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THE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN JAMES 1:9-11

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Regarding the use of Scripture in the Epistle of James, Wiard Popkes asserts that “James can hardly be called an OT exegete. He may call himself a ‘teacher’ (διδάσκαλος; 3.1f); but he is not really a teacher of the Bible’. His knowledge of the Bible is second-hand. This pertains to his quotations as well as to the allusions and examples.”<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this paper is to show, by using James 1:9–11 as a test case, that indeed James was quite an exegete, familiar with both the broad outlines of Old Testament theology and the small details of the Old Testament text. Modern commentators generally agree that the primary text behind James 1:9–11, is Isaiah 40:6–7. Even in English translation (RSV), the similarities are readily apparent:

## Isaiah 40:6–8

A voice says, “Cry!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. <sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people is grass. <sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand for ever.

## James 1:9–11

Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, <sup>10</sup> and the rich in his humiliation, because like the flower of the grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup> For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

In examining James’ use of Isaiah’s prophecy, both explicit and implicit intertextual relationships will be explored, noting how James incorporates material from other biblical texts.

Before plumbing the depths of James’ understanding of the prophet, it is necessary to explore the original literary context of the oracle. Isaiah 40 opens up the second half of Isaiah’s prophecy (chs. 40–66).<sup>2</sup> These chapters have been rightly called, “The Book of Consolation,” as they open with the divine exclamation, “Comfort! Comfort my people! Says your God!” (40:1). YHWH, in his mercy, pronounces the end of the exile and the restoration of the land even prior to the fulfillment of the doom announced in chapter 39! His announcement of restoration points to a “Second Exodus,” by evoking images reminiscent of Israel’s sojourn. “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God”

<sup>1</sup> See page 228 in “James and Scripture: An Exercise in Intertextuality,” *NTS* 45 (1999): 213–229. Popkes follows the lead of Martin Dibelius, who states that James’ scriptural allusions and quotes “could have come to the author just as easily through propaganda, preaching, teaching, and instruction intended for catechumens or missionaries as through books” (*James* [Hermeneia; revised by Heinrich Greeven; trans. Michael A. Williams; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976], 26).

<sup>2</sup> The authorship of chs. 40–66 is hotly contested among OT scholars. The author of this paper assumes that Isaiah, the courtier of king Uzziah in eighth century B.C. Judah, is the author of the entire book, from chapter 1 to chapter 66.

(40:3 ESV; cf. Exodus 14–15; Mark 1:2–3).<sup>3</sup> This is not, however, a simple recapitulation of the Exodus. The return of Israel from her captivity also signals the return of her God to the land. The way is prepared for *his* return, marking a great eschatological reversal, where “Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain” (v. 4 ESV). As the way is prepared in the desert, “the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh (כָּל-בָּשָׂר) shall see it together” (v. 5). This promise is guaranteed by the fact that the “mouth of the LORD” had declared it! It is here that Isaiah contrasts the frailty of humanity—like the grass of the field—with the enduring word of God (vv. 6–8).

The reversal described in Isaiah’s New Exodus, forms the first conceptual link with Jas 1:9–11, as shown by Dale Allison.<sup>4</sup> He notes that the comfort declared to a humiliated Jerusalem (ταπείνωσις; 40:2) and the leveling (ταπεινωθήσεται) of mountains and raising of valleys (40:4) provide verbal similarity with James’ command that the lowly brother (ταπεινός) boast in his exaltation (ὑψεῖ; 1:9) and that the rich boast in his being made low (ταπεινώσει; 1:10).<sup>5</sup>

It may be profitable to briefly explore other possible Old Testament backgrounds for the image of fading flowers, before entering into a discussion of James’ use of Isaiah 40:6–8. Davids suggests, given the ubiquity of this motif, that while James has very similar wording to Isaiah 40:6–7, he is more likely drawing upon stock phrases. Davids cites Psalm 103[102]:15–16 in particular as a parallel passage that James may have had in mind:

