as it is rendered in the RSV. This difference flows from his understanding of the implied author Matthew (10) showing himself as a disciple and not simply a “trained scribe.” My analysis here is, however, not locating the *author* Matthew as heir of Israel’s biblical history, but to gauge the cultural rhetoric of the parable metaphors in culturally coded metaphors.

suit local or regional needs. An ecotype preserves the fluidity of tradition and serves a sense of identity for its bearers.² Seen in this perspective, both the parables of Jesus and those of the rabbis reflect an early Jewish subdomain of the type of the parables of which the Greek fable is another representation.³ When we apply the notion to include the social locations of the actual or intended storyteller and hearers, this ecotype of the early Jewish parable, as I prefer to label the parables of both Jesus and the rabbis, functions within a designated social realm, a social field consisting of religious elites and their intended or actual audiences.⁴ The effectiveness of the parable as performative language depends on its ability to assure this audience of the justification of its social position, and in doing so confirms the authority of the parable teller.⁵ If the form reflects an ecotype, the social field within which a parable operates is its

2 The term “ecotype” was coined in the work of the Finnish folklore scholar Carl von Sydow (1878–1952). On the functionalist applications of this term, detecting interactions between story bearers, hearers, and their (changed) cultural environment, see Galit Hasan-Rokem, “Ecotypes: Theory of the Lived and Narrated Experience,” *NC* 3 (2016): 111–113.

3 Hasan-Rokem, “Ecotype,” 113–114: “The ecotype as an analytical tool addresses probably the most central issue raised in all theories of folk narrative research, namely, the dialectics between stability and change. Although not necessarily designed so by its creator, the concept of ecotype has largely been understood to presuppose the type as a normative configuration from which certain local or particular formations deviate. Its formulation tends to reflect a relationship between type and ecotype in which the type is primary and the ecotype secondary, derived from the type.”

4 Terry Rey, *Bourdieu on Religion: Imposing Faith and Legitimacy* (London: Routledge, 2007), 41f: “A Field is a competitive arena of social relations wherein variously positioned agents and institutions struggle over the production, acquisition and control of forms of capital particular to the field in question.”

5 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 111–113: “The specificity of the discourse of authority (e.g., a lecture, sermon etc.) consists in the fact that it is not enough for it to be understood (in certain cases it may even fail to be understood without losing its power), and that it exercises its specific effect only when it is recognized as such ... it must be uttered by the person legitimately licensed to do so, the holder of the *skeptron*, known and recognized as being able and enabled to produce this particular class of discourse ... it must be uttered in a legitimate situation ... finally, it must be enunciated according to legitimate forms (syntactic, phonetic, etc.)” This observation on liturgical language seems apt to hold for any genre, cf. Sam Whimster and Scott Lash, ed. *Max Weber. Rationality and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1987; repr. 2014), 124: “The religious message that will be most capable of satisfying a group’s religious demand, and therefore of exercising its properly symbolic function of mobilization upon that group, will be the one that provides it with a quasi-systematic set of justifications for its existence as the occupant of a determinate social location.” Cf. Eric Ottenheim, “Bourdieu und die Exegese. Eine exemplarische Rezeption Pierre Bourdieus am Beispiel der Gleichnisauslegung,” in *Religion und soziale Distinktion. Resonanzen Pierre Bourdieus in der Theologie*, ed. Ansgar Kreuzer et al., QD 295 (Basel: Herder, 2018), 48–69; Eric Ottenheim, “On the Rhetoric of ‘Inheritance’ in Synoptic and Rabbinic Parables,” in *Parables in Changing Contexts: Essays on the Study of Parables in*

“regional ecosystem.” Taken out of their prime context, parables, like plants, remain discernible, but will have to adapt to the new circumstances in order to function properly.⁶ This applies to their specific form as well: a saying may morph into a parable to address new audiences more captive to short narratives than to abstract sayings. Sayings in their turn address an inner circle of newly established elites.

2 The Cradle of the Parable

This ecological approach may actually also help us in discerning the cradle of the parable: the genre not only functions in, but most probably also developed from its entanglements with existing genres.⁷ A steadily growing consensus of scholars locates the parables of Jesus and the rabbis within an existing genre, and its metaphors as belonging to a *langue* informing the variants in Christian and rabbinic Jewish tradition alike. However, the roots of this genre still remain elusive.⁸ One approach draws attention to the similarities between parables, as short, fictive narratives with an educational goal, and the fables of Aesop or the similitudes of Epictetus, and assumes that the parables have their origins in external, Greek influence.⁹ Greek rhetoric, with its theoretical

Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism, ed. Eric Ottenheijm and Marcel Poorthuis, JCP 35 (Brill: Leiden, 2020), 15–36.

- 6 Such a transition takes place already in the move from orality to text, but this change still takes place within a similar culture.
- 7 This “genre consciousness” (Ruben Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables of Jesus: Methods and Interpretation* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015], 116) was noticed in Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, vol. 1, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu im Allgemeinen*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1910; repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), 31–33, but his argument seeks to unravel the authentic parable form of Jesus from their gospel embedding. As to the anachronism in locating rabbinic forms in pre-rabbinic times, Jacob Neusner, “Parable (Mashal),” in *Encyclopedia of Midrash: Biblical Interpretation in Formative Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 2:612, and emphasising specific form and rhetoric: Arnold Goldberg, “Das Schriftauslegende Gleichnis im Midrasch,” *FJB* 9 (1981): 1–90.
- 8 In a forthcoming book on the history of the early Jewish parable I detect, by means of several case studies, some of the early traces of the parable in Christian and rabbinic sources. As I will argue there, aside from the wisdom parable, the legal parable is reflective of this early stage.
- 9 Semitic origins of fables are suggested by Ben E. Perry in the preface of his edition of the fables of Babrius and Phaedrus, see Ben E. Perry, *Babrius and Phaedrus: Fables*, LCL 436 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965). Cf. David Daube, *Ancient Hebrew Fables: The Inaugural Lecture for the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); the fable of R. Akiva (b. Ber. 61b) shows parallels with a tale in

cases (*progymnasmata*) and similes, has similarly been argued to have had an impact on rabbinic legal discourse.¹⁰ However, whereas some literary knowledge of Greek fables is detectable in rabbinic parables, only scattered motifs appear in the Synoptic Gospels.¹¹ Moreover, the impact of biblical lore like Nathan's "parable" (2 Sam 12:1–4), the fable of Jotham (Judg 9:8ff.), the "Song of the Vineyard" (Isa 5:1–7), or Ezekiel's allegorising similes (Ezek 17:2–10) should not be overlooked either.¹² Rabbinic and synoptic parables likewise drew from these biblical precursors, and even may even have derived their didactic authority from these "canonical" forms.¹³ This observation does not negate Greek influence, but suggests looking closer for a bridge of the cultural interaction between these biblical precursors and Greek fables. Such a bridge, in my view, should supply some of the motifs and metaphors that belong to the ecotype of the New Testament and the rabbinic parable, feature Greek elements, and should be located in Second Temple Judaism. Moreover, it should already be reflective of social contexts close to public teaching, dispute, or homily, all of which are part of the regional ecosystem of parables in both synoptic and rabbinic contexts.¹⁴

