Jewish Studies Quarterly

JSQ

Volume 20 (2013) No. 3

Alan Appelbaum

Hillel II: Recovering an Obscure Figure of Late Antiquity

Rachel Neis

Pilgrimage Itineraries:

Seeing the Past through Rabbinic Eyes

Isaac Hershkowitz

Rabbi Yosef Hayyim's Halakhically and

Kabbalistically Based Approaches to Homosexuality

Tsafi Sebba-Elran

From *Sefer Ha'aggadah* to the Jewish Bookcase:

Dynamics of a Cultural Change

Mohr Siebeck

Pilgrimage Itineraries: Seeing the Past through Rabbinic Eyes

RACHEL NEIS¹

You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land; those great trials that your eyes saw, those miraculous signs and great wonder. (Deut 29:1–2)

The biblical author makes an appeal to Israelite memory that is designed to echo beyond the narrative frame. Whether directed at the desert Israelites in the immediate narrative context, or at the putative auditors of this text, the summons is for the eyes to recall God's wondrous hand in the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt. In the ancient world, this link between recall and the past was often phrased in terms of vision. Increasingly, in the late antique Mediterranean, it was also put in terms of journeys in which the traveler sought some kind of contact with a person, place or event that once was. People went to see the past, engaging in what might be called "sight-seeing," "tourism" – often in the context of the sacred – or what might be called "pilgrimage." What we might think of today as sight-seeing or tourism, as opposed to a strictly "religious" quest to see the sacred (whether past or present), were often combined. Ian Rutherford uses the term "sacred tourism," signaling how, in the ancient world, "the borderline between pilgrimage and sight-seeing is fluid."²

¹ For their comments and feedback on earlier incarnations and portions of this article, I thank Ra'anan Boustán, Steven Fine, Georgia Frank and Gil Klein. I am very grateful to Oded Irshai for his helpful comments on and suggestions for this article.

² Ian Rutherford, "Pausanias and his Periegesis," *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece*, ed. Susan E. Alcock et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 43, 46.

Late Antique Jewish Pilgrimage Literature

In an article on geography and cosmography in talmudic literature, Zeev Safrai notes the rise of “pilgrims’ literature” in the Byzantine period. Characterizing such writings (among which he notes Egeria’s *Itinerarium*) as a “new type of geographic literature,” he contrasts this Christian development with Jewish sources, claiming that “there does not seem to have developed a Jewish pilgrim literature or guides to the ‘holy sites’ during the Mishna and Talmud periods.”³

Such contrastive assessments tend to be typical of discussions about pilgrimage in late antiquity. Jewish pilgrimage is very often studied and presented as a predecessor or inspiration of the late antique Christian pilgrimage industry (with some veneration of biblical or prophetic figures) or as a chiefly Second Temple phenomenon, with only mournful relics surviving beyond the destruction.⁴ The more unrelentingly melancholy account of Jewish pilgrimage is not without its complicated basis in the tendentious words of early Christians. Regarding this Jewish pilgrimage historiography, I will make several claims. Firstly, I claim, *pace* Safrai, that the genre that he identifies as “pilgrim’s literature” is in fact present in rabbinic sources, and I identify what I regard as a type of rabbinic pilgrimage itinerary. Secondly, I show that aside from the expected melancholic post-Temple itinerary, there exist itineraries for

³ See Zeev Safrai, “Geography and Cosmography in Talmudic Literature,” in *The Literature of the Sages*, ed. M. E. Stone et al. (Assen: Fortress, 2006) 498, where he also declares, “The relationship of the sages to holy sites was somewhat mixed. Jewish law dictates a blessing to be recited at the site of a miracle, while there are different opinions regarding the sanctity of holy graves.” On Jewish, rabbinic and Christian attitudes to a cult of the dead, see Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Travel in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 383–388. She suggests that it is possible some Jews may have visited the graves of holy men and rabbis, even if the rabbis themselves did not encourage this practice.

⁴ John Wilkinson, “Visits to Jewish Tombs by Early Christians,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 20.1 (1995) 452–65. Wilkinson also uses sources from a variety of periods, including later rabbinic sources, to make claims about early Jewish pilgrimage. For the argument that Christian shrines took their initiative from Jewish veneration of biblical figures’ places of rest, see John Wilkinson, “Jewish Holy Places and the Origins of Christian Pilgrimage,” in *Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990) 41–53. For a corrective counter-argument, see David Satran’s *Biblical Prophets in Byzantine Palestine: Reassessing the Lives of the Prophets* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), esp. 24. For another corrective to the work of Wilkinson and for the view that pilgrimage (whether to the tombs of contemporaries or biblical heroes) was a later phenomenon from the third to fourth century, perhaps even encouraged by the rabbinic movement, see Allen Kerkeslager, *Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity in Hellenistic and Early Roman Egypt* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1997), esp. 31–55 and 60–61.

Babylon and for biblical conquest that do a very different kind of visual and affective work. Furthermore, like Christian and Greco-Roman pilgrimage writings, these rabbinic itineraries seek to visualize the past (and sometimes the future) in the landscape.

This brings me to two additional and connected matters, the first related to textuality, the second related to visuality and performance. Informed by the insights of scholars such as Susanna Elm and Georgia Frank on hagiography, Frank on pilgrimage writings and Elizabeth Clark on late antique textuality and history,⁵ I read these rabbinic itineraries not as sources through which to reconstruct a history of actual travel, but rather as mediations and techniques in and of themselves, through which the past was made visible. Related to this is how, like many Greco-Roman and Christian writings, these rabbinic sources thematize sight. However – and this will be linked again to textuality – these sources almost always call for the performance of vision through liturgical or scriptural acts of recitation.

Pilgrimage As/Through Text

Scholars have argued that texts like Pausanias' *Description of Greece* and Egeria's *Itinerary* ought to be understood precisely at the interstices of pilgrimage, sacred tourism and a certain kind of textual practice.⁶ They have proposed different models for understanding this broader conception of pilgrimage, whether in terms of religious and ethnic identity,⁷

⁵ See Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Susanna Elm, "Introduction," in *Charisma and Society: The 25th Anniversary of Peter Brown's Analysis of the Late Antique Holy Man*, ed. S. Elm and N. Janowitz (*Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6.3, 1998) 343–51; Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian and Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

⁶ For the most recent discussion of the theoretical implications of using the term "pilgrimage" in various classical and late antique cultural and religious contexts (e. g., its potentially Christianizing and homogenizing implications), see introduction in Jaś Elsner and Ian Rutherford, eds., *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 1–41. For more general theories of pilgrimage that move beyond Victor and Edith Turner's categories (e. g., Victor Turner, "Pilgrimage and Communitas," *Studia Missionalia* 23 [1974] 305–27 and Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1978]), see John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (London: Routledge, 1991).

⁷ See John Elsner, "Pausanias: A Greek Pilgrim in the Roman World," *Past and Present* 135 (1992) 3–29; Ian Rutherford, "Theoria and Darsan: Pilgrimage and Vision in Greece and India," *Classical Quarterly* 50 (2000) 133–46.

“cognitive mapping”,⁸ appropriation and colonization,⁹ or indigeneity and the Christianization of landscape¹⁰.

Others such as Frank have attended to the very structure and form of pilgrimage itineraries. Like hagiographies, the itineraries often tend to the schematic, the repetitive and the formulaic. These features can tell us much about the culture of the communities that produced these texts, as well as about the ways in which the texts in turn shaped those who used and circulated them. Thus, they have as much value for allowing us to think about how these sources served as textual enactments or stimulations of armchair pilgrimage for their readers, as for our ability to reconstruct historical pilgrimage travel *per se*.

The sources examined here can benefit from this kind of analysis. These rabbinic texts’ apparently easy assimilation as rabbinic law (*halakha*) (or as hard evidence for actual pilgrimage) has perhaps obscured their richness as the kind of formulaic writing that characterizes pilgrimage literature.¹¹ Attending to these rabbinic itineraries as textual productions allows one to consider how they mediate reality – both constituting and being constituted by it – rather than transparently, or cryptically, reflecting it.¹² This approach is particularly attuned to the complex

⁸ See William Hutton, “The Construction of Religious Space in Pausanias,” in Elsner and Rutherford, *Pilgrimage*, 291–317.

⁹ See Andrew Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Oded Irshai, “The Christian Appropriation of Jerusalem in the Fourth Century: The Case of the Bordeaux Pilgrim,” *JQR* 99 (2009) 465–486.

¹⁰ See David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Susan E. Alcock et al., *Pausanias*; Matthew Dillon, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1997); David Frankfurter, ed., *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

¹¹ For a fascinating example of a positivist reading of rabbinic narratives about pilgrimage, see David Noy, “Rabbi Akiva Comes to Rome: A Jewish Pilgrimage in Reverse?” in Elsner and Rutherford, *Pilgrimage*, 373–386. For other positivist accounts drawn from rabbinic and other sources, see Shmuel Safrai, *Ha-alayah le-regel bi-yeme ha-bayit ha-sheni* (Tel Aviv: Am ha-Sefer, 1965); “Pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the End of the Second Temple Period,” *Studies on the Jewish Background of the New Testament*, ed. Otto Michel et al. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1969) 12–21; “Pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the Time of the Second Temple,” *Immanuel* 5 (1975) 51–62; “Pilgrimage to Jerusalem after the Destruction of the Second Temple” (Hebrew), in *Peraqim be-toldot Yerushalayim bimei bayit sheni*, ed. Aharon Oppenheimer et al. (Jerusalem: Yad Yitshak ben Tsvi, 1981) 376–93; Yoram Tsafrir, “Jewish Pilgrimage in the Roman and Byzantine Periods,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 20.1 (1995) 369–76; Mark Friedman, “Jewish Pilgrimage after the Destruction of the Second Temple,” in *City of the Great King*, ed. N. Rosovsky (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) 136–46, 499–502.

¹² See Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews*, 105, who rightly reads Christian “pilgrimage narratives” in the frame of Greco-Roman travel writing that “served to negotiate local

textuality of rabbinic sources, which passed through multiple mouths and hands and demanded repetition, revision and internalization as objects of memory, study and analysis.

