

Reflections on the Spirit in the Mekilta: A Suggestion

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The *Mekilta* should be recognized as perhaps peculiarly important among Rabbinic sources for the understanding of the New Testament, and I have elsewhere indicated its relevance for this purpose.¹ The *Mekilta of Rabbi Ishmael*, conveniently translated into English by Jacob Z. Lauterbach,² is one of the oldest of the Tannaitic Midrashim and covers some of the most significant portions of the Old Testament, Exod. 12:1-23:19, 31:12-17, and 35:1-3. While it is particularly associated with the school of Rabbi Ishmael, it affords us an insight into the nature and content of the thinking not only of that school, but also of that of Rabbi Ishmael's colleague, Rabbi Akiba, and other Rabbis, who were contemporary with the early Christian movement. Here we shall very briefly point out the way in which the Spirit is dealt with in the *Mekilta*. Two caveats must be issued. First, the *Mekilta* has not been critically examined in terms of textual, form and redaction criticism, so that the preliminary work necessary for any definitive treatment of any aspect of the *Mekilta* remains to be done. I am fully aware of this important fact: in this paper I can only hope to draw attention to, not to exhaust, my theme. And, second, it would be erroneous to look for any systematic treatment of the Spirit in this document. Pharisaic Judaism was not concerned with theological consistency. What we shall find concerning the Spirit are a number of scattered opinions by individual Rabbis, uncoordinated and, apparently, haphazard.

But Heschel³ has rightly warned against treating the Rabbis as untheological even if they were unsystematic, and we shall seek to indicate a theological and historical reason for some of the statements made about the Spirit. Since the *Mekilta* is not arranged in a conceptually progressive manner, but as a series of comments on the biblical text, it will be best to look at each pertinent text as it occurs. We shall concentrate our attention especially on territorial or geographic categories within

1 W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, 1966), appendix.

2 Jacob Z. Lauterbach, trans., *Mekilta of Rabbi Ishmael*, 3 vols., (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949).

3 Heschel's thesis that the schools of R. Ishmael and R. Akiba represented two different streams of Tannaitic theology—the rationalistic and the mystical—is set forth in *Torah min ha-Shamaim*, 3 vols. It has not been examined or discussed adequately. The three volumes need to be translated.

which the Spirit is discussed and only refer briefly to others. Such a concentration may seem strange to Christian readers. But not so to Jewish ones, who are familiar with a territorial dimension in religious faith which Christians find alien. This dimension is probably more alien than that materialistic connotation which has sometimes been detected in sources dealing with *pneuma* and *ruah* in the first century, which enabled some scholars, for example, to speak of spirit as a *Lichstoff*.⁴ But the distinction between the personal or spiritual and the material was not as emphasized in the first century as now. In the same way the discussion of the Spirit and geography seemed not as unnatural to the Tannaitic Rabbis as to later ones.

I

The first text, Tractatē Pisha 1 on Exod. 12:1, is translated by Lauterbach on pp. 1, 3ff., and begins as follows:

And the Lord Spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the Land of Egypt Saying. . . In the Land of Egypt. This means outside of the city. You say it means outside of the city; perhaps it means within the city? Since, however, it says: "And Moses said unto him: As soon as I am gone out of the city I will spread forth my hands unto the Lord" (Ex. 9.29), would we not apply the argument of *Kal vahomer*? If with regard to prayer, the less important, Moses would utter it only outside of the city, it is but a logical inference that with regard to the divine word, the more important, He would speak it to him only outside of the city. And why, indeed, did He not speak with him within the city? Because it was full of abominations and idols.

The very first paragraph introduces a spatial notion which implies that *where* a person prays or God speaks is important. The presence of abominations and idols in the city renders it unclean and unworthy of revelation. Prayer and divine revelation occur more appropriately outside the city. The contamination of the city, it is implied, contaminates the communication between God and man. It is tempting to connect such a thought with a "nomadic ideal" which some have detected—almost certainly unjustifiably—in the Old Testament, but this would be to read too much into the text.⁵

The passage cited continues:

Before the land of Israel had been especially chosen, all lands were suitable for divine revelations; after the land of Israel had been chosen, all other lands were eliminated. Before Jerusalem had been especially selected, all the rest of the land of Israel was eliminated. For thus it is said: "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest, but in the place [Jerusalem] which the Lord shall choose" (Deut. 12.13-14).