Herodotus and with Greek fables, see Haim Schwarzbaum, "The Vision of Eternal Peace in the Animal Kingdom. (Aa-Th 62)," *Fabula* 10 (1969): 110–113. Greek influence is argued in David Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse und der Gleichniserzähler Jesus*, vol. 1, *Das Wesen der Gleichnisse*, JudChr 4 (Bern: Lang, 1981); David Flusser, "Aesop's Miser and the Parable of the Talents," in *Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Clemens Thoma and Michael Wyschogrod (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 9–25.

- 10 Yonah Fraenkel questions rabbinic knowledge of classical rhetoric, see Yonah Fraenkel, *Darkhei ha-aggadah vehamidrash* (Givatayim: Yad Latalmud, 1991), 327 (Hebrew); cf. Richard Hidary, *Rabbis and Classical Rhetoric: Sophistic Education and Oratory in the Talmud and Midrash* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Daniel Boyarin detects influence from Menippean satire on absurd tales in the Bavli, see Daniel Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
- 11 On Aesop and Aesopic traditions in relation to synoptic and rabbinic parables, see the contributions of Justin Strong and Tal Ilan in this volume. On motifs in synoptic parables, see Mary-Ann Beavis, "Parable and Fable," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 473–498.
- 12 Cf. Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:32: "Woher nun konnten die Jünger solche Lehrweise kennen als aus der Erfahrung ihres Lebens oder aus dem A.T.?"
- 13 Gary Porton, "The Parable in the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic Literature," in *The Historical Jesus in Context*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison, and John Dominic Crossan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 206–221.
- 14 Flusser, *Rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 300–301, notes how some of Jesus' parables are operative in dialogues. This occurs in rabbinic sources as well, e.g., Fraenkel, *Darkei ha-aggadah*, 347–349.

Remarkably, and in spite of certain parabolic speech in Philo’s allegorical Bible interpretations, parables as such cannot be detected in his work.¹⁵ Neither do we find it in Qumran, or in apocalyptic literature (e.g., 4 Ezra 4:13–18) such as the “Parables of Henoah.”¹⁶ The semi-parabolic forms found in these texts do display some formal elements of the parable, such as the introductory “like” in Philo, or the use of metaphor, but they do not feature homiletical discourse, or the sage-disciple or sage-sage interactions typical of synoptic and rabbinic sources. Neither do they constitute a distinct genre, labelled as such, within the respective works in which they appear. A suitable candidate for bridging the gap between biblical and Greek tradition may instead be found in the Second Temple wisdom tradition. The book of Ben Sira, mediating Greek philosophy and Semitic wisdom, provides motifs and similes that, as we will see, are realized in (narrative) parables.¹⁷ While this point has as such been already made, its importance has not been given due attention in comparative research of rabbinic and synoptic parables.¹⁸ Wisdom portrays the exchange of religious wisdom and knowledge between “father and son,” referring to teachers and disciples, and this social context (whether literary or historical) underlies many parables as well. Like wisdom sayings, parables are keen on transmitting religious knowledge in the guise of metaphors that are embedded in daily life experiences, and this shows in Greek as well as Hebrew.¹⁹ Scholars have noted the close similarity between sayings and parables, reflected in the

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- 15 Admittedly, some allegorical explanations prelude the *marshal* in using the technical opening “like” and in applying metaphors to comment on the biblical text: see e.g., Philo, *Opif.* 78.4 (I owe this reference to my former PhD students Albertina Oegema and Martijn Stoutjesdijk). The Greek form here, however, mimics the famous Homeric simile in style and aesthetics.
- 16 Compare 4Q302, frag. 2:2, a simile might be located in between a wisdom saying with its introductory form, and a parable. Philo, *Abr.* 105ff. offers a more compelling example, but cf. Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2:206; Flusser, *Rabbinischen Gleichnisse*, 146–147.
- 17 Compare e.g., Sir 11:18–19 and Luke 12:16–21.
- 18 Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:42, had already suggested this, but he mistakenly dissociated the “Hellenistic” (read: universal Jewish) Ben Sira from rabbinic (read: particularistic Jewish) tradition.
- 19 Three notions buttress this connection: Antigonos ben Sokho’s saying in m. Avot 1:3, which Flusser identifies as the first instance of an early Jewish parable, must rather be categorised as a wisdom saying in parabolic form. Its short narrative on slaves serving their master either or not keen on receiving their daily sustenance, *peras*, nonetheless marks it as the threshold of the narrative parable. Secondly, the exchange of knowledge in the dialogical dress of a teacher-father instructing his “son,” which represents the literary setting of Qoheleth and Proverbs, provides the rhetoric appealing to sages and disciples. Third, the agricultural wisdom metaphor of working in vineyards, as it is present in Prov 24:30–34, is a less apparent but still clearly operative background for vineyard parables in synoptic and rabbinic tradition.

homonyms *parabolè* and *mashal/mathla* as the term the sources use to designate (wisdom) sayings and parables in Greek and in Hebrew/Aramaic. Others have suggested an organic development from the simple sayings and similes to narrative parable as well.²⁰ Underlying this development of genre may actually be a change of social setting. A different social field requires concomitant rhetorical techniques, and parables, adding localised narrative to metaphor, may fulfil these better than abstract sayings which serve formal “school” settings. However, even then sayings and parables feature side by side.²¹ Is the parable, as a preferred genre for homiletic or public teaching, reflective of a Galilean setting? While scholars may be divided on whether the reference to a “school” in Sir 51:23 is historical in nature or represents a wisdom topos, they do associate Sirach with a city setting of Jerusalem.²² Parables, on the contrary, operate in informal settings of teachers and their disciples, occasional audiences, or in homiletical contexts.²³ Narrative may be more appealing for occasional