Types of Itineraries: Miracle and Mourning

I focus here on a particular sub-genre within rabbinic sources that I designate as the sight-seeing list or pilgrimage itinerary, and specifically on two varieties of such itineraries that surface in the Yerushalmi and the Bavli.¹³ The first type, the miracle itinerary, entails the seeing of the miraculous past and derives from an injunction in tractate Berakhot (mBer 9.1). Within this type, I note the following sub-types: the personal miracle site, the Babylon itinerary and the Israelite conquest itinerary. The second type, the mournful itinerary, which curiously has no extant Tannaitic precursor, is chiefly set amid the Palestinian and Babylonian talmudic laws of mourning in Moed Qatan and prescribes a mournful sight-seeing tour of Jerusalem, its environs and its (ruined) holy places. In all cases, seeing is the central sensory trope around which the past is accessed, and saying is an important mechanism for the performing of said vision.

1. Miracle Itineraries

In chapters nine of Mishnah Berakhot and six of Tosefta Berakhot we find a set of what might be called sight-triggered blessings. Embedded within a series of prescriptions for blessings to be recited in a range of situations, these rules prescribe what is to be said upon beholding certain sights. The particular rule that triggers sight-seeing itineraries is mBer 9.1:

A. One who sees [*ha-roeh*] a place where miracles had been done for Israel says: “Blessed is he who wrought miracles for our fathers in this place.”

identity within an increasingly omnipresent empire” and “produced forms of knowledge about other places and other times that situated the author (and audience) in a particular cultural location.” Maribel Dietz urges caution before deciding that the itinerary of the Bordeaux “pilgrim” is categorized as a “pilgrimage text” or reflects the work of a pilgrim. Rather, she, like others, views this work as an aid to other travelers. See Maribel Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims: Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005) 18. Both these formulations attend to the implications, functions and effects of the text rather than necessarily seeking to extrapolate historical information about travel per se.

¹³ My particular claim about how these work as texts, is that they are performative on multiple levels, in a way that is different from pilgrimage narrative.

B. [One who sees] a place from which idolatry had been rooted out says: "Blessed is he that rooted out idolatry from our land."¹⁴

Horbury reads this conjunction of sights (miracles, destroyed idolatry) in light of the "zealot-like spirit" in remembering the Jewish revolts, claiming that Jews sanctified the land by establishing a "network of places" or memorial "spots."¹⁵ In their Tannaitic context, these blessings, among a range of sight-triggered formulae, form part of a manual on how to safely and blessedly navigate the world. Nonetheless, Horbury's insight that the call to highlight miraculous sites and to mark the removal (or presence) of "idolatry" was linked to the production of memory and place under Roman imperialism is very much to the point for how the later rabbis take up these blessings. The rabbis of the both the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds greatly expanded the blessing to be made on "seeing places where miracles were done for Israel." It is hard not to take into account the spiritual politics and geography of empire in interpreting the "network of places" that they mapped across the viewscape of Palestine and Babylonia.

Let us begin with the Palestinian Talmud's commentary on mBer 9.1:

One who sees a place where miracles were wrought for Israel –

A. The Mishnah speaks of miracles for Israel. But for miracles only for individuals, one is not required to bless?

B. What is the law as to a person blessing for miracles for his father or his teacher?

D. What of a well-known person, such as Joab son of Zeruiah and his companions, or a person by whom heaven's name was sanctified, such as Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah? And what of one of the tribes of Israel?¹⁶

The Yerushalmi makes its usual hermeneutic moves, drawing out the Mishnah's import by probing its parts and words. The extent of the term "Israel" is examined. The Yerushalmi's hypotheticals seek to expand the miracle site beyond those associated with corporate Israel to those on a smaller scale such as the tribal, or biblical individuals such as near-martyrs Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, or more personal figures such as "one's father or rabbi," or even heroic and ambivalent

¹⁴ The parallel tBer 6.2 does not mention miracles but has: "(A) One who sees idolatry says: 'Blessed is he who is slow to anger.' (B) [One who sees] a place from which idolatry was uprooted says: 'Blessed is he who uprooted idolatry from our land. May it be your will, Lord God, that idolatry be uprooted from all places in Israel and turn the hearts of your servants to serve you.'"

¹⁵ See William Horbury, "Land, Sanctuary and Worship," in *Early Christian Thought in Its Jewish Context*, ed. J. M. G. Barclay and J. P. McMurdo Sweet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 213–14.

¹⁶ yBer 9.1, 13b.

figures such as Joab (to whom miracles did not occur). It is tempting to wonder whether these hypotheticals about miracle sites express a contemporary interest in visiting such places. The idea of endowing a miracle site with visual and liturgical value not just in the historical, “national” register, but in a personal (father or rabbi) one is also fascinating.

Babylon Itinerary

Following this discussion, the Yerushalmi goes on to reach well beyond Palestine and claims Mesopotamian sights through biblical lenses.

A. One who sees [*ha-roeh*] Babylon must recite five blessings.

B. One who sees the Euphrates River says: “Blessed is he who is the maker of creation.”

C. One who sees Mercury says: “Blessed is he who is slow to anger.”

D. One who sees the palace of Nebuchadnezzar says: “Blessed is he who destroyed this wicked one’s house.”

E. One who sees the place of the fiery furnace and the lions’ den says: “Blessed is he who performed miracles for our forefathers in this place.”¹⁷

F. One who sees the place from which they carry dust says: “Blessed is he who speaks and acts; blessed is he who decrees and upholds his word.”

G. One who sees Babylon says: “*I will sweep it with the broom of destruction* (Isa 14:23).”¹⁸

The visual emphasis of this list of stations and blessing formulae can be partially read in the light of Greco-Roman and Christian pilgrimage pieties, which have long been noted for their engagement with visibility.¹⁹ The framers of the Palestinian Talmud would have at least witnessed the start of imperial investment in the Holy Land and the beginnings of the

¹⁷ On the image of Daniel and the lions’ den in Jewish and Christian art, see Yoram Tsafrir, *Eretz Israel: From the Destruction of the Second Temple until the Muslim Conquest: Archaeology and Art*, vol. 2 (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1984) 439; Judith A. Lerner, *Christian Seals of the Sasanian Period* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), nos. 56–65; Shaul Shaked, “Jewish and Christian Seals of the Sassanian Period,” *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. M. Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1977) 17–31. There are several depictions of Daniel in the lions’ den in Palestine, including in the synagogues at Na’aran and En Samsam.

¹⁸ Technically, this sixth mandated utterance is not a blessing.

¹⁹ See, e. g., Rutherford, “Theoria and Darsan”; Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in Its Cultural Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Elsner and Rutherford, *Pilgrimage*; Julie Ann Smith, “‘What Now Lies Before Their Eyes’: The Foundations of Early Pilgrim Visibility in the Holy Land,” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 4 (2007) 135–57; Frank, *Eyes. Theória*, meaning literally “looking at,” referred to an individual (the *theoros*) who “made a journey or pilgrimage abroad for the purpose of witnessing certain events and spectacles” (Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles*, 3) at oracles or festivals.

process of Christianization of the Palestinian landscape. This meant the erection of visible *indicia* of Christian history, the steady increase of pilgrimage traffic, and the concomitant assortment of guides, hostels, relics, souvenirs and stories. There is no reason to imagine that fourth-century Palestinian rabbis did not partake in this revitalization and discovery of the visible past in the contemporary landscape, albeit very much in their own terms.²⁰

If contemporary trends in visual and pilgrimage pieties help make sense of the visual or “theoretic” focus of this list, we must still explain its relationship to the earlier Mishnah and Tosefta’s lists of sight-blessings, in order to posit that this list of sites is not just a simple expansion of, or supplement to, its Tannaitic precursors. Unlike the first exegetical unpacking of mBer 9.1 (personal miracle sites), this list of sights and formulae is not an exegetical expansion or commentary of the underlying Mishnah. Rather, it presents a wholesale list of sites related to the biblical past located in Babylon. Some of these are “miracles that were wrought for Israel.” Others less so.

The list styles itself to speak with the authority of earlier rabbinic tradition, echoing the Mishnah’s formula of “one who sees x, says y:”

1. A. One who sees a place where miracles were done for Israel says: “Blessed is he who wrought miracles for our fathers in this place.”

B. [One who sees] a place from which idolatry had been rooted out says: “Blessed is he who rooted out idolatry from our land.”

2. [One who sees] shooting stars, earthquakes, lightning, thunders and storms says: “Blessed is he whose power and might fill the world.” [One who sees] mountains, hills, seas, rivers and deserts says: “Blessed is the maker of creation.” R. Judah says: One who sees the great sea [Mediterranean] says: “Blessed is he who made the great sea” – but only if he sees it [after] intervals of time.²¹

The logic that orders the contents of the Yerushalmi’s list is quite distinct from that which orders the Mishnah’s. The Mishnah moves from miracles to idolatry, to natural phenomena in all their variety.²² It bundles together a variety of visual objects and phenomena by virtue of their

²⁰ I hasten to add that while the upsurge of Christian pilgrimage starting in the fourth century helps us understand these itineraries better, I do not view these texts as direct “responses” or “polemic.” Rather, I see them as participating in a wider discursive sphere (albeit without directly declaring themselves), and to the extent that Christianity was now armed with imperial resources, we might usefully view these sources as “hidden transcripts” in which those who are dominated resist in subtle, implicit ways. See James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

²¹ mBer 9.1–2. See also tBer 6.2–6.

²² The Tosefta’s parallel also includes a panoply of unusual human phenomena.

worthiness of blessing and response. The Yerushalmi's list is clearly inspired by mBer 9.1, but it is still not a simple extrapolation of it. The Yerushalmi's list, rather, possesses its own unifying integrity, organized under "one who sees Babylon" in A.

The introductory formula A and the closing formula G frame B–F (the five blessings to be said upon seeing Babylon) as a unit.²³ This frame – plus B–F with its iterative formulae, its sequential structure and its combination of Babylonian natural wonders, idolatrous objects and biblical sites – makes up something more than the Mishnah's list or a catalogue. This, I argue, is an itinerary. We first see the Euphrates, then we encounter local idolatry, then we see various historical sites, and finally summarize our confrontation with the entire city (in G).

This is a map of a route, a discursive tour of a rabbinically-viewed Babylon. The repeated "one who sees x says y" is not merely a stylized link associating disparate types of visual objects, neither is it a mnemonic device. Rather, repetition in this context becomes iteration, conceived of within the organic and coherent trajectory of a tour. If we consider the level of the text or passage itself, we see it performing a kind of travel, framing movement through the city with a wide-angle lens (as in A and G), then snaking along the river that cut through Babylon, and on to the various sites thereabout.