4 W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1970), 178f., especially 183f.

5 See my forthcoming work *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (University of California Press, 1973).

Before the Temple had been especially selected, the whole of Jerusalem was appropriate for the manifestation of the divine presence; after the Temple had been selected, the rest of Jerusalem was eliminated. For thus it is said: "For the Lord hath chosen Zion, He hath desired it for His habitation: This is My resting-place for ever" (Ps. 132.13-14). Before Aaron had been especially chosen, all other Israelites were qualified for the priesthood; after Aaron had been chosen, all other Israelites were eliminated. For thus it is said: "It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the Lord, unto thee and to thy seed with thee" (Num. 18.19); and again it says: "And it shall be unto him, and to his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Num. 25.13). Before David had been chosen, all Israelites were eligible to the kingship; after David had been chosen, all other Israelites were eliminated. For thus it is said: Ought ye not to know that the Lord, the God of Israel, gave the kingdom over Israel to David forever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt."

The words translated "divine revelations" by Lauterbach are the Hebrew *kešērôt leḏibrôt*, literally, 'clean for words or commandments'. To the interpreter, ever since the land of Israel had been chosen, all other lands became unworthy of divine revelation. Even within the land itself in due course, and, finally, even within Jerusalem, the divine presence, the Shekinah, was confined to the Temple itself. Apparently the choice of the land refers to the promise to Abraham (Gen. 12,15,17) which came to him outside the land; since that promise, all lands outside Israel were "unclean."

But such a view created difficulties. God had indubitably spoken to Moses in Egypt. True, this was outside the contaminated city, but nevertheless it was also outside the land of Israel. And, even more seriously, God had spoken to prophets outside the land of Israel long after the promise to Abraham. This difficulty emerges in the next section which we quote (Lauterbach, p.5):

You could say: "I cite the case of those prophets with whom He did speak outside of the land of Palestine." True, He did speak with them outside of the land, but He did so only because of the merit of the fathers. For thus it is said: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuseth to be comforted for her children, because they are not. Thus saith the Lord: Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. And there is hope for thy future saith the Lord" (Jer. 31.15f.). Some say: Even though He did speak with them outside of the land, and because of the merit of the fathers, He did so only at a pure spot, near water, as it is said: "And I was by the stream Ulai" (Dan. 8.2). Again it says: "As I was by the side of the great river, which is Tigris" (Dan. 10.4); "The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar" (Ezek. 1.3). --Some say: He had already spoken with him in the land and then He spoke with him outside of the land, for thus it is said: "The word of the Lord had come and came to Ezekiel." 'Had come' indicates that He had spoken with him in the land; 'and came'⁶ indicates that He spoke with him outside of the land. R. Eleazar the son of Zadok says: Behold it says: "Arise go forth into the plain" (Ezek. 3.22); this declares that the plain was suitable for divine revelation. -- You can learn from the following that the Shekinah does not reveal itself outside of the land. It is said: "But Jonah rose up to flee unto

Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1.3). Could he have thought of fleeing from the presence of God? Has it not been said: "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven Thou art there; if I make my bed in the nether world, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there would Thy hand lead me," etc.? (Ps. 139.7ff.). And it is also written: "The eyes of the Lord, that run to and fro through the whole earth" (Zech. 4.10); and it is also written: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch up on the evil and the good" (Prov. 15.3); "Though they dig into the netherworld. . . though they climb up to heaven. . . though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel. . . though they go into captivity," (Amos 9.2-4); "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves" (Job 34.22). But Jonah thought: I will go outside of the land, where the Shekinah does not reveal itself. For since the Gentiles are more inclined to repent, I might be causing Israel to be condemned.⁷