- 20 Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition*, 4th ed., FRLANT 29 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), 184: “Als eigentliche Vergleiche bezeichne ich zunächst solche Bildungen, die sich von einem Vergleich oder Bildwort nur durch die Ausführlichkeit, mit der das Bild gestaltet ist, unterscheiden, und zwar kann ein Gleichnis bald aus einem Bildwort, bald aus einem Vergleich entwickelt sein” (italics are mine); e.g., Luke 14:28–33, 15:4–10; Matt 18:12–14.
- 21 It is no coincidence that synoptic tradition added sayings to the parables of Jesus: see Charles H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (London: Fontana Books, 1961; repr. Glasgow: Collins Fount Paperbacks, 1978), 21–22. For the rabbinic side: Yonah Fraenkel, in a discussion of m. Avot 2:15, argues that some parabolic sayings that he labels as “chain parables” lack a plot so as to stress the synchronicity of events. See Fraenkel, *Darkhei ha-aggadah*, 378.
- 22 On the social location of *paideia* in Ben Sira, see Friedrich V. Reiterer, “Ein unkonventioneller Umgang mit der biblischen Autorität: Siras Art in hellenistischer Umgebung aus seiner Bibel zu denken und zu sprechen,” in *Scriptural Authority in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity*, ed. Géza G. Xeravits, Tobias Nicklas, and Isaac Kalimi, DCLS 16 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 129–166. Siegfried Kreuzer argues for a Jerusalem context for Ben Sira and highlights the Greek elements of *paideia*, see Siegfried Kreuzer, “Der soziokulturelle Hintergrund des Sirachbuches,” in *Texts and Contexts of the Book of Sirach/Texte und Kontexte des Sirachbuches*, ed. Gerhard Karner, Frank Ueberschaer, and Burkard M. Zapff, SCS 66. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 33–52.
- 23 On Jewish-Christians, their sages and the Pharisaic and rabbinic sages, see Roland Deines, “Religious Practices and Religious Movements in Galilee: 100 BCE–200 CE,” in *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods*, vol. 1, *Life, Culture and Society*, ed. David A. Fiensy and James Riley Strange (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 78–111; arguing diversity and competition with social identity theory, see Anders Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic intra-Group Conflict,” *JBL* 127 (2008): 95–132; on the grounds of material culture, see Jody Magness, “Sectarianism before and after 70 CE,” in *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple*, ed. Daniel R. Schwartz

listeners in non-institutionalized settings, as reflective of their daily life, or as buoyantly grasping their imagination. In this regard, the ecotype of the early Jewish parable guarantees continuity with wisdom tradition but at the same time also transmits new types of religious knowledge.

3 The Sage as Treasure

An early example of this ecotype is the “sage as a treasure” parable, and in particular the ways this parable morphs, in rabbinic and Christian sources alike, the “treasure” motif with the motif of “sorting out money.” Its social rhetoric is manifest in buttressing canonicity and the authority of emerging religious elites. The cradle of this ecotype can be detected in the second part of a saying of Ben Sira, in its Greek recension: “In the treasuries of wisdom are sayings of understanding” (ἐν θησαυροῖς σοφίας παραβολαὶ ἐπιστήμης, Sir 1:25a NRSV [adapted]). This verse is not rendered in the Hebrew fragments, but given Sirach’s near canonical status in rabbinic tradition, as well as its complex textual history, it is not implausible to imagine that there was also a Hebrew version of this saying.²⁴ While the Hebrew term *chochma* or the Greek *sophia* suggests that the saying depicts universal wisdom as a treasure of wise sayings, potentially available to true seekers, the verse itself actually addresses the wisdom acquired by the sage: “Its explanation here is not the upper wisdom, but the teaching and the tradition of a sage who leads a man on the good ways.”²⁵ This embodied quality of wisdom indeed emerges from the immediately preceding saying in Sir 1:24, which speaks about a patient man who withholds

and Zeev Weiss, AJEC 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 69–89; and, arguing from textual and material culture, see Eric Ottenheijm, “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 Schwartz and Peter J. Tomson, CRINT 15 (Leiden, Brill, 2018), 378–400.

24 The metaphor is widespread in Hebrew wisdom tradition, compare the wisdom as sought for treasure in Prov 2:4. Rabbinic appreciation for Ben Sira can be seen, for example, in their admiration for Shimon the High Priest, see Vered Noam, “Ben Sira: A Rabbinic Perspective,” in *Discovering, Deciphering, and Dissenting: Ben Sira Manuscripts after 120 Years*, ed. James K. Aitken, Renate Egger-Wenzel, and Stefan C. Reif (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 201–217. For the rabbinic use of bipartite, didactic sayings, chains of biblical generations (m. Avot 5; Sir 44–50) on the shared focus on death, and on isolated quotations from Ben Sira, see Amram Tropper, *Wisdom, Politics, and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman Near East* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2004), 58–59, 68.

25 Moshe H. Segal, *Sefer Ben Sira ha-shalem* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1958), 10 (Hebrew). The text is not rendered in the extant Hebrew fragments published in Pancratius C. Beentjes, ed., *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts*, VTSup 68 (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

his speech until the right moment, and is buttressed by other occurrences of “treasure/storehouse” in Sirach, most of which connote character.²⁶ The saying bridges Greek philosophy with rabbinic culture in its insistence on embodied Torah as acquired wisdom.²⁷ Moreover, the ambiguity of the Greek *thesaurós* as either denoting a “treasure,” filled with gold and silver coins for example, or a “storage room,” filled with foodstuff, is present in Christian and in rabbinic parables and parabolic sayings on the activity of the Sage.

4 Matt 13:52: “New and Old”

Closing his teaching on the kingdom of God with a series of parables, Jesus offers a striking parabolic saying on the nature of the sage:

<p>Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.</p>	<p>διὰ τοῦτο πᾶς γραμματεὺς μαθητευθεὶς τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν ὁμοίος ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπῳ οἰκοδεσπότη, ὅστις ἐκβάλλει ἐκ τοῦ θησαυροῦ αὐτοῦ καινὰ καὶ παλαιά</p>
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Matt 13:52

Remarkable here is the word “scribe,” *grammateús*. Usually, Matthew uses the term in a critical sense, as a reference to Jesus’s opponents.²⁸ In Matthew, however, it also refers to Jesus’s disciples, and, on the editorial level, to qualify the ideal Matthean sage, the *didaskalos* (teacher) who is not to be called “rabbi” (Matt 23:8), but who likewise acts as the scripturally trained community leader.²⁹ The parable recalls the Ben Sira saying of the sage as a treasure, but it

26 Sir 1:25, 6:14, 20:30, 29:11; 12; 41:12 all adduce “treasure” to depict a personal quality. Sir 40:18 mentions a treasure literally, and Sir 43:13(–14) refers to the “treasures” of heaven. Cf. Sir 51:28.