Frank, writing about the apparently repetitive and terse writing in the *History of the Monks in Egypt* and the *Lausiak History*, declares that they "simultaneously express and generate pilgrims' experiences, rather than simply transcribe the places and people visited."²⁴ Advising us that these writings are as much prospective as descriptive or retrospective, she advocates "attention to the language, arrangement and the telling omissions."²⁵ Turning this lens onto the Yerushalmi's Babylon itinerary (and those to come), we might think of how it benefits from being posed as *halakha*, a genre that is also expressly and formally prescriptive rather than descriptive.

²³ Note that six blessings are actually enumerated.

²⁴ Frank, *Eyes*, 31. Analyses of this kind follow the linguistic turn, incisively described and advocated in Clark, *History*.

²⁵ See Frank, *Eyes*, 37: "If taken as literary creations and not factual records, such as a census or tax report, pilgrims' writings can reveal the world as it was imagined and experienced. Those sensibilities emerge when one pays close attention to the narrative patterns, repetitions, and omissions in pilgrim narratives." See also Blake Leyerle, "Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives," *JAAR* 64 (1996) 119–43.

Seeing and Saying: The Performance of Vision

The prescriptive and prospective aspect of this itinerary is enhanced by the performance of sight by speech.²⁶ The Yerushalmi's directions themselves ("one who sees x, says y") prescribe a set of speech and vision acts which could be properly classed as performative, in that they do not merely describe or refer to a past act or fact, but create the action or context to which they simultaneously refer.²⁷ X becomes x by being seen and declared as such, in ritualized fashion. Put differently, vision is ritualized through speech; visual objects are effected through gaze and word.

Such collaboration of verbal and visual techniques was also crucial to the work of Christian pilgrimage in the enlivening of contemporary locations with biblical pasts. It can be seen at play in the fourth-century itinerary of Egeria. This itinerary is remarkable not only for its reiteration of vision on the level of the text's description, but also for the way in which the pilgrim within it combines seeing with biblical recollection and verbal utterance.

When we arrived there our guides, the holy men who were with us, said: "It is usual for the people who come here to say a prayer when first they catch sight of the Mount of God," and we did as they suggested ...²⁸

And it was always our practice when we managed to reach one of the places we wanted to see to have first a prayer, then a reading from the book, then to say an appropriate psalm and another prayer. By God's grace we always followed this practice whenever we were able to reach a place we wanted to see.²⁹

Egeria's narrative is peppered throughout with "we saw x" or "we saw y." But the "practice" of seeing described here pertains to a profoundly performative type of seeing that allows pilgrim or reader to simultaneously map her way through the contemporary landscape and the biblical past, via vision and language. These visual and verbal techniques echo those in the Yerushalmi. In other words, seeing is neither

²⁶ The formulae themselves range from biblical verses, to generic blessing formulae, to more specifically designated utterances.

²⁷ See John L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 6–7. In Austin's terms a "performative utterance" does something, whereas a "constative utterance" describes something. For the use of performance analysis in late antique Jewish liturgy, see Ruth Fine, *To Worship God Properly: Tensions Between Liturgical Custom and Halakhah in Judaism* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1998), esp. 44–47, 112.

²⁸ *Itinerarium Egeriae* 1.2 (*Egeria's Travels*, trans. John Wilkinson [Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1999] 91).

²⁹ *It. Eg.* 10.7 (Wilkinson, 105).

passive nor unmarked; it is Egeria's "practice" to always frame it, always ritualize it with verbal utterances, biblical and liturgical.

Similarly, we can think of the performativity of pilgrims' graffiti, a widely attested practice by which pilgrims inscribed and embedded their viewing experience – and often themselves via their names – onto the site itself. The typical inscription would transmit the very experience of viewing itself, such as the many graffiti of "I saw and I was amazed" (*eidon kai ethaumasa*) left by visitors at pharaonic tombs in Thebes or at the Memnonion at Abydos, or those written in Persian directly onto the paintings of the Dura Europos synagogue.³⁰

The performativity of vision in Egeria's itinerary is embedded within a larger and narrative frame, but as in the Yerushalmi we have the sense of a trajectory, albeit a far lengthier one. The relative terseness of the Yerushalmi, and its repetitiveness, recall the strategies of the formulaic repetition and lists in *The History of the Monks in Egypt* and the Bordeaux pilgrim itinerary.³¹ In the latter instance, the spare insistence on overlaying Palestine with a Christian topography has been understood as a powerful device for the remapping and rewriting of the Palestinian landscape with a Christian narrative.³² This attention to form has

³⁰ See the two Persian inscriptions on the painting of Elijah: "When Hormezd the scribe came/ And he looked at this [picture]: 'Living/ The child (?) (who has been) dead'" and "The month [Ardwahist?], day Hormezd./ When Ardaw the scribe came/ And he looked at this picture and/ He looked at the child (?): 'Living the dead (be)come.'" See David Noy and Hanswulf Bloedhorn, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis. Vol. 3: Syria and Cyprus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) 196–98 and 200–202. Steven Fine notes: "The apparent excitement of Hormezd and Ardaw is memorialized and leads other Persian-speaking viewers through the viewing process"; Steven Fine, "Jewish Identity at the Limes: The Jews of Dura Europos between Rome and Persia," in *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. E. Gruen (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011) 297. For the inscription of a Roman matron that includes the declaration "I saw the pyramids" (*vidi pyramidas*), see Edmund Thomas, *Monumentality and the Roman Empire: Architecture in the Antonine Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 179. On the ubiquity of graffiti by Roman visitors to Thebes that declare, "I saw and I was amazed," see Lionel Casson, *Everyday Life in Ancient Egypt* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) 280–284.

³¹ On the brevity of these lists in ancient travel writing and as focusing devices, see Frank, *Eyes*, 59–60.

³² Jaś Elsner, "The *Itinerarium Burdigalense*: Politics and Salvation in the Geography of Constantine's Empire," *JRS* 90 (2000) 181–95; Glen Bowman, "A Textual Landscape: The Mapping of a Holy Land in the Fourth-Century *Itinerarium* of the Bordeaux Pilgrim," *Unfolding the Orient: Travellers in Egypt and the Near East*, ed. Paul and Janet Starkey (Reading: Ithaca, 2001) 7–40; Smith, "Pilgrim Visuality." For the view that the brevity and odd order of stations mean that the work is a guide or aid for pilgrims rather than an account of a pilgrim's journey, see Dietz, *Wandering*, 17–20 and references there.

allowed appreciation of the way that the work trains the eye, rather than previous scholarly stances which saw “poverty of language,” in an “almost stenographic account” with “no theological interest” moving “indiscriminately.”³³

The Route

As for the contents of this Babylon itinerary, it is notable that we find no link to a Jewish present or near-present, but rather, a direct journey to its biblical past.³⁴ This may be interpretable as a deliberate strategy, one that differs from the Yerushalmi’s first line of questioning which considers among its miracle sites those related to one’s father or rabbi. As we will see, this abstraction from the present is nothing like its Babylonian talmudic parallel.

The first item on the Yerushalmi’s itinerary (B) has the person who sees the Euphrates utter “blessed is the maker of creation.” The Euphrates clearly functions as the Babylonian counterpart to the Palestinian Mediterranean, which the Mishnah and Tosefta single out among other seas or rivers amid their lists of vision blessings.³⁵ The blessing formula is the one that these Tannaitic sources prescribe for wondrous natural phenomena. Egeria also takes the time to report her encounter with the river on her journey to Syrian Mesopotamia:

I arrived in God’s name at the river Euphrates, and the Bible is right to call it *the great river Euphrates* (Gen 15:18). It is very big, and really rather frightening since it flows very fast like the Rhône, but the Euphrates is much bigger. We had to cross in ships, big ones, and that meant I spent more than half a day there.³⁶

While she does not self-consciously perform seeing the Euphrates the way she does in other cases, Egeria nonetheless scripturalizes it as she remarks on its magnitude.

The second item on the itinerary (C), “Mercury,” demands the same “blessing” that is mandated in the Tosefta for the seeing of idolatry: “Blessed is he who is slow to anger.”³⁷ The blessing is nothing short of

³³ See Robert Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) 109–110.

³⁴ B (Euphrates) and C (*merkolis*) seem to be derived from m and tBer’s Mediterranean and idolatry related utterances respectively.

³⁵ See mBer 9.2 and tBer 6:6.

³⁶ *It. Eg.* 18.2–3 (Wilkinson, 113–4). See Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.180, who calls the Euphrates “a wide, deep, and swift river” (trans. A. D. Godley [New York, London: Heinemann, 1920] 225).

³⁷ See tBer. 6.2, quoted in n. 14 above.

a bid to ask God to be less patient with idolatry, and expresses (in both verbal and physiological-physical senses) a baleful, liturgical gaze designed to annihilate the offending object from the surface of the Holy Land.³⁸ As Saul Lieberman has argued, *merkolis* in later rabbinic sources is a generic term for idolatry [*avodah zarah*].³⁹

The references to idolatry in C and F (*merkolis* and the “place from which dust is taken”) continue the Tannaitic juxtaposition of these two notions of biblical miracles and the uprooting of idolatry in mBer 9.1 A–B, in which Horbury saw that “zealot-like spirit.” However, the latter (mBer 9.1B) is originally related to the rabbinic-biblical fantasy of eradicating idolatry from the Land of Israel (as opposed to Babylon).⁴⁰ Perhaps the curse against Nebuchadnezzar (the wicked one) ties the anti-idolatry polemic to the Babylonian context: after all, Nebuchadnezzar figures in the Bible not only as a destroyer of the first Jerusalem Temple but also as attempting to coerce Judeans into serving idols in the notable case of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.⁴¹

The rest of the itinerary moves from gloating (over ruins of Nebuchadnezzar’s palace and the city in D and F) to praise (over the miracle sights once again connected to Nebuchadnezzar in E).⁴² The miracle sights are the “fiery furnace” whose flames did not harm the “three youths,” Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and the lions’ den from which Daniel was saved.⁴³ Both of these miracles represent Jewish figures standing up for their God in the face of imperial might.

In F the liturgical formula of “blessed is he who speaks and acts, blessed is he who decrees and upholds his word” frames the viewing of the “place from which they carry dust.” To what might this

³⁸ See my forthcoming, “Eyeing Idols: Rabbinic Viewing of Idolatry in Late Antiquity,” *JQR*. Note that yBer 9.1, 63b mandates the recitation of Ex 22:19 (*One who sacrifices to god, other than the Lord, shall be utterly destroyed*) upon seeing people sacrificing to an idol.