In this section the fact of prophecy outside the land is squarely faced and its seriousness as a problem is recognized. Two degrees or intensities in the understanding of the Spirit are implied in the Rabbinic sources. The Spirit could be present in a real, but generalized sense, outside the prophetic experience. For example, obedience to the Torah was thought to lead to the possession of the holy spirit as in *Yoma* 9b; *Soṭah* 48b, *Sanh.* 11a; Mishnah *Soṭah* 9:12, 15; Tosefta *Soṭah* 13.2, p. 318; *Lev. Rabba* 35.7; *Song of Songs Rabba*, 1.8; *Mekilta Beshallah* 7; 'Abodah Zarah 20b. But it was in the prophets that the Spirit was deemed to be particularly at work. In the intense sense, the Spirit could be claimed to have ceased with the last of the prophets.⁸ The activity of prophets—in whom the Spirit was especially at work—outside the land was puzzling. So much must this have been the case that Finkelstein has drawn attention to a passage in *Sifre Deuteronomy*, Sec. 175, a comment on Deut. 18:15. The latter verse reads in the RSV as follows: "The Lord will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you from your brethren—him you shall heed." Under the influence of New Testament studies, this passage is usually taken to refer to a single prophet, like Moses, who would emerge at the end of the days. But Finkelstein takes it as a general reference. A prophet that is, prophets, like Moses, would arise from time to time, the singular here denoting an implicit plural. In this Finkelstein follows the understanding of the *Sifre*, which interprets the Hebrew *miqqirb^ekā* 'from the midst of thee' in Deut. 18:15 to mean: "And not from outside the land of Israel." From this interpretation Finkelstein concludes that the passage in the *Sifre* is drawn from a tradition which had emerged before the exile when Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the story

6 "The infinitive absolute *bāyōh* in this passage is considered as having the force of a pluperfect" (Lauterbach, *Mekilta*, 6, n. 6).

7 "By contrast with the Ninevites who would readily listen to the prophet and repent, Israel would stand condemned for not so readily listening to the prophets" (Lauterbach, *Mekilta*, 7, n. 7).

8 *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 208f.

of Jonah had arisen. "It is clear," he writes, "that this comment derives from teachers who lived before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and probably before the exile of Jehoiachin and many Judaites in 597 B.C.E."⁹ As we shall see later on, even such a date would not have obviated the difficulty of the presence of the Spirit outside the land because Moses himself was a prophet. And, unlike Finkelstein, it was not in terms of chronology that the authorities cited in the *Mekilta* dealt with the problem. In the passage we have quoted they give the following reasons why prophecy broke forth outside the land.

First, because of the merit of the fathers. The reference in the quotation from Jer. 31:15f. is to Rachel. She was not strictly one of "the fathers" so that the term *merit of the fathers* refers here in a general sense to pious ancestors both male and female. In *Pesikta Rabbati* 11b (ed. Friedmann) the passage from Jeremiah "was interpreted to mean that Rachel cried to God for her children who were exiled and God promised her that he would return them to their own land. It was because of Rachel, then, that God communicated with the prophets in the Babylonian Exile to tell them about the return, when and how it was to take place."¹⁰ This notion emerges clearly also in *Exodus Rabbah* 15:4 on Exod. 12:1. Israel is redeemed from Egypt on account of its ancestors.

The second reason given for the gift of prophecy outside the land is that the prophets to whom the Spirit came prophesied near water. Water is an agent of cleanliness (see Mishnah Eduyoth 8:4; J. Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions About The Pharisees Before 70*, Part I [Leiden, 1971], 61f.): land that is near water, it is implied, partakes of its purity and becomes clean. It is one of the antinomies of Judaism that while the sea seems to be a symbol of chaos so that in the ideal future there shall be no more sea (Rev. 21:1), water itself is pure and a symbol for the Torah itself. Use is made of this symbolism here in the *Mekilta* to explain why Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied outside the land.

Third, it was claimed, Ezekiel had been able to prophecy outside the land because he had already done so before he had left it. It is an assumption in *Mekilta Pisha* 1, in this passage, that the Shekinah, the Divine Presence, normally does not reveal itself outside the land.¹¹ Related to this is the strong emphasis in a slightly later passage that "prophets prophesy only because of Israel" (*Mekilta Pisha* 1, end).

It is instructive to find that, in *Midrash Rabbah* on Exodus the phrase to which the *Mekilta* pays so much attention, that is, *in the land of Egypt*, is very little noticed. In fact, it is ignored until well into the discussion of Exod. 12:1. When, finally, in *Exodus Rabbah* 15:5, the phrase is dealt with, the treatment seems long overdue and is very brief as compared with the almost immediate engagement with it in *Mekilta Pisha* 1. Moreover the whole section is ascribed to one Rabbi, Rabbi Hanina (first century), and

9 L. Finkelstein, *New Light from the Prophets* (London, 1967), 26.

10 Lauterbach, *Mekilta*, 1:5, n. 5.

11 Ibid., 7f.

does not deal with the question of prophecy outside the land at all. The phrase *in the land of Egypt* is simply taken to indicate that God spoke to Moses (Exod. 12:1) outside the city, which was full of idol worship, immorality, and uncleanness. In coming to speak to Moses it was necessary for God himself to avoid the contamination of the city, which is compared to a cemetery, so he remained outside. The whole section, then, bears no resemblance to the treatment in *Mekilta Pisha* 1. This suggests that when the Mekilta was composed the problem of the land and the Spirit was more acute than when the material in *Midrash Rabbah* was redacted at a later date. We shall suggest a reason for this later.