27 The rabbis understood themselves and their Torah-centred theology as heirs to Ben Sira, see Ishay Rosen-Zvi, “The Wisdom Tradition in Rabbinic Literature and Mishnah Avot,” in *Tracing Sapiential Traditions in Ancient Judaism*, ed. Hindy Najman, JSJSup 174 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 172–190.

28 Cf. Matt 8:18, 9:3, 15:1, 20:18, 21:15, and the diatribes against “scribes and the Pharisees” in Matt 23.

29 The Matthean scribe is addressed as well in Matt 5:17–20. The parallel saying of Luke 6:45 addresses a different, religio-ethical rhetoric. Note also the scribe (*grammateus*) mentioned as a would-be disciple in Matt 8:19. See on this issue also Ottenheijm, “Matthew and Yavne,” 394–397, and the literature cited there.

also adds action in having the sage bring out “new and old.”³⁰ This expansion evokes the question of what “new and old” may actually be. First, and given the cultural validation of “old” over “new,” a late antique reader would expect the more common phrase “old and new.”³¹ However, the formula “new and old” was not altogether unknown in antiquity, judging from a sparse occurrence in Herodotus, where he recounts how the Greeks were preparing for the battle of Plataea (479 BCE) between the assembled Greek city states and against the Persian army. To gain a place of honour next to the Spartans, who represent the core battle force, the Athenians and the Tygeans boast about their acts of heroism. Herodotus then narrates:

Here, in the marshalling of the nations, a fierce battle of words arose between the Athenians and the Tegeans, both of whom claimed to have one of the wings assigned to them. On each side were brought forward the deeds which they had done, whether in new or in older times (καὶ καινὰ καὶ παλαιὰ παραφέροντες ἔργα).

HERODOTUS, *Hist.* 9.26³²

The rhetoric advanced by both parties bolsters the understanding that the new are equally important as the old and deserving of similar treatment. Indeed, Matthew may allude to new traditions as actually of a similar value as the old ones. This explanation gains weight if we gauge the biblical ring in the expression as well: the odd phrase “new and old” may constitute an allusion to Song 7:14, even though the Greek text of the LXX does use a somewhat different expression than Matthew: “The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and over our doors are all choice fruits, *new as well as old*, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved” (Song 7:11–13 NRSV).³³ Motifs from Song of Songs can be detected in the parable of the Ten Maiden (Matt 25:1–13), possibly presenting us with another example.³⁴ The rabbis, in a curious twist based on reading

30 Peter Philips, “Casting out the Treasure: A New Reading of Matthew 13:52,” *JSNT* 31 (2008): 3–24, argues that ἐκβάλλει as “throwing out,” “expel,” but admits that the parable already acquires a nuanced meaning in Matthew’s editorial use.

31 Compare the tension between “old” and “new” in the Q-tradition in Matt 9:16–17.

32 See also Philips, “Casting out the Treasure,” 19.

33 “The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and over our doors are all choice fruits, *new as well as old* (מַנְדְּרָקִים יִשְׁפְּרוּ רִיחָם וְעַל דְּרָגוֹתֵינוּ פְּרִי תְּבָרָה), which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.” (Song 7:11–13 NRSV) LXX Song 7:14 reads νέα πρὸς παλαιά, but Matthew could adapt the LXX version at times, see Maarten Menken, *Matthew’s Bible: The Old Testament Text of the Evangelist* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).

34 Peter J. Tomson, “Parables, Fiction, and Midrash: the Ten Maidens and the Bridegroom (Matt 25:1–13),” in *Parables in Changing Contexts: Essays on the Study of Parables in*

Hebrew *tsafanti* (צִפְנָתִי), in the clause “I have them in store for you,” as “*tsofen ani lachem*,” “I have looked at you,” understand the verse as expressive of the intimate relation between God and Israel:

“I have them in store for you”
(Song 7:14). Said R. Aba bar Kahana:
The Holy One blessed be He says to
Israel: you look (*tsofnim*) at Me and
I look at you (*tsofen lachem*): you
look by means of commandments
and good deeds, and I look at you by
means of treasures even more full
than all good things of the world.

Wilna ed. 7:14

דודי צפנתי לך
א"ר אבא בר כהנא אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא
לישראל אתם צופנים לי ואני צופן לכם
אתם צופנים במצות ומעשים טובים ואני
צופן לכם באוצרות מלאים יותר מכל
הטובות שבעולם

The odd intrusion of the treasure reminds us of our parable, but the combination with the expression “new and old” is even more telling, and may be suggestive of a known trope. Moreover, in the beginning of this verse the treasures (*otsarot*) mentioned here govern the now following explanation of the biblical expression “choice fruits,” where the rabbis present two parables: one reading it as a reference to ripened figs, the other as referring to money, and both appear to be connected to the treasures mentioned:

It may be compared to a virtuous
woman to whom her husband left
only a few articles and little money for
her expenses; yet when he returned
she was able to say to him: “See what
you left me and what I have saved up
for you!”

Wilna ed. 7:14, 1 [trans. Soncino]

לאשה כשרה שהניח לה בעלה מעט
חפצים ומעט יציאות
כיון שבא בעלה אמרה לו ראה מה הנחת
לי ומה סגלתי לך וגם הוספתי לך עליהם

The rabbis seem to have understood this verse to refer to the sage-scribe in particular. The continuation of this parable applies the imagery of the fruits and the orchard to the older and younger (“new and old”) generations of sages and rabbinic scholars. In a functionally similar rhetoric, Matthew applies the parabolic saying to the elite of his community, i.e., the scribe who has become

Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism, ed. Eric Ottenheijm and Marcel Poorthuis, JCP 35 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 226–235.

a “disciple of the kingdom.” Crucial here is the fact that, unlike the motif of food, the motif of “treasure” as well as the motif of “money” in the parable is not provided by Song of Songs, and its appearance both in the midrash and in Matthew suggests an exegetical tradition underlying both sources, and in connection with the biblical expression “new and old.” The midrash employs it to denote the innovative hermeneutical work of the sages, in Matthew, “new as well as old” has to do with the newness as well as the continuity of the kingdom in light of the old, which is “Moses and the Prophets.”³⁵

What did Matthew convey with the motif of the *thesaurós*, usually translated as “treasure”? Two preceding parables, the Treasure (!) in the Field (Matt 13:44) and Purchasing a Precious Pearl (Matt 13:45–46) focus on monetary value, but another preceding parable is the parable of the Fishnet, and it focuses on food.³⁶ Foodstuff is again the main topic in the parable of