³⁹ Saul Lieberman, “Palestine in the Third and Fourth Centuries,” *JQR* 36 (1945–46) 329–70; 37 (1946–47) 31–54. Lieberman sees the employment of *merkolis* here as a synonym for the term *avodah zarah* used in the Tannaitic texts, rather than as a designation of a particular “Mercury” cult figure.

⁴⁰ Although yBer 9.1, 13b and bBer 57b do consider the implications of the tBer 6.2’s curse against idolatry outside of the Land of Israel, hoping that idolators repent not only in Palestinian but also in Diaspora contexts.

⁴¹ See 2 Chr 36:6–14; 2 Kgs 24:1–12, 25:1–9; Dan 3:1–28; bHag.13b and of course the same folio of the Yerushalmi.

⁴² See Benjamin of Tudela’s account of visiting Babylon and seeing the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar’s palace and the “Synagogue of the Pavilion of Daniel” and the furnace, in *The Itinerary of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. and trans. Marcus N. Adler (London: H. Frowde, 1907) 65.

⁴³ This is despite the fact that the biblical accounts set their self-sacrifice in Dura.

refer?⁴⁴ The word *afar* means “dust,” in the sense of earth or dirt.⁴⁵ In general, the itinerary offers the prospective pilgrim a chance to see, or visualize, Babylon’s ruins, whether of Nebuchadnezzar’s famous buildings or other parts of the city, as a fulfillment of God’s promise to destroy Babylon so that it would be “desolate forever.”⁴⁶ Jeremiah 51 paints a particularly angry and vivid picture of Babylon’s fall. It repeatedly promises that “Babylon shall be a desolation, without inhabitants” (v. 29) and become “heaps, a dwelling place for jackals, an astonishment, a hissing, without inhabitant” in revenge for Babylon’s destruction of Jerusalem and as “vengeance for its Temple” (v. 11).

Greco-Roman writers including Strabo, Pliny, Cassius Dio and Pausanias also supply the image of Babylon as dust and desolation. They describe it in terms of the disintegration of its former glory, referring to its (famous) ruins. Cassius Dio even goes so far as to describe the mysterious properties of its earth that prevent animals from surviving there.⁴⁷ Perhaps this (and the related stops) on the Babylon itinerary

⁴⁴ Isa 47:1 associates dust with Babylon’s fall.

⁴⁵ At the reading of a version of a portion of this article at the Society for Biblical Literature in 2012, it was suggested that the “place from which they carry dust [or earth]” may obliquely refer to the Christian pilgrimage customs of returning from their journeys with *eulogia* (souvenirs, lit. “blessings”). This included gathering earth (and other substances) from holy places or sites connected with holy people. On this practice, see Jerome, *Against Vigilantius*; the Piacenza pilgrim, *Travels from Piacenza*, trans. John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster, Eng.: Aris and Phillips, 1977) 78–89; Augustine, *City of God*, 22.8; Theodoret, *Hist. rel.*, 21; *Life of Symeon Stylite the Younger*, 163, 232 and 235. These sources (except Jerome) are cited and discussed in Gary Vikan, *Byzantine Pilgrimage Art* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1982). On R. Hiyya b. Gamda rolling in the dust (*afarah*) of Israel in fulfillment of Ps 102:15 (“for your servants take pleasure in her stones and favor her dust [*afarah*]”), see bKet 112a.

⁴⁶ Jer 25:12: “I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,” declares the Lord, “and will make it desolate forever.” For similar threats, see Jer 49:18; 50:40–45; 51:26, 29, 37, 38, 62; Is 13:19; 14:4–23; 21:9; 47:5.

⁴⁷ Parthians transferred the capital from Babylon to Ctesiphon; see Gene R. Garthwaite, *The Persians* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004) 77. On the vapor that arose from the destroyed walls of Babylon, see Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 68.27–30, who reports that Trajan saw this. See Strabo, *Geography* 16.1.5 on how “the great city is a great desert” (trans. H. L. Jones [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927] 229). Pliny also claimed that Babylon was reduced to a desert (*solitudinem rediit*) and that its population was drained because of the proximity of Seleucia; see Pliny, *Natural History* 6.30.121–122. See also Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 8.33.3 (trans. W. H. Jones and H. A. Ormerod, *Pausanias’ Description of Greece*, vol. 4 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935] 69): “At Babylon the sanctuary of Belus still is left, but of the Babylon that was the greatest city of its time under the sun nothing remains but the wall,” though he also reports that he has not seen the wall (4.31.5).

invoke not only the fate allotted to Babylon prophetically but also this welter of legendary traditions that it had accumulated.

The rabbinic Babylon itinerary with its fixation on the ruins of Babylon allows the imagined viewer to “see” these ruins it as a fulfillment of God’s threats. This image of Babylon’s desolation is reinforced with the Babylon itinerary’s summation formula (G), which invokes the Isaian curse that Babylon will be swept “with the broom of destruction” (Isa 14:24). With this flourish the Palestinian Talmud’s closes its destructive perspective onto a somewhat distant Mesopotamian city. The city itself was tied to rabbinic imagination not just by its ancient royal patron’s conquest of Judea and destruction of Jerusalem and Temple, but also by its ongoing relationship with the Babylonian rabbinic center. Here we might wonder whether this itinerary bears the traces of a back-and-forth between Palestinian and Mesopotamian rabbinic centers, allowing us to speculate about life beyond the abstracted biblical tour.⁴⁸ Perhaps we can also read it as a displaced lashing out at all imperial powers – and perhaps Rome in particular – that would dare raze the holy city and Temple.

Babylonian Itineraries

The project of enlivening the past by embedding it and seeing it in the contemporary landscape was by no means neglected by Babylonian rabbis. As in the Yerushalmi, this project was cast partially in terms of sight and its ritualization – that is, as part of the Bavli’s commentary on and expansion of mBer 9’s vision-blessings. Like the Yerushalmi, the Bavli begins with personal miracle sights.

“One who sees places in which miracles were wrought for Israel [mBer 9.1]”

A. From where is this derived? R. Yohanan [PA1] said: because the Bible says, *And Jethro said, Blessed is God who saved*, etc. (Exod 18:9).

B. We bless over a miracle for a multitude; do we not bless over a miracle for an individual?⁴⁹

C. And this man was going through Ever Yemina.⁵⁰ A lion fell upon him but a miracle occurred and he was saved from it. He came before Rava [BA4] who said to him: every time you go there, bless: “Blessed is he who performed a miracle for me in this place.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ It ostensibly bears no traces of Babylonian origin, though we will see differently in the Babylonian parallel.

⁴⁹ Cf. yBer 9.1, 12d: “The Mishnah speaks of miracles for Israel. But for miracles only for individuals, one is not required to bless.”

⁵⁰ A suburb on the south side of Mahoza.

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*: “What is the law as to blessing for miracles for his father or his teacher? Or a known person, such as Yoav b. Zeruyah and his companions, or a person in whom

D. And Mar son of Ravina [BA4], who was once going through the valley of Aravot and was parched for water – a miracle occurred, and a well of water was created for him and he drank. Furthermore, once he was going through the district of Mahoza when a wild camel attacked him. The wall of a house caved in, (and) he went inside. Whenever he came to Aravot he would bless: “Blessed is he who performed miracles for me in Aravot and with the camel.” Whenever he passed through the district of Mahoza he would bless: “Blessed is he who performed miracles for me with the camel and in Aravot.”

E. Say: for a miracle done for a multitude it is the obligation of everyone to bless; for a miracle done for an individual, he alone is required to bless.⁵²

Unlike the Yerushalmi, the Bavli presents us with the biblical source for blessing over miracles, in the voice of Palestinian Amora Rabbi Yohanan, in A. The Bible describes Jethro as blessing God for “saving the people from the hand of Egypt,” which allows the Bavli in B to pose the same question as the Yerushalmi in A: this pertains to community miracles, but what is the law as to individual miracles?⁵³ Here the Bavli pursues a rather different route from the Yerushalmi’s open-ended inquiries about miracles wrought for individual others (whether tribal, biblical, familial or rabbinic personalities). Instead, it cites specific, brief anecdotes of miraculous interventions involving Amoraic Babylonian figures, who bless on account of their very own miracles (“who performed miracles for me”) in C–D.

These are two (or three) somewhat idiosyncratic tales, providing the briefest sketch of the miracle at hand, each of which occurs at a specific (and specifically Babylonian) place (reflecting the Mishnah’s formulation of “one who sees a place”), whether Ever Yemina, Aravot or Mahoza. The first has an unnamed person miraculously saved from a lion. He consults with the Babylonian Amora Rava, who recommends a personalized and first-person reformulation of the blessing to be uttered “every time you go there.” In a slightly different twist on this tale, Mar son of Ravina is fortunate enough to be the beneficiary of not one but two miracles, each in a different location. Encountering either miracle site, he blesses not only for the miracle that happened there but also for the one that occurred at the other location. The anonymous voice then resounds in E with the declaration that while all are obligated to recite

God’s name was sanctified, such as Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah? And one of the tribes of Israel?”

⁵² bBer 54a.

⁵³ Cf. Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, tractate Pisha, 12 on Jethro, Exod 18:8–9, and its extraction of an obligation to bless upon seeing and hearing these miracles.

the blessing when encountering sites where communal miracles occurred, only those affected need recite for personal miracles.

As important as the stories in C and D are for supporting the proposition in E, they are perhaps even more significant as anecdotes that contemplate that not just a national, biblical, tribal past, but a truly personal history might be set in one's local viewscape.⁵⁴ In this vein, the deliberate localization and babylonianization are noticeable effects of the deployment of Babylonian figures and miracle-locations. Further, the notion of the miraculous is rather expansive in these stories, not being of the supernatural scale that biblical narrative imagines.⁵⁵

The Bavli's Israelite Conquest Itinerary

It is not as though bBerakhot forgoes the more blatantly miraculous. Even more than the Yerushalmi, it envisions biblical heroes and miracles embedded in the viewscape, presenting the following *baraita*:⁵⁶

- F. Our rabbis taught: One who sees [*ha-roeh*]
 1. the place of the crossing of the [Red] Sea,⁵⁷
 2. or the fords of the Jordan,⁵⁸
 3. or the crossings of the streams of Arnon,
 4. or hailstones on the descent to Bet Horon,⁵⁹
 5. or the stone which Og king of Bashan wanted to throw at Israel,⁶⁰
 6. or the stone on which Moses sat when Joshua fought with Amalek,

⁵⁴ The Yerushalmi does not even consider miracles that happen to the person himself, but only to others.