II

Another passage in the *Mekilta* seems to denote an emphasis very different from that we noted in *Mekilta Pisha* 1 which confined prophecy, the gift of the Spirit, to the land. In *Mekilta Pisha* 14 the Shekinah, the presence of God, is declared never to forsake the people of Israel wherever they go, even into slavery outside the land. The notion is expressed in a comment on Exod. 12:41, as follows:

Even the Selfsame Day It Came to Pass, that All the Hosts of the Lord Went Out from the Land of Egypt. The hosts of the Lord are the ministering angels. And so you find that whenever Israel is enslaved the Shekinah, as it were, is enslaved with them, as it is said: "And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet*," etc. But after they were redeemed what does it say? "And the like of the very heaven for clearness" (Ex. 24:10). And it also says: "In all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isa. 63:10). So far I know only that He shares in the affliction of the community. How about the affliction of the individual? Scripture says: "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble" (Ps. 91:15). It also says: "And Joseph's master took him," etc. (Gen. 39:20). And what does it say then? "But the Lord was with Joseph" (ibid., 39:21). And thus it says: "From before Thy people, whom Thou didst redeem to Thee out of Egypt, the nation and its God"* (II Sam. 7:23). R. Eliezer says: An idol crossed the sea with Israel, as it is said: "And a rival* passed through the sea" (Zech. 10:11). And which idol was it? The idol of Micha*. R. Akiba says: Were it not expressly written in Scripture it would be impossible to say it. Israel said to God: Thou hadst redeemed Thyself, as though one could conceive such a thing*. Likewise you find that whithersoever Israel was exiled, the Shekinah, as it were, went into exile with them. When they went into exile to Egypt, the Shekinah went into exile with them, as it is said: "I exiled Myself unto the house of thy fathers when they were in Egypt" (I Sam. 2:27). When they were exiled to Babylon, the Shekinah went into exile with them, as it is said: "For your sake I ordered Myself to go to Babylon" (Isa. 43:14). When they were exiled to Elam, the Shekinah went into exile with them, as it is said: "I will set My throne in Elam" (Jer. 49:38). When they were exiled to Edom, the Shekinah went into exile with them, as it is said: "Who is this that cometh from Edom," etc. (Isa. 63:1). And when they return in the future, the Shekinah, as it were, will return with them, as it is said: "That then the Lord thy God will return with thy captivity" (Deut. 30:3). Note that it does not say: "The Lord will bring back" (*vebeshib*), etc., but it says: "He will return" (*ve-shab*). And it is also said: "With me from Lebanon, my bride" (Cant. 4:8). Was she really coming from Lebanon? Was she not rather going up to Lebanon? What then does Scripture mean by saying: "With me from Lebanon?" Merely this: You and I, as it were, were exiled from Lebanon; you and I will go up to Lebanon. * [On the difficulties indicated by an asterisk in this translation, see Lauterbach].

Heschel¹² has gathered together a large number of passages where the same idea occurs. (See for example *Exodus Rabbah* 23:5 on Exod. 15:1). The Shekinah is always and every-

where present with Israel; but the Spirit, according to some, was confined to the land. The relationship between the Spirit, and the Shekinah demands separate treatment. In other passages in *Mekilta Pispa* the presence of the Spirit at the Exodus—not in the city—is recognized. Consider a passage, *Mekilta Beshallah* 3, a comment on Exod. 14:13. Moses is rallying the people, who face the Red Sea in terror and murmur against their leader for having brought them out of Egypt at all: they “would rather be slaves to the Egyptians than die here in the wilderness” (Exod. 14:12). The *Mekilta* reads as follows:

Stand Still and See the Salvation of the Lord. The Israelites asked him: “When?” Moses said to them: “Today the Holy Spirit rests upon you.” For the expression “standing” (*yezibab*) everywhere suggests the presence of the Holy Spirit, as in the passages: “I saw the Lord standing beside the altar” (Amos 9.1). “And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times: ‘Samuel, Samuel’” (1 Sam. 3.10). And it also says: “Call Joshua and stand in the tent of meeting that I may give him a charge” (Deut. 31.14). To what were the Israelites at that moment like? To a dove fleeing from a hawk, and about to enter a cleft in the rock where there is a hissing serpent. If she enters, there is the serpent! If she stays out, there is the hawk! In such a plight were the Israelites at that moment, the sea forming a bar and the enemy pursuing. Immediately they set their mind upon prayer. Of them it is stated in the traditional sacred writings: “O my dove that art in the clefts of the rock,” etc. (Cant. 2.14). And when it further says: “For sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely” (ibid.), it means, for thy voice is sweet in prayer and thy countenance is comely in the study of the Torah. Another interpretation: For thy voice is sweet in prayer and thy countenance is comely in good deeds.

The passages cited indicate that by the Holy Spirit was meant the spirit of supplication or prayer, the spirit of study and good deeds. The salvation could also be understood in terms of “squadrons upon squadrons of ministering angels,” the Holy Spirit apparently being thought of as the spirit of might, as the passage immediately following the one cited above shows:

Another Interpretation: *Stand Still and See*, etc. The Israelites asked Moses: “When?” He answered them: “Tomorrow!” Then the Israelites said to Moses: “Moses, our Master, we have not the strength to endure.” At that moment Moses prayed and God caused them to see squadrons upon squadrons of ministering angels standing before them, just as it is said: “And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, a host with horses and chariots was round about the city. And his servant said unto him: ‘Alas, my master! how shall we do?’ And he answered: ‘Fear not: for they that are with us are more than they that are with them.’” And Elisha prayed and said: ‘Lord I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see.’ And the Lord opened the eyes of the

12 *Torah min ba-Shamaim*, ad rem, vol. 1., where the notion of Yahweh’s exile with his people is emphasized. The passage on Exod. 15:1 is interesting for another reason. The Israelites are insisted to have sung at the Exodus not because of the miracles wrought for them but because of the faith of Abraham. So Rabi Nehemiah and Rabbi Simeon b. Abba. We know that Judaism reacted negatively to the emphasis on miracles in early Christianity—a parallel to its reaction to that on the Spirit. See A. Guttman, “The Significance of Miracles for Talmudic Judaism,” *HUCA* 20 (1947), 363-406; but also see the criticism of him by J. Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions About the Pharisees Before 70*, (Leiden, 1971), 3:347f.

young man; and he say: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (II Kings 6.15-17). And so also here Moses prayed at that moment and God caused them to see squadrons upon squadrons of ministering angels standing before them. And thus it says: "At the brightness before Him, there passed through His thick clouds, hailstones and coals of fire" (Ps. 18.13—"His thick clouds," as against their squadrons; "hailstones," as against their catapults; "coals," as against their missiles; "fire," as against their naphtha. "The Lord also thundered in the heavens" (ibid., v. 14)—as against the clashing of their shields and the noise of their trampling shoes. "And the Most High gave forth His voice" (ibid.), as against their whetting the swords. "And He sent out His arrows and scattered them" (ibid., v. 15), as against their arrows. And He shot forth lightnings and discomfited them" (ibid.), as against their shouting. Another Interpretation: *And He Sent Out His Arrows*. The arrows would scatter them, and the lightnings would huddle them together. "*And Discomfited Them*." He confounded them and brought confusion among them. He took away their signals so that they did not know what they were doing. Another Interpretation. *And Discomfited Them*. Discomfiture here means by pestilence, as in the passage: "And shall discomfit them with a great discomfiture until they be destroyed" (Deut. 7.23).¹³

In other passages in *Mekilta Beshallah* 7 (Lauterbach, pp. 252ff.) the gift of the Holy Spirit is accorded to the people of Israel because of their faith. The comment is on Exod. 14.31, a remarkable verse which speaks of faith, not only in God, but in Moses his servant. For this faith there is a reward. It prompts the following words in the *Mekilta Beshallah* 7:

And They Believed in the Lord and in His Servant Moses. If you say they believed in Moses, is it not implied by *Kal vahomer* that they believed in God? But this is to teach you that having faith in the shepherd of Israel is the same as having faith in Him who spoke and the world came into being. In like manner you must interpret: "And the people spoke against God, and against Moses" (Num. 21.5). If you say they spoke against God, is it not implied by *Kal vahomer* that they spoke against Moses? But this comes to teach you that speaking against the shepherd of Israel is like speaking against Him who spoke and the world came into being.