35 Ulrich Luz considers it to develop a traditional saying of Jesus, based on the curious change of the address from “disciples” (v. 36ff.) to “sages” (v. 52), and suggests a context of the separation of Matthew’s community from the community of Israel. See Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 8–17)*, EKKNT 1/2 (Neukirchen Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2007), 362, 366. However, Peter Müller argues it to be editorial: Peter Müller, “Neues und Altes aus dem Schatz des Hausherrn (Vom rechten Schriftgelehrten). Mt 13,52,” in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann et al. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007), 435. Philips (“Casting out the Treasure,” 22) even distinguishes three (!) stages, with the original parable as a call to radically “expel” (ἐξβάλλει) both the new and the old teachings in order to make way for the kingdom. Philips argues over the ground of the same verb in the parabolic saying connects Matt 12:35 (cf. Matt 12:20) but his argument that the “new” should be expelled as well, given the rhetorical ring of the kingdom itself as representing a new reality, remains unconvincing given the exegetical concerns all over the Gospel, e.g., in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew’s concern to anchor Jesus’ teaching of the kingdom in Moses, moreover, differs from patristic interpretations and their struggle against Marcion and gnostic depreciations of Hebrew Scriptures (see also Luz, *Matthäus*, 364n24), but “new and old” may not only qualify the author-editor of the Gospel but the ideal disciple-scribe in his community as well. Schreiner alludes to the famous Augustinian trope in concluding that for Matthew “the new interprets the old, and the old reveals the new” (*Matthew: Disciple and Scribe*, 103). There may be more apologetic tension at stake here, however, and also for Matthew continuity of the preaching of Jesus with the biblical was a concern in the crisis following the demise of the Temple. On this anxiety in Jewish and Christian sources, see Jonathan Klawans, *Heresy, Forgery, Novelty: Condemning, Denying, and Asserting Innovation in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). Remarkably, a similar tension underlies the twofold image of R. Akiva in rabbinic sources, see below.

36 On the parable of the Treasure in the Field, see the article of Catherine Hezser in this volume. On the rhetoric of a pearl as representing unlimited monetary value, see Eric Ottenheim, “Finding Pearls. Matthew 13:45–46 and Rabbinic Literature,” in *Hebrew Texts in Jewish, Christian and Muslim Surroundings*, ed. Klaas Spronk and Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman, SSN 69 (Leiden, Brill, 2018), 231–251.

the Sower (Matt 13:1–9) followed by the parable of the Wheat and the Tares (Matt 13:24–30). However, whereas the motif of growth and harvest might suit a wisdom context, a reading of the saying in Matt 13:52 as taking out old *food-stuff* can hardly be a fitting image for bolstering scriptural authority. Moreover, the term *thesaurós* in Matthew is always associated with “silver and gold,” see for example the parable of the Treasure in the foregoing Matt 13:44, not with food, and a more appropriate image would be the taking out of “new and old” coins.³⁷ This reading references the scriptural interpretation of the scribe, and deploys a known imagery.

In the following, we will buttress this interpretation by assessing the entanglement of textual and material culture. First, we will review material culture and argue the rhetoric of monetary distinction as referencing scriptural scrutiny. This will be accompanied by two textual strands: an early Christian *agraphon* on “money changing” as an exegetical activity and, finally, both dimensions of the metaphor “treasure” recurring in rabbinic parables on the idealized sage.

5 Sorting Our Coins: Material Dimensions and Cultural Rhetoric

Sorting out coins was a common practice in the late antique world both of Matthew and of the rabbis. Palestinian coins findings of the late Second Temple and early Roman times show an increasing variety of sorts and values, including Italian coins from Imperial mints and coins from Eastern provincial mints.³⁸ In late Roman and Byzantine times some cities in the region were allowed local mints that issued lower value bronze and copper currencies.³⁹ Old Hellenistic coins from the Hasmonean period also continued to be used. Thus, markets featured a mixture of coins, due to the circulation of coins of different age and provenance. Coins transcended borders, and changing money came to connote social mobility.⁴⁰ Among the many bronze coins one could

37 As already proposed by John D.M. Derrett, *Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 3, *Midrash, Haggadah, and the Character of the Community* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), albeit but without supporting argumentation.

38 Lawrence E. McKinney, “Coins and the New Testament: From Ancient Palestine to the Modern Pulpit,” *RevExp* 106 (2009): 467–489.

39 McKinney, “Coins and the New Testament,” 477; for the Byzantine era, see Peter Guest, “The Production, Supply and Use of Late Roman and Early Byzantine Copper Coinage in the Eastern Empire,” *NumC* 172 (2012): 105–131.

40 McKinney, “Coins and the New Testament,” 477: “No matter what money one started with when making purchases in Caesarea Philippi, the change received would have left the

find the very common Greek *lepton* and Hebrew *peruta*, which were used from Hasmonean times but continued to be in use in the following centuries, and had an unclear value.⁴¹ Moreover, silver coins in particular were subject to wear through usage and hand frapping, resulting in loss in weight and the effacing of diagnostic surface features, all of which severely diminished their value and usability. Coins of bad quality, or coins produced with two different dies (so called hybrid coins) also necessitated an intensive and localized system of money changing.⁴² Establishing the local value of coins thus was the moneychanger's main task, it was part of an act of merchandise, involving change and exchange of underlying value in the form of goods. Important for the rhetoric of the saying, assessing the value was done by critically looking at the images, by reading the textual markings, and by determining weight and quality.⁴³ This visual rhetoric can be found in the saying of Matthew on the disciple of the kingdom “bringing forth new and old,” i.e., in public, and according to local needs. It is clearly reflected in some Christian and rabbinic sayings and parables on the “sage as money changer.”

6 “Be Approved Money Changers!”

The material culture rhetoric of critically scrutinising the quality of coins by looking and reading indeed recurs in the *agraphon* “Be Approved Money Changers” (γίνεσθε τραπεζίται δόκιμοι, [Resch 1906, logion 43]). This is a non-canonical saying attributed to Jesus, widely known and quoted from the second century CE onwards. It mainly features within the fierce debates of proto-orthodox teachers with Marcionite and gnostic circles who denied the revelatory character of the Hebrew Bible. This indeed suggests the saying to be

consumer with a purse containing coins as eclectic in both language and imagery as the city itself with its cosmopolitan population.”

41 McKinney, “Coins and the New Testament,” 475, 479.

42 Ya'akov Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins from the Persian Period to Bar Kokhba* (Jerusalem: Yad ben-Zvi, 2001), 33: As the renowned expert on Jewish coins notices, “the exchange of silver coins for bronze coins was carried out according to an assessment of the value of the transaction at the time of implementation, as if it involved merchandise and not money, in accordance with the locality, time, needs, or demand. It should be added that the state of preservation of the coins was also of significance with regard to their value, especially in the case of silver pieces.”