⁵⁵ Dan Ben Amos, "Historical Poetics and Generic Shift: *Niphlaot ve-Nissim*: Terms for a Mysterious Concept," *Fabula* 35 (1994) 20–49.

⁵⁶ bBer 54a.

⁵⁷ Cf. *It. Eg.* 3:8; 7:2–3.

⁵⁸ Cf. *It. Eg.* 10.3–4 (Wilkinson, 105): "[W]e reached the place on the Jordan where holy Joshua the son of Nun sent the children of Israel across, and they passed over, as we are told in the Book of Joshua the son of Nun. We were also shown a slightly raised place on the Jericho stretch of the river, where the children of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh made an altar. After crossing the river we came to the city of Livias, in the plain where the children of Israel encamped in those days. The foundations of the camp and the dwellings of the Israelites are still to be seen there today," and, "From this point you have a view of the very place where the children of Israel set down the ark of the covenant, and placed the twelve stones which they brought up out of the Jordan." See bSot 32a; 36a; Jo 4:20; Eusebius, *On Golgol*, *idem. Onomasticon* 64–6 (ed. Klostermann); Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.12.1–9. For further references to the visible traces of Israelites camping grounds, see *It. Eg.* 12.9 (Wilkinson, 108).

⁵⁹ Josh 10:141. See bSan 32b on the difficulties of navigating the ascent to Bet Horon. On the "discovery" of a biblical burial site at Bet Horon (i. e., those killed by the hand of Ishmael son of Netaniah [Jer 41:9]), see bNid 61a.

⁶⁰ There is no indication of this in the biblical text. This is expanded in the exegetical section that follows the itinerary (bBer 54b).

7. or [the pillar of salt of] Lot's wife,
8. or the wall of Jericho which sank into the ground –
for all of these he should give thanks and praise to the Lord.

With the exception of F6 (Lot's wife), all of the sites pertain to the movement of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan and ultimately the conquest of Canaan (culminating with the fall of Jericho). This is nothing less than a journey into nationhood, a conquest itinerary. Its form is of the sparest kind, naming either particular sites (as in F1) or natural and material objects (F2–8) – all visible markers of the places in which miracles occurred.

Many of the spots alighted on in this itinerary appear in other pilgrimage texts, such as Egeria's and that of the Bordeaux pilgrim. Thus the latter:

Above the same fountain [of Elisha] is the house of the harlot Rahav, to whom the spies came, and she hid them and alone was saved when Jericho was destroyed. Here stood the city of Jericho, round whose walls the children of Israel circled with the Ark of the Covenant, and the walls fell down.⁶¹ Nothing is to be seen of it except the place where the Ark of the Covenant stood, and the twelve stones that the children of Israel brought out of Jordan.⁶² There Jesus, son of Nave [Joshua son of Nun], circumcised the children of Israel and buried their foreskins.⁶³

The play between going to see the biblical past and there sometimes being something to see and sometimes nothing to see, is also a feature of Egeria's text. It appears for example in her account of seeing (the absence of) Lot's wife (in the form of a pillar of salt). Gen 19:26 declares, "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt," but Egeria admits:

We were also shown the place where Lot's wife had her memorial, as you read in the Bible. But what we saw, reverend ladies, was not the actual pillar, but only the place where it had once been. The pillar itself, they say, has been submerged into the Dead Sea – at any rate we did not see it, and I cannot pretend we did. In fact it was the bishop there, the Bishop of Zoar, who told us that it was now a good many years since the pillar had been visible. It used to stand near the sixth milestone from Zoar,⁶⁴ but was now completely submerged by water.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Cf. bBer 54a F8.

⁶² Cf. bBer 54a F2.

⁶³ *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, 597, in *Itineraria et alia geographica*, ed. P. Geyer and O. Cuntz (CCL 175; Turnhout: Brepols, 1965) (trans. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 161, with minor changes of my own).

⁶⁴ See bPes 93b: "It is written: *The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came unto Zoar*. [Gen 19:23] – R. Hanina said: I myself saw that place, and it is five miles [from Sodom]."

⁶⁵ *It Eg.* 12.6–7 (Wilkinson, 107–8).

Other, earlier and later accounts do report its sighting.⁶⁶ Targum Neofiti in its rendition of the biblical verse that tells of Lot's wife fate adds that she became a pillar of salt "until the dead will be resurrected" (or "until the resurrection of the death").⁶⁷ We find similar renditions in the fragmentary Targums. In the Bavli there is no indication whether "Lot's wife" means the pillar of salt or simply the site where it/she stood, whether this particular item on the visual menu is simply the Bavli's imagined item or whether it may be related to some actual traditions still afloat.⁶⁸ Elsewhere in the Bavli we find instances in which biblical sites are established through first-person witness, in the language of "I myself saw it."⁶⁹

After the brief listing of the six sights in F, the Bavli proceeds to elaborate on the miracles that occurred at each of these sites, grounding them in biblical prooftexts and "extracting" some of their details midrashically.⁷⁰

G. When the Israelites were about to pass through [the valley of Arnon], the Amorites came and made cavities [in the rocks] and hid in them, saying: when Israel pass through this way we will kill them. They did not know that the Ark was advancing in front of Israel and leveling the hills before them. When the Ark arrived there, the mountains closed together and killed them, and their blood flowed down to the streams of Arnon.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Josephus, Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and the Piacenza Pilgrim record the sighting of the pillar.

⁶⁷ This could pertain to the fate of Lot's wife's corporal condition rather than as a declaration that the pillar is still *in situ*.

⁶⁸ For a Palestinian rabbinic anecdote about a local Palestinian tradition about the cedars from which the Ark was made, their sacred status among locals, and rabbinic approval, see Song Rab. 1.74 (par. Gen. Rab. 94.4; yPes 4.1, 30d; yTa'an 1.6, 64c). For rabbis establishing the extent of miraculous objects in biblical narrative empirically, see tSot 8.6 (= bSot 34a).

⁶⁹ See, e. g., bBB 73b–74a (the eleventh in this series of Rabbah b. b. Hana stories) in which Rabbah b. b. Hana sees the "dead of the wilderness," Mt. Sinai, and the place in which Korah and his men were swallowed by the earth. On this, see Dina Stein, "Believing Is Seeing: A Reading of Baba Bathra 73a–75b" (Hebrew), *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 17 (1999) 9–32. See also bEruv 55b, in which Rabbah b. b. Hana claims to have seen one of the remains of the Israelites camps; bSan 71a, in which R. Yohanan claims to have seen the grave of a rebellious son (who was executed) and sat on it, and to have seen the ruins of a condemned city and sat on them. On eye-witness testimony of rabbis regarding temple vessels, see Ra'anana Boustán, "The Dislocation of the Temple Vessels: Mobile Sanctity and Rabbinic Rhetoric of Space," in *Jewish Studies at the Crossroads of Anthropology and History: Authority, Diaspora, Tradition*, ed. Ra'anana S. Boustán et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) 135–46, nn. 365–70.

⁷⁰ bBer 54a–b. The anonymous editor concedes items F1 and F2 (supplying proof-texts) but goes on to question F3 and the remaining items F4–6.

⁷¹ This is framed as a Tannaitic report based on Num 21:14 about two lepers who brought up the rear and noticed a stream of blood flowing into the Arnon and reported

Here the Bavli expands on the streams of Arnon (F3), which the Bible describes rather briefly, as the site where the Amorites and Moabites refused to let Israel pass, resulting in their defeat by Israel. The Bavli exegetically expands the biblical narrative, not only to add in supernatural and miraculous events, but also to graphically embed and situate them in the landscape. The visualization of biblical history in the contemporary landscape, along with tales of discovering and seeing such landmarks, seems to be a distinctive feature taken up in Babylonian rabbinic culture that is unparalleled in the Palestinian evidence (or at least unrepresented to the same extent).

The Babylonian Babylon Itinerary

Unlike the Yerushalmi, which includes its Babylon itinerary as part of its commentary on mBer 9.1A's blessing over miraculous sights, the Bavli separates and inserts its version under its commentary on mBer 9.1B's blessing upon seeing "places from which idolatry was uprooted." This immediately casts an even more hostile light over Babylon and its destinations.

bBer 54b	yBer 9.1, 12d
H. Rav Hamnuna [BA3] expounded [<i>darash</i>]: One who sees Babylon must recite five blessings:	A. One who sees Babylon must recite five blessings:
I. 1. One who sees Babylon itself says: "Blessed is he who has destroyed the wicked Babylon."	B. 1. One who sees the Euphrates river says: "Blessed is he who is the creator."
	2. One who sees Mercury says: "Blessed is he who is slow to anger."
2. One who sees the palace of Nebuchadnezzar says: "Blessed is he who destroyed the palace of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar."	3. One who sees the palace of Nebuchadnezzar says: "Blessed is he who destroyed this wicked one's house."
3. One who sees the lions' den or the fiery furnace says: "Blessed is	4. One who sees the place of the fiery furnace and the lions' den says:

it back to the Israelites, who then broke out into song (as per the biblical account). This miracle takes place before the open battle against the Amorites recounted in Num 21:21–32, followed in quick-step by the battle against Og, the king of Bashan, in Num 21:33–25. The Talmud's anonymous editor grants that the Red Sea and the Jordan miracles are clear but inquires as to the basis of the other miracles.

he who wrought miracles for our fathers in this place.”

“Blessed is he who wrought miracles for our forefathers in this place.”

4. One sees Mercury says: “Blessed is he who is slow to anger to those who transgress his will.”

5. One who sees the place from which dust is carried away says: “Blessed is he who speaks and acts, blessed is he who decrees and upholds his word.”

5. One who sees the place from which they carry dust says: “Blessed is he who speaks and acts; blessed is he who decrees and upholds his word.”

J. [Aramaic:] Rava, when he saw donkeys carrying dust, used to give them a slap on the back and say: “Run, righteous ones, to perform the will of your master.”

K. When Mar son of Ravina came to Babylon, he would put some dust in his kerchief and throw it out, to fulfill that which is written, *I will sweep it with the broom of destruction* (Isa 14:23).