Great indeed is faith before Him who spoke and the world came into being. For as a reward for the faith with which Israel believed in God, the Holy Spirit rested upon them and they uttered the song; as it is said: "And they believed in the Lord. . . Then sang Moses and the children of Israel" (Ex. 14.3; 15.1). R. Nehemiah says: Whence can you prove that whosoever accepts even one single commandment with true faith is deserving of having the Holy Spirit rest upon him? We find this to have been the case with our fathers. For as a reward for the faith with which they believed, they were considered worthy of having the Holy Spirit rest upon them, so that they could utter the song, as it is said: "And they believed in the Lord. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel." And so also you find that our father Abraham inherited both this world and the world beyond only as a reward for the faith with which they believed, as it is said: "And the people believed" (Ex. 4.31). And thus it says: "The Lord preserveth the faithful" (Ps. 31.24)—He keeps in remembrance the faith of the fathers. And it also says: "And Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands," etc. (Ex. 17.12).

13 Lauterbach, *Mekilta*, 1:210-13.

It is striking that in the *Midrash Rabbah* on the passages in Exodus (commented on in the passages in the Mekilta) which we have noted, there is again a scarcity, indeed almost a complete absence, of any reference to the Holy Spirit. It is as if there were a deliberate avoidance of connecting the Holy Spirit with the Exodus. It is recognized that Moses is the greatest of the prophets—a familiar thought—but there is only one very brief reference to the Holy Spirit in *Exodus Rabbah* 23:2 on Exod. 15:1, in the name of Rabbi Abbahu (third century).

As *Mekilta Pisḥa*, sō *Mekilta Shirata* on Exod. 15:1 again makes a reference to the Holy Spirit. The song of Moses after the parting of the Red Sea greatly attracted the Rabbis. The following passage ascribes the song of Moses and of the people to the Holy Spirit. What is noteworthy is that the Rabbis mentioned connect the Holy Spirit with the celebration of the manifestation of God's might: The Spirit celebrates a victory in a holy war. The reference by Rabbi Akiba to the Hallel, a prayer which comprises Pss. 113-18, and which came to be decreed to be recited for New Moon, Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, and Chanukah, is significant: especially at Passover it evoked militant Messianic emotions. The Holy Spirit at the Exodus indicated the presence of the kind of zeal out of which Holy War arose.

Later in *Mekilta Shirata* 3 on Exod. 15:2, the Holy Spirit is connected with the recognition of Israel as blessed by its deliverance, the gift of the Torah. It is incomparable and glorified. All this the Spirit declares. In *Mekilta Shirata* 7 the Holy Spirit is made to indicate precisely how the Egyptian enemy was overcome. It has an argumentative function.

The Egyptians at the sea were divided into three groups as regards the Israelites. One group proposed: Let us get from them their money and our money without killing them. One proposed: Let us kill them without taking their money. And one proposed: Let us kill them and also take their money. The one that proposed: Let us take their money without killing them, said: "I will divide the spoil." The one that proposed: Let us kill them without taking their money, said: "My lust shall be satisfied upon them." The one that proposed: Let us kill them and also take their money, said: "My hand shall inherit them." Pharaoh, when still in Egypt, defiantly boasted of five things: "The enemy said: 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them'" (Ex. 15.9). As against these five boasts, the Holy Spirit answered and said: "Thou didst blow with Thy wind," etc.; "Thy right hand, O Lord, dasheth in pieces the enemy;" "And in the greatness of Thine excellency Thou overthrowest them that rise up as stubble;" "Thou stretchest out Thy right hand," etc. To give a parable, to what can this be compared? To the following: A robber standing behind the king's palace, defiantly says: "If I find the prince, I shall seize him, I shall kill him, I shall crucify him. I shall make him die the most cruel death." So also did the wicked Pharaoh boast defiantly in the land of Egypt: "The enemy said: 'I will pursue, I will overtake'" etc. But the Holy Spirit laughs at him and says: "Thou didst blow with Thy wind." And it also says: "Thou stretchest out Thy right hand." And so it also says: "Why are the nations in an uproar. . . Let us break their bands asunder. . . He that sitteth in heaven laugheth" (Ps. 2.1-4). And it says: "Behold, they belch out with their mouth" (ibid. 59.8). And what is written following this? "But Thou, O Lord, shalt laugh" (ibid. v. 9). And so also it says: "Sheba and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish," etc. (Ezek. 38.13). And it says: "And it shall come to pass in that day, when God shall come. . . shall shake at my presence" (ibid. vv. 18-20.—Thus all these thousands and all these myriads sank as lead because of the boast of one.