43 Whether the act of changing was prompted to evade the use of pagan symbols and Imperial propaganda is a subject of debate. Outside the temple precincts and apart from the revolts that witnessed specifically Jewish mints, Jews regularly used several coins on the daily market, see McKinney, “Coins and the New Testament,” 478.

of somewhat later origin, but it may have been unknown in the gospel given the editor's biased views on moneychangers.⁴⁴ Be this as it may, the logion, in different Christian quarters of the second century onwards, is "always deployed analogically in relation to the practice and skill of discernment—how one determines a given text, teaching, or even leader to be authorised or approved, just as the money changer tests the authenticity of coins to avoid counterfeits."⁴⁵ Its main application is defending the sacred and revealed nature of the Hebrew Bible by promoting Christian teachers to discern between those scriptural traditions and characters that warrant divine authority or not.⁴⁶ This rhetoric of assessing individual texts can be seen for example in the third century CE *Clementine Homilies*, a Greek version of the Clementine novels which probably originated in Syria, and is reflective of a Christian milieu at once close and hostile to nascent rabbinic Judaism: "Thus, if some of the Scriptures are true, while others are false, rightly our teacher said: Be good moneychangers, because some sayings in the Scriptures are good, while others are unworthy."⁴⁷ In short, while Christian sources deploy the saying in their debates on the canonicity of the Hebrew Bible, it may be that it also originated in this specific theological context, and unrelated to the expression in the parable of Matthew. Remarkably, however, Origen explains Matthew's phrase "new and old" in a similar vein as buttressing the validity of the Hebrew Bible by means of correct

44 Moneychangers do occur in the synoptic tradition and in the Gospel of John, but since they have a bad reputation as the object of Jesus' wrath when he cleansed the temple precincts (Mark 11:15–17; Matt 21:12–13; Luke 19:45–46; John 2:13–17), this could explain the saying's absence in earlier sources.

45 The logion is also attributed to Paul, but it is not mentioned in any canonical or pseudo-Pauline source. Cf. Curtis Hutt, "Be Ye Approved Money Changers! Reexamining the Social Contexts of the Saying and Its Interpretation," *JBL* 131 (2012): 590. We do not seek to test the authenticity of the saying, as argued by Hutt, but see it as a floating logion known in Christian quarters, and as a variant on R. Eliezer's saying discussed below. On the early Christian role of the logion, see Giovanni Bazzana, "Be Good Moneychangers' The Role of An Agraphon in a Discursive Fight for the Canon of Scripture," in *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation. Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity*, ed. David Brakke, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, and Jörg Ulrich, *ECCA* 11 (Bern: Lang, 2012), 297–311.

46 Clement of Alexandria quotes the saying in emphasizing the need to differentiate between permissible and immoral acts. Although the saying is also adduced by the gnostic teacher Appelles, suggesting a wide and flexible usage, it is predominantly used by proponents of the Hebrew Scriptures, who, however, seek to differentiate between good and bad characters in the Hebrew Bible. Origen aptly chastises those who do not take out both the new and the old as those who do not validate Moses and the prophets: "... οὐ μόνον τὰ καινὰ τῶν εὐαγγελίων καὶ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῆς ἀποκαλύψεως αὐτῶν λόγια, ἀλλὰ καὶ παλαιὰ τοῦ σκιαν ἔχοντος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν νόμου καὶ τῶν ἀκολούθως αὐτοῖς προφητευσάντων προφητῶν" (Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 10–11). Origen also offers an allegorical explanation.

47 Ps.-Clementines, *Hom.* 2.51.1, quoted in Bazzana, "Be Good Moneychangers," 299.

exegetical interpretation. This understanding of Matthew, however, may be assessed as reflective of Origen’s hermeneutics, in which he reads Matthew as a defence of the Hebrew scriptures, and buttresses the sacredness of the Hebrew Bible by allegorical explanation to reveal its true value. Nonetheless, “changing coins” as the implied action underlying Matthew’s saying “bringing out new and old,” qualifies the scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom as someone being able to correctly interpret Scripture, the old, in light of the new, the preaching of the kingdom.

7 Sorting Out Coins as Hermeneutics

We may not be able to settle this question on the grounds of the Christian expression alone, but it is telling that “money changing” is a metaphor for hermeneutical activity in rabbinic quarters as well. In the death scene of R. Eliezer, Rabbi Akiva compares his beloved teacher to a moneychanger: “He opened his eulogy and said: My father, my father, chariot of Israel and its horsemen! I have coins but no moneychanger (*shulhani*) to sort them out (מעוֹת ישׁ לִי שׁוֹלְחָנִי לְרִצּוֹתֶן)” (Avot R. Nath. A 25, MS Oxford Opp 95).⁴⁸ Akiva’s cry “My father, my father, chariot of Israel and its horsemen” is a quote taken from 2 Kgs 2:12 and depicts R. Eliezer as Elia, and thus R. Akiva as Elisha, his disciple. The phrase “I have coins but no moneychanger to sort them out” is reflective of Akiva’s needs. Akiva’s saying denotes the legal questions he has, now with no one to answer them. R. Eliezer was teaching halakhot on his deathbed, differentiating between pure and impure, and this act of differentiation is expressed using the image of a money changer. The context of R. Eliezer’s death scene is telling, since this teacher was banned, and Akiva’s saying grants Eliezer canonical authority in spite of that ban. The motif of the moneychanger may have Akivan backgrounds, as it occurs in Tannaitic parables attributed to pupils of R. Akiva. One of these parables is found in a discussion between R. Josi and a certain Arius, on the difference between wisdom and knowledge. Its immediate context appears in an exegetical discussion on the verse “Select from each of your tribes persons who are wise and discerning, and experienced, and I will appoint them as your heads.” (Deut 1:3):

48 Text according to Hans Jürgen Becker, *Avot de-Rabbi Natan: Synoptische Edition beider Versionen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 204. Menahem Kister notes this to be the correct version: the “corrupt” reading שלחם / שלוחים, harmonises the text with the *editio princeps*, see Menahem Kister, *Studies in Avot de-Rabbi Nathan: Text, Redaction and Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1998), 242 (Hebrew).

He said to him: has it not already said “discerning,” so what is the difference between “discerning” and “wise”? A wise man is like a rich money changer: when he is brought (coins), he examines them. When he is not brought (coins), he takes out his own and examines them. The discerning person is like a poor money changer: when he is brought to examine, he examines, when he is not brought, he sits and looks around.