6. One who sees Babylon says: “*I will sweep it with the broom of destruction*” (Isa 14:23).

L. Rav Ashi [BA6] said: I had not heard this teaching of Rav Hamnuna, but of my own mind I made all these blessings.

The first thing to note is how the Bavli frames the five Babylon blessings, which were styled with the authority of Tannaitic tradition in the Yerushalmi. In the Bavli they are introduced as an exegesis derived by Rav Hamnuna and capped with Rav Ashi’s statement that he made these blessings of his own accord and unaware of Rav Hamnuna’s teachings. Furthermore, as in the case of A–E (the Bavli’s preceding exposition of mBer 9.1A in terms of personal miracle sites), halakhic teaching is reinforced with narrative enactment, once again, featuring specifically Babylonian Amoraic figures – two of whom also appeared in the earlier stories (Mar son of Ravina and Rava).

The Bavli works from a set of traditions that is similar to the Yerushalmi’s, making some minor adjustments, with a tendency towards personalizing and localizing prescriptive law through narrative enactment.⁷²

⁷² The Yerushalmi, which promises five blessings, offers five and one summary verse (arguably a sixth blessing). The Bavli presents only five blessings. The Bavli omits the

The figure of Rav Ashi in L functions as an embodied encapsulation of all five blessings with his pronouncement that upon seeing the sights of Babylon he spontaneously and without any tutoring came up with the appropriate (and very same) verbal utterances. The Bavli's final move is not only to appropriate these traditions by casting them as Babylonian (in origin) and contemporary (or at least Amoraic), but also to naturalize and localize them so that they derive neither from the authority of the Tannaim, nor from the abstraction and remove of exegesis (as per Rav Hamnuna's *derasha*) but from the very sights themselves.

Another striking feature of Babylonian Babylon itinerary is the inclusion of ritual acts in the marking of sights. Thus in J and K, Rava and Mar son of Ravina find ways to see and to physically ritualize the fulfillment of God's will ("the will of your master" in J) or scripture ("to fulfill that which is written"). First they do so by physical action, performing the fulfillment of God's promise in the physical realm. Then Rava and (in the case of Mar) the narrator frame these acts as embodiments of God's words, through verbal utterances.⁷³ The one bids the donkeys to hasten to perform God's will; the other quotes Isa 14:23.⁷⁴

This is a twist on the performativity of vision that is different from the solely verbal, scriptural kind we have seen thus far. Here the pilgrim does more than map the viewscape with biblical pasts. The pilgrim actually embeds himself as a subject or actor into the viewscape, actively transforming it into a fulfillment of God's word by his actions, bringing past promises about the future into the present. With physical intervention on the part of the pilgrim, we have not only a different kind of performative vision, but also a different kind of pilgrimage subjectivity.

Scholars have alerted us to the different ways that pilgrimage subjectivity is effected in Egeria's writings and the Bordeaux pilgrim.⁷⁵ The one presents a first-person narrative that speaks out to the reader (the

blessing for the Euphrates but has a blessing proper for "one who sees Babylon" (in I.1), whereas the Yerushalmi (in B6) has Isa 14:23. Isa 14:23 is incorporated by the Bavli through Mar son of Ravina's actions (in K).

⁷³ Jer 51:60–64 provides a fascinating frame for the chapter's preceding verbal fury in promising Babylon's destruction, as well as a model for the Babylon itinerary's "seeing, speaking and acting" about God's "speaking and acting." Through the voice of Jeremiah, the text asks Seraiah to "come to Babylon, see and read all these words," and to then cast it into the Euphrates with a curse. The text self-consciously refers to itself, its own reading, materiality, authorship and authority, and asserts itself upon Seraiah's sight of Babylon through recitation and ultimately as part of an apparently self-destructive ritual that is supposed to enact the destruction of Babylon.

⁷⁴ We might well consider the politics of this: after all, the Babylonian framers of the Talmud are very deliberately inserting Babylonian Amoraim into a rather aggressive critique of Babylonian imperialism (though admittedly ancient).

⁷⁵ Elnser, "Itinerarium," 195; Bowman, "Textual," 2, 12–14.

“dear sisters” whom Egeria addresses throughout) as secondhand auditors of her first-hand testimony. The Bordeaux itinerary entirely forgoes the first-person singular, presenting mostly unframed, unsourced nuggets of information, with an occasional impersonal “one” (as in, “from here one can see.”) As mentioned above, this elliptical style, once judged as “impoverished,” provides in its gaps a kind of placeholder for the reader, who is able to insert herself in the text’s empty spaces and so to undergo the journey herself.

The Bavli also contains different registers of pilgrimage writing: the brevity and sparsity of the itineraries encourage the reader to insert himself within their prescriptive webs so that he becomes the “one who sees and says.”⁷⁶ The Bavli also intersperses among these itineraries the lure of the narrative or anecdote with its third-person subjects that mediate between reader and event, much as Egeria as a narrator does for the readers of her text.⁷⁷

From the Mediterranean to the Euphrates or Jerusalem

Comparing the Yerushalmi and the Bavli allows us to see that the content of the Bavli’s blessings differs somewhat from the Yerushalmi. Notably absent from the Bavli’s Babylon itinerary is the Euphrates River, which is included in the Yerushalmi’s Babylon itinerary. However, it is left for the later discussion of the Mishnaic obligation to bless upon “seeing the great sea/Mediterranean,” which appears in both Talmuds:

bBer 59b	yBer 9.1, 13d
M. R. Judah says: One who sees the great sea [the Mediterranean] says ... [mBer 9:2]	C. R. Judah says: One who sees the great sea [the Mediterranean] says: “Blessed is he who made the great sea.” This is so when he sees it at intervals. [mBer 9:2]
How long must the intervals be? Rami b. Abba [BA3] said in the name of Rav Isaac: from thirty days.	And how much is one interval? Thirty days.
Rami b. Abba also said in the name of Rav Isaac: If one sees the River Euphrates by the Bridge of Baby-	Simeon Kamatria asked R. Hiyya son of R. Aba [PA3]: Since I am a donkey driver and go to Jerusalem throughout

⁷⁶ One might add to this the hypotheticals of the Yerushalmi, which also encourage identification in an abstract way (e. g., “what of one’s father or teacher?”).

⁷⁷ Mar son of Ravina finds a way to see the materialization and enactment of God’s promise. As God is blessed for “making a decree and fulfilling” the Isaian prophecy, so Mar son of Ravina acts to fulfill the verse’s mandate.

lon, he says: “Blessed is he who has wrought the work of creation.”⁷⁸

And now that the Persians have changed it, only if he sees it from Be Shapur and upwards.

Rav Joseph [BA3] says: from Ihi Dekira and upwards.

Rami b. Abba also said: If one sees the Tigris by the Bridge of Shabistana, he says: “Blessed is he who wrought the work of creation.”

the year, what is the rule as to tearing [my clothes upon seeing Jerusalem]?

He said to him: If [more than once] within thirty days, you do not need to tear. After a thirty-day [period], you need to tear.

The Bavli transfers the “great sea” (the Mediterranean) into a Babylonian context – one much closer to Babylonian rabbinic home. The contemporary and proximal nature of this context is made explicit with the anonymous voice’s “and now” (*ve-ha’idnah*), as change of the river’s appearance is registered, calling for adjustment of the vantage point from which it must be viewed in order to merit the blessing of God’s creation (rather than human labor).⁷⁹ So too is the nearby river Tigris brought into the viewer’s ambit. Topping off this transposition and expansion of mBer 9.1’s mandate for sight-triggered utterances, the Bavli engages in midrashic etymological anthropology and geography.⁸⁰ The coupling of these itineraries with etymological and biblical exegesis echoes the scripturalization of sight of the itineraries themselves. The scrutiny that is turned on the viewscape is turned onto scripture – the expansive midrashic sections grant further license to the sight-seeing itineraries.⁸¹

⁷⁸ On the “Bridge of Babylon” see Strabo, *History*, 186.304; Herodotus, *Histories* I.186. For a discussion of many of the features in this itinerary, see Aharon Oppenheimer et al, *Babylonia Judaica in the Talmudic Period* (Wiesbaden: L. Reichart, 1983).

⁷⁹ See Yaakov Elman, “Up to the Ears” in Horses’ Necks (B. M. 108a): On Sasanian Agricultural Policy and Private “Eminent Domain,” *Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal* 3 (2004) 95–149.

⁸⁰ bBer 59b continues: “Why is it [the Tigris] called Hiddekel (Gen 2:14)? Rav Ashi said: Because its waters are sharp (*had*) and swift (*qal*). Why is it [the Euphrates] called Perat? Because its waters are fruitful and multiply (*parin ve-ravin*).” The Talmud goes on to present Babylonian Amoraim who link the geographical location of Mahoza to the disposition and habits of its residents.

⁸¹ Isaiah Gafni discusses the various ways in which the Babylonian rabbis sought to map biblical history onto Babylonia, including the Babylon itinerary and its exegetical expansions. He argues that this “game of identifying ancient biblical cities with nearby and familiar sites thus transcended a simple form of geographical exegesis, because it effectively put the exegete himself – together with his audience – on the biblical map as well.” See Isaiah Gafni, “Babylonian Rabbinic Culture,” in *Cultures of the Jews*, ed. D. Biale (New York, 2002) 262. Gafni claims that this project of “the intersecting of past

While the Bavli goes from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, the Yerushalmi in its discussion of what constitutes “an interval of time” pivots from the Mediterranean to Jerusalem.⁸² As it moves from the sight of a natural wonder to the sight of the holy city, it shifts from ritual utterance to ritual action. These performances of sight express and shape different affective registers, from ritual praise to ritual mourning and from wonder to melancholy.

2. Mourning Itineraries

One who mourns Jerusalem will merit to see it in its joy. (tSot 15.15)⁸³

I will rebuild by my own efforts the sacred city of Jerusalem, which for so many years you have longed to see inhabited ... (Julian, *Letter* 51)⁸⁴

The question put to R. Hiyya bar Abba by Simon Kamatriya in yBer 9.1 assumes that, like the sight of the Mediterranean, the sight of Jerusalem was subject to a recognized halakhic ritualized performance. In Tannaitic sources we see no indication of a Jerusalem-specific visual ritual aside from narrative inklings, which we will discuss. However, in the (later) Palestinian Talmud’s commentary on the tractate Mo’ed Qatan we find Jerusalem-specific, sight-triggered *halakhot*, which in turn become a fully-fledged itinerary in Bavli Mo’ed Qatan. This itinerary bears formal similarities to the Babylon and Israelite conquest itineraries already examined. If the Babylon itineraries give insight into Palestinian and Babylonian ways of seeing the once-preeminent Babylonian city – doubtless representing the epitome of a conquering Gentile empire (which could also be Rome or Persia, depending on one’s perspective) – then the Jerusalem/Temple sight-seeing rules give us the reverse: Palestinian and Babylonian perspectives onto the foremost Jewish city in its halcyon days.

and present” was related to a Babylonian rabbinic desire to domesticate an “alien society and culture” and to create a “sense of ‘home while abroad’” by creating a sense of familiarity with the “physical environment” (ibid.). It seems harder to argue for Babylonian rabbinic alienation from the Babylonian environment when we consider that some of the itineraries we have examined are shared by both Palestinians and Babylonians, and that the Babylonians created maps for Palestine and the Sinai desert as much as for Babylonia.