The connection of the Spirit with exultation over the enemy emerges also in *Mekilta Shirata* 10 in dealing with the reference to Miriam as a prophetess in Exod. 15:20. The ascription of the term *prophetess* to Miriam occasioned difficulty and the passage which we note here supplies various erudite reasons for this: appeal is made to her prediction in Exod. 2:1-4, where the term *yezibab*, 'standing', as elsewhere, is taken to refer to the presence of the *Holy Spirit*: the phrase *mērābōq* 'afar off', in the light of Jer. 31:2, is taken to refer to the Holy Spirit and "to know." The treatment of Miriam reveals extreme concern to justify the ascription of prophecy to her. That ascription, in turn, only attests that an outburst of song at the might—warlike—works of Yahweh is the work of the Holy Spirit.

When the full extent of the *Mekilta* is considered it has to be recognized that taken in isolation, the discussion of the Spirit is limited, but as compared with the material dealing with the same Scriptural passages in later Midrashim the *Mekilta* shows a concern with the Spirit that was lively. We suggest that this was because some of the materials preserved in the *Mekilta* are more directly influenced by the spread of Christianity than materials preserved in later Midrashim. At one point in particular, it may be indicated—very tentatively—that the Christian movement is reflected in the *Mekilta*. Early Christianity spread with rapidity outside the land of Israel: its experience of the Spirit was intense, as the New Testament and other documents indicate. That Spirit seemed to defy topography, to ignore the territorial limitation of it to the land of Israel which some Jews at least had set. I have sought to deal with the encounter of early Christianity and Jewish territorial doctrine elsewhere. The engagement of some parts of the *Mekilta* with the relation of the Spirit to the land of Israel may reflect this encounter. Early Christianity radically challenged the view that the Spirit was inextricably related to the land of Israel. The pertinent passages in the *Mekilta* may have arisen, at least in part, out of the attempts to meet this challenge. True there were examples of the Spirit being experienced outside the land; so some Rabbis admitted. But these could be explained. And with this attitude may be connected the emphasis in other passages in the *Mekilta* on the presence of the Spirit at the birth of the people of Israel at the Exodus. Although there are passages in the New Testament where the Spirit seems to indicate a vindictive aspect such as we associate with the Holy War, generally the Spirit is subordinate to Christ, and interpreted above all as that of love, joy, and peace. The New Exodus wrought by the finger of God avoided vindictiveness, as is clear in Matthew 11:2-6, where in the quotation from Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1f. the words "Behold, you God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God" are omitted from Isa. 35:4, as are the words: "And the day of vengeance of our God" from Isa. 61:2. The *Mekilta*, however, although it recognizes the morally exalted forms of the gifts of the Spirit, does unashamedly connect the Spirit with the destruction of the Egyptians. It does this in a very self-conscious way. May it be that the Rabbis whose thought it preserves were conscious of an opposite tendency in the Christian movement? We cannot be sure. But it does seem not impossible that Tannaitic Rabbis may have been aware of Christian emphases in the understanding of the Spirit—as geographically ubiquitous and nationally indifferent—which they were concerned to oppose. In later sources when Judaism and Christianity were more removed from each other we notice an absence of any comparable

concern with the Spirit.¹⁴

I can only add, in view of the limitations of space, that the brevity and inadequacy of this contribution is in inverse proportion to my debt to and affection for the one to whom it is offered.

14 For the larger context of the comparison of the Spirit in Pharisaic Judaism and early Christianity see *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 200f. The suggestion made above, that reaction to the wide spread of early Christian experience of the Spirit may have influenced the discussion of the geographic provenance of the Spirit among the Rabbis, is not intended to ignore the fact that there were influences within Judaism itself tending to the geographic limitation of the Spirit. Oddly enough, however, the declaration that lands outside *Eretz Israel* were unclean, which is variously dated, came late, for economic as well as other reasons. See Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions About the Pharisees Before 70*, 1:69, 72. Neusner's work makes it unmistakably clear how much work needs to be done on the form and redaction criticism of the sources.