Sifre Deut. 13 [FINKELSTEIN 22]⁴⁹

א"ל כבר נאמר נבונים מה בין חכם לנבון
 חכם דומה לשולחני עשיר כשמביאים לו
 לראות רואה וכשאינ מביאים לו לראות
 מוציא משלו ורואה
 נבון דומה לשולחני עני כשמביאים לו לראות
 רואה כשאינ מביאין לו לראות ויתוהה

The parable thus compares a wise man to someone who checks coins other people bring to him, by putting them on the table and examining them carefully.⁵⁰ The *mashal* of R. Josi qualifies wisdom as being able to realize (*meqayem*) his acquired knowledge (*talmudo*). The difference between the poor and the rich moneychanger is that the former examines and assesses the value of other people's coins only, which is necessary for his sustenance, while the latter also checks his one's own coins.⁵¹ The wise man is able both to teach others and to digest his own acquired knowledge, thus occupying himself with Torah also when he is not being consulted.⁵² Here, Sirach's motif of the sage as a filled treasure harnesses the rabbinic understanding of the sage as a Jewish version of the Greek philosopher, immersed in his knowledge, and eager to pass it on

49 My translation is close to Fraade's, who follows MS Vatican, Ebr. 32.2, which is also the version of Midrash ha-Gadol. The versions in MS Berlin, Yalqut Simoni MS Oxford (Neubauer 2637), the version in Midrash Chachamim, and the first Venice printing offer different descriptions for the actions of the rich and the poor (or “strange”) money changer, but see Fraade, *Tradition*, 101m134, and literature cited there. The textual variants may reflect different views on the hierarchy of discerning knowledge and wisdom, as they emerged in the discussion triggered by Arius.

50 For this section cf. Steven D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (Albany: State University of New York Publishers, 1991), 101–201.

51 Fraade, *Tradition*, 102: “But the difference between the two is that the former preoccupies himself with the examination and evaluation of his wealth of acquired rules and traditions whether or not his services are sought. In other words, he spends his time absorbed in study *for its own sake*, and not, like the *nabon* (poor money changer), only when his expertise is sought for a practical application.”

52 Fraade, *Tradition*, 101.

to others when asked. Lurking behind the image of the “leaders of the people” in the parable’s application is the self-image of the rabbis, as a self-proclaimed scriptural elite. Against the background of this motif of sorting out coins both for oneself and for others, the scribe who takes out new and old from his treasure in Matt 13:52 is remarkably close to the image of people who bring forward their own coins. The Matthean scribe, like the rich money changer, displays his knowledge and teaches others.

8 Filling the Storage House

Hebrew *otsar* and Greek *thesaurós* either relate to a food storehouse or to a money container. This polysemy triggers a conceptual blend which might lie hidden beneath the surface of the elusive saying in Matthew, but is definitely manifest in manuscript versions of a rabbinic parable on Rabbi Akiva.⁵³ Conceptual blending occurs when related input domains blend into a single metaphorical manner of speech.⁵⁴ In some cases, a blend can solve tensions between domains. In our case, the two input domains of food and money morph together, since both are perceived to be denoting scriptural wisdom. The rabbinic parable develops a saying (!) that likens R. Akiva to a mixed storehouse (or treasure), filled with different kinds. It equates R. Akiva with a person who goes out with his basket to fill it with wheat, barley, beans, and lentils, and afterwards fills his storehouse (*otsar*) with his gain. The application then introduces the motif of sorting out: “Thus R. Akiva did and he arranged all of the Torah into טבעות טבעות, *taba’ot taba’ot*, rings.”⁵⁵ As such, it evokes a technique of depositing food in conic circles in the store room of a late antique household. A store room was meant to stabilize food products and protect them from spoiling due to light or moisture. Unchangeability is articulated in Vitruvius’s account of how and where to build store rooms:

53 On the related motif of finding a treasure, see Catherine Hezser’s contribution in this volume.

54 Blake E. Wassell and Stephen R. Llewelyn, “Fishers of Humans,’ the Contemporary Theory of Metaphor, and Conceptual Blending Theory,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 628, 645. A good example is the expression “fisher of man,” found in a Jesus’ saying, where the two separate domains of economy and religion, in this case, being real fishermen and being disciples who gather people, become mingled in a single expression.

55 Following the *editio princeps*, ed. Becker, *Avot*, 176. Cf. Pierre Lehnhardt and Peter von der Osten-Sacken, *Rabbi Akiva. Texte und Interpretationen zum rabbinischen Judentum und Neuen Testament*, ANTZ 1 (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1987), 275: “So tat R. Akiva und ordnete die ganze Tora in Ringen an.”

For in wine stores no one takes light from the south or west but from the north, because that quarter at no time admits changes, but is continuously fixed and unchangeable. So also those granaries which look towards the sun's course quickly change their goodness; and fish and fruit which are not placed in that quarter which is turned away from the sun's course do not keep long.

VITRUVIUS, *Arch.* 1.4.2–3⁵⁶

In gathering wisdom in his storehouse or treasure, the sage protects it from decay or loss. Storehouses were a reality in the Land of Israel, also serving as deposits for tithes, suggesting that these spaces fulfilled both legal and religious functions.⁵⁷ The *nimshal* then applies this image in our *mashal* to the storing of the Oral Torah. Saul Lieberman explains the curious image of “rings” in line with Greek *kykloi* of Christian Latin *catenae*, standardized and organized traditions that follow logical principles. According to Lieberman, the *nimshal* refers to the editing of the Mishnah, which is the paramount rabbinic document of Oral Torah and is based to a large extent on the work of R. Akiva and his pupils. However, some manuscripts supply the reading מטבעות, מטבעות, *matbe'ot matbe'ot*, “coins,” resulting in a different application for the simile: “Thus R. Akiva did and he and sorted out all of the Torah in coins.”⁵⁸ Whereas R. Akiva in the first version organizes Oral Torah topically, the second version focuses on hermeneutical quality, again deploying the activity of

56 “Ideo etiam et granaria quae ad solis cursum spectant, bonitatem cito mutant, obsoniaque et poma, quae non in ea parte caeli ponuntur, quae est aversa a solis cursu, non diu servantur.” Translation by Frank Granger, *On Architecture*, vol. 1, *Books 1–V*, LCL 251 (London: Heinemann, 1970), 280.

57 Vaulted store rooms found in the Herodian may be the *otsar* mentioned in the Murabba'at lease contract (Mur 24), stipulating that the tithes be weighed on its roof: col. 2, line 19: [מוֹדֵד עַל גַּב] אוֹצֵר בַּה־רוּדִים] col. 3, line 17: עַל גַּב אוֹצֵרָה col. 6, line 14: [מוֹדֵד עַל גַּב] אוֹצֵר בַּה־רוּדִים]. Text taken from Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic, Hebrew and Nabataean Documentary Texts from the Judaean Desert and Related Material*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2000), 1107. I thank prof. Boaz Zissu for providing these data and for permission to use his pictures when I presented an earlier draft of this chapter in Utrecht, June 2019.