⁸² Note that while the Yerushalmi goes on to discuss mBer 9:2 in terms of its stated concerns regarding intervals of time, the Bavli’s discussion about the Euphrates and which sections merit the blessing concern spatial measures.

⁸³ See bTa’an 30b; bBB 60b.

⁸⁴ *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, trans. W. C. Wright (3 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) 3.177–81.

bM. Q. 26a

yM. Q. 3:7, 83b

A. R. Helbo [P/BA3] said in the name of Ulla of Biria [PA2/3] in the name of R. Elazar:⁸⁵

1. One who sees the cities of Judea in their ruin says: “*Your holy cities have become a wilderness*” (Isa 64:9) and tears [his clothes].

2. [One who sees] Jerusalem in its ruin says: “*Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation*” (Isa 64:9) and tears.

3. [One who sees] the temple in its ruin says: “*Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised you, is burned with fire and all our delightful things are laid to waste*” (Isa 64:10) and tears.

B. He tears over the Temple and adds [to the same tear] over Jerusalem.

C. This is contrasted [with the following *baraita*]: It is the same whether one hears or sees [in terms of his obligation to tear]. When one reaches Scopus one tears, and one tears for the Temple separately, and one tears for Jerusalem separately.

It is the same whether one hears that Jerusalem has been destroyed or whether one sees Jerusalem in its destruction: one is obligated to tear. One who sees Jerusalem from Scopus is obligated to tear.

D. This is not difficult. The one holds when he comes upon the Temple first, and the other holds when he comes upon Jerusalem first.

Both the itinerary and halakhic discussion in the Bavli and the short halakhic teachings in the Yerushalmi follow a list of ten (or eleven) “tears that are not rejoined.” The last few items on the lists of both Talmuds differ only slightly. The Yerushalmi has “over Jerusalem and over the Temple,” whereas the Bavli has “over the cities of Judea, over

⁸⁵ Cf. similar chains of transmission before this, regarding tearing upon seeing a Torah scroll burning.

the Temple and over Jerusalem.”⁸⁶ The Bavli’s Jerusalem itinerary (of apparent Palestinian origin) bears a striking formal resemblance to both the Palestinian and Babylonian Babylon and biblical itineraries.

With its stations, the Jerusalem itinerary’s iterative format, 1–3, mimics the trajectory of travel, effectively mapping a route to the Temple. It ritualizes vision through recitation, and like the Bavli’s anecdotes after its Babylon itinerary, it adds embodied ritual – i. e., tearing. As with the Babylon and biblical itineraries (bBer 64a F), the kinds of seeing and unseeing that it encourages the traveler (or reader) to perform are by no means simple.

In the Babylon and biblical itineraries, one is sometimes aided in seeing the past in the landscape by summoning it with recited verses or performing actions. At other times, the Bavli indicates – both in its itineraries and in its exegetical expansions – that there were specific objects to be seen (such as stones, hailstones, pillar of salt, rivers, ruins, etc.). The seeing of the past was sometimes facilitated by focusing on particular objects or material things that were clearly visible residue of events, but this was not always the case.⁸⁷ Sometimes one went to see the place where something happened and had to have it pointed out by experts (monks, guides) and/or one had to actively insert it into the sites (by reciting blessings or biblical verses). As was also the case in Christian pilgrimage accounts and itineraries, it certainly did not hurt if there was a specific visual object, topographical feature or human-built construction that could make the sacred past visible to the human eye. Ultimately, however, as Jerome put it of Paula who “saw” a whole scene of the nativity when she visited Bethlehem, it was “the eye of faith” that did the work of seeing.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ The Yerushalmi goes on to use Jer 40:5 (eight men from the north come to Mitspeh in mourning, after Jerusalem has been devastated by Nebuchadnezzar in mourning) to think about whether one must mourn even if one hasn’t oneself seen. Jer 40:5 proves that one must. The Bavli on the other hand uses Jer 40:5, which is after all a city of Judea, to think about whether one must make a new tear at each step of one’s mournful itinerary or whether it is sufficient to add to the previous tear. Thus the Bavli resolves the contradiction between B and C. D harmonizes in the standard Babylonian fashion whereby each *baraita* is taken to refer to a different scenario. Of course one could theoretically see both Jerusalem and the Temple from Scopus, but D tells us that the Temple gets priority. See Rashi *ad. loc.* and Maimonides, *Laws of Fasts*, 5.16, for suggestions as to how one might come to see the Temple without first seeing Jerusalem.

⁸⁷ Both Egeria and the Bordeaux pilgrim attend to this. Egeria especially considers whether there are remains of the past, or whether they are absent, for example in the case of Lot’s wife.

⁸⁸ Jerome, Ep. 108, *To Eustochium*.

In the case of the mourning itinerary, the prophetic verses to be recited emphatically iterate the desolate state of each site that is visually encountered – Judean cities, Jerusalem, Temple. The rules themselves compound this by describing each site as being “in its ruin” (*behubano*). But what would one see? We know that the Temple mount was left in various states of ruin until the Persian and Islamic conquests. Assorted accounts describe the city of Jerusalem as lying in ruins until Hadrian rebuilt, remapped and renamed it in the second century.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, the precise nature of what ruins were seen is not entirely clear.

Rabbinic narratives about second century Tannaim who “went up to Jerusalem” suggest that viewing Jerusalem entailed ruins, ritual tearing and weeping.⁹⁰ These narratives describe how a group of rabbis rent their clothes upon reaching Scopus – whose very name in Hebrew and Greek indicates that it was a place from which Jerusalem was viewed. They wept upon reaching the Temple mount when they “saw a fox emerging from the holy of holies,” which they saw as a fulfillment of Lam 5:18: “for the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it.”⁹¹

This floating narrative dramatizes the early rabbis’ reaction to the sight of their holy city lying in ruins.⁹² It also models ritualized affect upon seeing such sights: weeping, rending and scripturalization. Perhaps the story gestures towards a time before Hadrian rebuilt Jerusalem and set a pagan temple on the site of the Jewish Temple – in other words, a time when the Temple ruins or at least the Temple’s gaping absence would have still been visible. While the Jerusalem itinerary can be fruitfully understood in light of the performative visuality that seems to have been at the heart of rabbinic, Greco-Roman and Christian pilgrim literature, I suggest that there is more going on here. Jerusalem, it seems, attracted a particular visual anxiety among Jews and Christians.

Christian sources echo this picture of a mournful Jewish pilgrimage to the Temple grounds. The Bordeaux pilgrim relates that at the sanctuary “where the Temple stood” was an altar with the blood of Zachar-

⁸⁹ The ruined state of cities of Judea is less clear. Any precise positivist gleanings from this emphasis on destruction and ruin ought to be separated from the way that these sites were meant to be viewed, i.e., quite apart from questions of how and whether they broadcast their devastation to the pilgrim’s eye, they were thought of and seen as such.

⁹⁰ Sifre Deut 43 (Finkelstein, 95); Lam Rab. 5.18 (Buber, 80b), and bMak 24b.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Unlike Rabban Gamaliel, Rabbi Eliezer ben Azaria and Rabbi Joshua, who cry, Rabbi Akiva laughs, knowing that if this prophecy has been fulfilled, so would Zech 8:4–5, which predicts the restoration of Jerusalem.

iah on it, two statues of Hadrian, and “a pierced stone, which the Jews come and anoint each year.” He continues, “They mourn and rend their garments and then depart.”⁹³ Jerome describes Jews only being allowed to enter Jerusalem to mourn, but focuses less on the ruins and more on the Jews, painting a pitiful portrait of what “you can see with your own eyes,” which included “woebegone women” and “old men” whose “bodies and clothes demonstrate the wrath of God.”⁹⁴ This “mob of wretches” moaning over the Temple ruins is set against the visible symbols of Christ (his manger, church of resurrection, banner of the cross) that glow, sparkle and shine.⁹⁵ The Jews, for Jerome, become as much a visible marker of Christian supremacy as the ruins of their Temple, being themselves vestigial, ruinous and ruined.⁹⁶

Eusebius claims that after the Bar-Kokhba revolt Jews were barred by Hadrian from “setting foot anywhere near Jerusalem, so it could not even be seen from a distance.”⁹⁷ Scholars have often focused on this and other testimonies in order to ask whether Jews did or did not visit or live in Jerusalem.⁹⁸ For our purposes, this question is less pertinent.⁹⁹ Rather, these sets of evidence are useful as examples of how the language of vision framed later Jewish and Christian claims over Jerusalem and the Temple. Furthermore, they shed light on the increasing formalization of a Jewishly inflected sight-seeing itinerary of the city in the face of a decidedly Christian view which from the fourth century also had the backing of the imperium and thus a new-found ability to register and materialize Christian sites and sights across the cityscape.

In Eusebius’ *Theophany*, the trope of vision is even more emphatic. Eusebius contrasts his account of Jewish lack of access (including visual)

⁹³ *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, 589.7–51.7 (Wilkinson, 154–55).

⁹⁴ Jerome, *In Sophoniam* 1.15–16 (trans. Francis E. Peters, *Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995] 144).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Lam Rab. 1.52 (Buber ed., 81) also contrasts celebratory Temple pilgrimage of the past with that of melancholy present.

⁹⁷ The truth-value of claims that Hadrian banned Jews from Jerusalem (e. g., Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 4.5–6; 5.12; Eusebius, *Chronicle of Hadrian*, Year 18; Eusebius, *Theophany* 4.20; Tertullian, *Against the Jews* 13; cf. Justin, *Apology* 1.47; Justin, *Dialogue* 16.2; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 69.12) is not my concern in this article. See O. Irshai, “Constantine and the Jews: The Prohibition against Entering Jerusalem” (Hebrew), *Zion* 60 (1996) 129–78.

⁹⁸ For debate about the depopulation of Judea in the wake of Hadrian, see Joshua Schwartz, *The Jewish Population in Judah from after the Bar Kokhba Revolt until the Arab Conquest* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985–1986) and bibliography.