58 The manuscripts are: MS New York Rabinowitz 25, ed. Becker, *Avot*, 176–177, and T-S NS 313.1 and a “different reading” (*nusach acher*) mentioned in MS Oxford Opp 247: מטבעות טביעות. It is followed by Shmuel Safrai, “Halakha,” in *The Literature of the Sages*, vol. 1, *Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates*, ed. Shmuel Safrai and Peter J. Tomson, CRINT 2.3a (Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 200–201: “Thus did R. Akiva, and he made the entire Tora into coins and sorted out separately,” and see note 383.

money changing to address exegetical activity.⁵⁹ According to this second version, R. Akiva embodies wisdom in the way of dynamic hermeneutics, in sorting out how the Oral Torah is in line with scriptural verses.⁶⁰ This version offers a narratological friction between *mashal* and *nimshal*, since sorting coins does not align with gathering food. However, lurking beneath the surface of this version is the motif of the sage as money changer, a metaphor that is realized in several parables attributed to pupils of Rabbi Akiva, and the image is reflective of his school of thought.⁶¹ Rather than searching for the original, the polysemy of *otsar* as either store house, associated with food, or treasure, associated with money, caused a powerful if somewhat confusing blend of two input domains, which is storing and sorting out coins, and emerging from a general field of meaning: assessing value.⁶² Moreover, when the parable is read

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- 59 Azzan Yadin discerns two imageries of R. Akiva's exegetical prowess: either conservatively as one who interprets Scripture as buttressing the views of Oral Torah, or, according to a later strand of tradition, as able to innovatively distil meanings even from the non-signifying crownlets and hooks of the Hebrew script (b. Menah. 29b). The motif of money changing in the variant reading of the parable may hint at the first type, Akiva as buttressing Oral Torah with Scripture. Like Matt 13:52, this serves a rhetoric of harmonising new teachings with Mosaic Scripture; see Azzan Yadin, *Scripture and Tradition: Rabbi Akiva and the Triumph of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); see also Azzan Yadin, "Rabbi Akiva's Youth," *JQR* 100 (2010): 573–597.
- 60 Safrai, "Halakha," 201n384 follows Rashi on b. Git. 77a: "He [R. Akiva] arranged midrash, Sifra and Sifrei, separately and taught them by themselves, and halakhot by themselves and aggadot by themselves." Cf. y. Sheq. 5:1 (48c) and t. Zav. 1:5.
- 61 The image of changing coins recurs in a parable of R. Meir, that addresses the memorising of Oral Torah in the context of the verse "May my teaching drop like the rain, my speech condense like the dew; like gentle rain on grass, like showers on new growth." (Deut 32:2 NRSV): "R. Yehuda (Mss: R. Meir) used to say: You should always gather the words of Torah together into general rules, for if you assemble them as individual details, they will weary you down. How can you know what to do? A parable: A man who went to Caesarea needed one hundred or two hundred *zuz* for expenses. If he took this sum in small change, it would weary him. (At first) he did not know what to do, but finally he converted the money into *selah*-coins, which he then changed (into smaller coins) and spent wherever it suited him." (Sifre Deut. 306 [Finkelstein, 338–339]). The parable comes in three variants, revealing the plasticity of applications. On the section characterising the sage, see Fraade, *Tradition*, 97.
- 62 In their discussion of the impact of blending on the fusion of different syntactic forms, Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner note: "Such constructions offer ready-made and powerful blending schemes. A tightly compressed frame and a corresponding syntactic form from one input can be recruited into a blended space linked to a diffuse input. Constructing a network based on that scheme for a particular case depends crucially on being able to construct a generic space that applies to the two inputs." See Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, "Conceptual Blending, Form and Meaning," *ReCo* 19 (2003): 79. It seems to me that the generic space in this case is the spatial function of the *otsar*/*thésaurus* as storehouse for food, or a treasure of coins, or both.

as Akiva sorting out coins, it morphs the known saying of the money changer into the wisdom metaphor of the sage as a filled treasure.⁶³ It is an additional example as to how sayings and parables feature side by side.

9 Conclusion

Despite the synchronic differences between rabbinic parables and the parables of Jesus in terms of their theological bearing on either the kingdom of God or the Torah, and despite the diachronic incongruencies of the respective sources, a comparative approach yields a shared “ecotype.” The polysemy of *otsar* in Sir 1:25 was detectable in both “Christian” and rabbinic sayings and parables, and the morphing of food and money is understandable from shared cognitive processes linking the input domain of sorting out coins with sorting out food to the generic space as represented by functions of a storehouse/treasure. Moreover, this “ecotype” of the early Jewish parable indeed functions in a similar social field, i.e., buttressing the authority of respective elites in their ability to read and interpret Scripture. We have traced out how both traditions develop a wisdom motif in two genres (sayings and parables) and two types of parabolic narrative: one that stresses the way the treasure is filled, and one that focuses on the dynamics of sorting out what was in it. Moreover, we saw how rabbinic parables and, quite probably, Matthew as well absorbed the motif of the sage as money changer, circulating as a saying in rabbinic and Christian quarters alike.

Our observations show how tradition can be both ruthlessly conservative as well as ingeniously innovative. The blend of two input spaces, money and food, results in narratological gaps and varieties in the manuscripts. This morphing is understandable from the cognitive process linking the input domain of sorting out coins with sorting out food to the generic space as represented by functions of a storehouse/treasure. This morphing is part of this parable’s “ecotype.” Moreover, similarities in rhetoric and their application to scribes and sages are revealing of a regional ecology for these parables on scriptural knowledge. Despite the differences in applications, these parables address the training of disciples and serve the interests of emerging elites: whether that of

63 Fauconnier and Turner, “Conceptual Blending,” 60: “In Double-Scopes, essential frame and identity properties are brought in from both inputs. Double-Scope Blending can resolve clashes between inputs that differ fundamentally in content and topology. This is a powerful source of human creativity.”

“Christian” scribes or an emerging rabbinic elite. In both traditions, the parables on the sage as an embodied deposit of wisdom add the significant task of trustfully assessing the validity of scriptural verses for others as well. The parable in turn legitimates and authorizes this task in the social realm of the audience. Wisdom becomes embodied in hermeneutical activity, carried out by emerging elites, and buttressed by a new literary genre.

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