⁹⁹ See Epiphanius, *Treatise on Weights and Measures* 14, on Hadrian’s building project on discovering Jerusalem in ruins.

with the visible witness that the Temple ruins serve for the Christian eye.¹⁰⁰ For Eusebius, the visibility of the destruction is theologically necessary and he emphasizes that this destruction is not only visible but also (miraculously) visibly ongoing.¹⁰¹ The tropes of visibility and lack of visual access threaten to undo themselves – on the one hand, the ruins must be visible to give witness of Christian triumph and Jewish defeat, but on the other hand, they must not be so ruined as to no longer be visible.¹⁰² As with Jerome, the need for the ruins is analogous to the need for Jews.

Christians were at pains to see the ruins of the Temple and to see them in a certain way as representative of the Jewish condition (and vice versa). So, too, we might remember just what the rabbinic focus on seeing Judea, Jerusalem and the Temple “in their destruction” also accomplishes in terms of unseeing. In other words, by fixating on Jerusalem, its environs and insides as a marker of ruin, the rabbis are cultivating a vision that looks at the past while seeing past what is actually, presently there.¹⁰³ They narrate stories about foxes emerging from the holy of holies, even as Eusebius claims to have seen a Roman farmer plowing over the Temple site – each casts their eyes on the Temple that works best for them. Each shapes a visible present in light of a past that lives, breathes and appears in the contemporary viewscape.

With scriptural and liturgical texts, with actions, and in pilgrimage writings, rabbis, Church Fathers and others re-viewed the landscape. Pilgrimage writing allowed those who had never travelled (such as many of the Babylonian rabbis, or Egeria’s “sisters”) a glimpse onto these sites, at a remove. That the Jerusalem and biblical itineraries both receive their fullest form in Babylonia (whether they originated in Palestine or not) needs no special explanation grounded in the plausibility of these itineraries as actual trips. Indeed, actual presence was no

¹⁰⁰ Eusebius, *Theophany*, 4.20. See also 4.3; 1.18.

¹⁰¹ Eusebius, *Theophany*, 4.16.

¹⁰² See Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel* 9:24.

¹⁰³ Hutton’s argument that Pausanias created a cognitive map of Corinth, effectively inventing an ancient Greek past that ignored or overlay the contemporary layout of the city, is especially pertinent here. See Hutton, “Religious Space.” The other possibility with respect to the rabbis is that they were not ignoring Christianization of Palestine (to the extent and degree that this took place by the late fourth or early fifth century), but rather they were unconcerned or oblivious to it. I do not wish to overstate the convergence of Christian and rabbinic visual concerns about Jerusalem; after all, the most developed Jerusalem itinerary is found in the Babylonian Talmud and may be more fruitfully understood in the light of the Bavli’s other itineraries than in the geopolitics of Christian Rome and the rabbinic perception of imperial investment in the Holy Land.

guarantee of seeing the right thing. Thus Egeria and the rabbis agree on the need to say and do in order to see properly – even if at the actual site. For both rabbis and Christians, seeing was not an unmediated, immediate experience; it needed to be achieved.

The hopeful, sight-specific framing of Jerusalem's present, past and future is also given words in the inscription found on the Temple mount's western wall: "And you shall see and your heart shall rejoice and their bones like grass [shall flourish]." This is a variant of Isa 66:14.¹⁰⁴ The inscription has been dated from the fourth to the eighth centuries and has given rise to various interpretations. One of these (which is hard to prove with any certainty) is that it was inscribed during the beginnings of work on the third Temple that followed Julian's promise to rebuild it.¹⁰⁵ Tantalizing as this suggestion is, the inscription is more likely simply the work of a Jewish pilgrim who was looking at his present through the hopeful lens of a biblically promised future, and who like many ancient pilgrims wrote his view into the viewscape itself. His words reflexively meditate on and prescribe the very active process of seeing in the way that we have noted was a feature of much pilgrimage textuality. In Frank's terms, this inscription is as much a prescriptive as a descriptive text, precisely in its mixing of past (Isaiah), present (ruins) and future (rejuvenation, revival and rejoicing).

This suggestive evidence offers more than the unremittingly melancholic picture drawn by Christian sources, incorporating, as Frankfurter put it, "the messianic anticipation of [the] reconstitution" of what was a powerful fantasy of the ultimate pilgrimage sight – a place in which both biblical and rabbinic writings imagined one went to see God's own face thrice yearly.¹⁰⁶ More than confirming a history of actual Jewish travel,

¹⁰⁴ Compare this *u-reitem* [or perhaps *u-reitam*] *ve-sas libkhem ve-atmotam ka-deshe* to the Masoretic version, which has *u-reitem ve-sas libkhem ve-atmotekhem ka-deshe' tifrakhnah*. On the significance of this variant, see M. Ben-Dov, *In the Shadow of the Temple: The Discovery of Ancient Jerusalem* (trans. Ina Friedman; New York: Harper and Row, 1985) 222–24. Note the fourth-century graffito discovered on a wall of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, which dates to the time of Constantine and depicts a boat above the words *Domine ivimus* (Lord, we have come).

¹⁰⁵ Baruch [Benjamin] Mazar, *The Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem near the Temple Mount: Preliminary Report of the Second and Third Seasons, 1969–70* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1971) 23; cf. Ben-Dov, *Discovery*, 218–23. For a different interpretation and a later dating, see Y. Bilig and R. Reich, "A New Explanation Regarding the Inscription 'Your Heart Shall Rejoice . . . ' on the Western Wall" (Hebrew), in *New Studies on Jerusalem: Proceedings of the Third Conference, December 11, 1997*, ed. A. Faust and E. Baruch (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1997) 18–24.

¹⁰⁶ See Frankfurter, "Pilgrimage," 644. For another tantalizing piece of evidence, see M. Margaliot, *Laws of the Land of Israel from the Genizah* (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1973) 139–140, a source from the Cairo Genizah of uncertain date

these Temple pilgrimage sources tell us something about the visual piety and yearning of their framers, whether Babylonian or Palestinian. They highlight the centrality of performative vision when “sight-seeing” the past. Whether at the level of the text, or even at the level of the praxis, the present was filtered and the past and future was made visible through biblical or liturgical or ritual lenses, and verbal and corporeal acts.

Conclusion

The performance of vision in pilgrimage writing could in itself give a glimpse of certain destinations even to those who would never physically make it to them. In this vein, it is notable that not only does the Palestinian Talmud have a Babylon itinerary, but the Bavli preserves the only celebratory Israelite conquest itinerary – thus Palestinian rabbis reach into Babylonia, and Babylonian rabbis reach back to Palestine. Distance, like time, is no barrier to the pilgrimage imaginary.

We do not necessarily need to subsume these varied rabbinic sight-seeing itineraries under one overarching explanatory paradigm. After all, they surface in and straddle different geographical, political and cultural centers (Palestine and Babylonia), and they are categorically different (miracles and mourning), while treating distinct types of sites (the personal miracle, the biblical-national miracles, Babylonian empire destroyed, Jerusalem Temple ruins and restoration). And yet, they share much with each other in terms of a set of stylized, formulaic, itinerary or manual-like textualities, staged to a remarkable degree through the act

that lays out a ritualized entry and progress into Jerusalem. The pilgrim is not only instructed to recite verses from Isaiah, tearing his garments, while “he gazes from Scopus” and to proceed towards the Temple ruins while reciting festival Psalms. The text also mandates recitation of a prayer for the restoration of the cult, referring to the Temple as that place “on which your eyes and heart rest, in its ruins and in its built state.” The hope is that “just as we have seen it in its ruins, let us merit to see it in its built state.” Vision is not only ritualized, but the pilgrim prays that his current vision is wedded to that of God who sees the Temple in its built state, such that the pilgrim too enjoys this restored vision of cult. For a Christian ritualized entry to Jerusalem that emphasizes vision, see the sixth-century *Life of Peter the Iberian* §38, which recounts how pilgrims see Jerusalem from a high place, cry out “Behold [or see] Zion, the city of our salvation. Your eyes shall see Jerusalem. [Is 33:20],” and then proceed to crawl towards and within it, kissing the earth with their lips and eyes. See *John Rufus: The Lives of Peter the Iberian, Theodosius of Jerusalem, and the Monk Romanus*, ed. and trans. Cornelia B. Horn and Robert R. Phenix Jr. (Leiden and Boston : Brill, 2008) 51. On the remarkable similarity between this text and the Genizah fragment, see Robert Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, 298.

of seeing. As such, they also share much with late antique pilgrimage discourse more broadly.¹⁰⁷ The sense of sight in pilgrimage literature channels movement through time and space, produces memory, sanctifies present with past, and maps the viewscape accordingly. Crucially, it does not work alone, but rather in complicity with words and actions, both on the level of the utterances and formulae that frame vision, and on the levels of texts, whether biblical books or verses or pilgrimage writings themselves.

In the particular case of travel or pilgrimage writing, the geopolitics of vision must also be part of the analysis. We have been shown how effectively this can allow the understanding of pilgrimage writing, whether in terms of resistance and appropriation, Romanization and indigeneity, the imperial gaze, or Christian-Jewish supercessionism and contestation, or even Palestinian-Babylonian-rabbinic rivalry.¹⁰⁸ When examining a malevolent biblically inspired gaze cast at Babylon, the visualization of a glorious Israelite imperialism and the melancholic/hopeful vision of Jerusalem, we cannot deny the subtle tones cast by the differing conditions of empire in which the two centers of rabbinic culture thrived. At the very least, we can say that the eyes and the texts and words that trained them, could be as sharp as the swords and saws of conquest and construction. The eyes, trained properly and rabbinically, could be as purposeful as the pilgrim's sandals.

¹⁰⁷ This is related to what scholars of Greco-Roman and Christian culture have begun to describe as a visual turn in late antique piety, which in turn had as much to do with folk ways of understanding vision as with scientific, philosophical and theological ideas about the centrality of vision to knowledge, truth and faith. See for example, Frank, *Eyes*; Patricia Cox Miller, *The Corporeal Imagination: Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); James Francis, "Verbal and Visual Representation: Art and Text, Culture and Power in Late Antiquity," in *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. Philip Rousseau (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) 285–305.

¹⁰⁸ Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*; Elsner, "Pausanias"; Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews*; Irshai, "Christian Appropriation." On Palestinian-Babylonian rabbinic rivalry and local patriotism, see Isaiah M. Gafni, *Land, Center and Diaspora: Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997).