<p>ἄνθρωπος ὡσεὶ χόρτος αἱ ἡμέραι αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ ἄνθος τοῦ ἀγροῦ οὕτως ἐξανθήσει ὅτι πνεῦμα διήλθεν ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ οὐχ ὑπάρξει καὶ οὐκ ἐπιγνώσεται ἔτι τὸν τόπον αὐτοῦ</p>	<p>As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so shall he flourish. For the wind passes over it, and it shall not be; and it shall know its place no more. (Brenton)</p>
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Scholars have held that Psalm 103, in spite of its Davidic inscription, is most likely postexilic, and that the psalmist actually had Isaiah 40 in mind when he composed the song. In Isaiah’s oracle, the transience of humanity-like-grass, is set in contrast with the forever enduring

<sup>3</sup> Craig A. Evans, “From Gospel to Gospel: The Function of Isaiah in the New Testament,” in *Writing & Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition* (eds. Craig C. Boyles & Craig A. Evans; vol. 2; VTSup 70; Leiden: E. J. Brill), 651–691.

<sup>4</sup> See pages 47–52 in his chapter, “Uses of Isaiah in the Gospels and James,” in *Scriptural Allusions in the New Testament: Light From the Dead Sea Scrolls* (N. Richland Hills, Tex.: BIBAL Press, 2000), 43–56.

<sup>5</sup> Allison also asserts that the use of ὑψόω in Isa 40:9 also shows a connection to James’ text, and the exaltation of the rich, but this connection is more of a stretch, as it is the good news itself that is to be lifted high to the mountains.

“word of the LORD” (v. 8), but in the psalm the contrast is with “mercy of the LORD” that “endures from generation to generation” (v. 17).<sup>6</sup> James Luther Mays notes a number of similarities between the Isaianic “Second Exodus” motif and Psalm 103[102], stating “In the psalm, the ways of the LORD revealed to Moses are understood as confirmed and renewed in the restoration from the exile. Not only the exodus but the return from exile is reflected in the psalm’s praise.”<sup>7</sup> So, it can be seen that the psalmist was dependent upon the Isaianic tradition. This does not, however negate that James may still have used common cultural images here. It should be noted, however, that unlike Isaiah 40, Psalm 103[102] contains none of the explicit verbal parallels of reversal that were noted by Allison. Only ὕψος is used in v. 11, where the Psalmist declares, “For as the heaven is high (ὕψος) above the earth, the Lord has so increased his mercy toward them that fear him” (Brenton). A closer examination of James’ actual use of the language of Isaiah 40:6–7 will reveal that surely James was borrowing from the Isaianic context rather than the Psalmist’s.

#### ISAIAH 40:6–8 IN 4QWISDOM INSTRUCTION

Isaiah’s work was well known to the Qumran community, so it comes as no surprise that an allusion to Isa 40:6–8 would be found in one of the community’s scrolls. 4Q185 (*4QWisdom Instruction*) is a fragmentary text from the late second century B.C. Despite its poor condition, Harrington comments that one “can say something about the work with a reasonable degree of confidence.”<sup>8</sup> The opening lines of frag. 1 are badly damaged, but it sets the stage of this wisdom admonition in eschatological judgment, involving angels (i 4–9a) before proclaiming woe to the “sons of men”:

And you, sons of men, woe to you; for behold 10 like grass he sprouts from his ground and his goodness flowers like a blossom. His wind blows on it, 11 and its herbage dries up, and its blossom the wind bears away unto [...] so that it passes [away like a name that pe]rishes, 12 and it is no more found for it is but wind.... They will seek him and will

<sup>6</sup> Leslie Allen notes that though the difference in the two passages should not be missed, the “word” in Isaiah 40:8 is “itself the loyal promise of God, as the contrast with human לֶחֶם, “loyal love,” in Isa 40:6 makes clear” (*Psalms 101-150* [rev. electronic ed.; WBC 21; Dallas: Word, 2002] n.p.).

<sup>7</sup> Compare v. 5 with Isa 40:31; v. 9 with Isa 57:16; v. 11 with Isa 55:9; vv. 15–16 with Isa 40:6–8 (*Psalms* [electronic ed.; Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994], n.p.).

<sup>8</sup> Daniel J. Harrington, *Wisdom Texts from Qumran* (Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls; London: Routledge, 1996), 37–38. English translation of this text will be taken from Harrington (35–36). See also Thomas H. Tobin, “4Q185 and Jewish Wisdom Literature,” in *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins* (eds. Harold W. Attridge, et al.; Resources in Religion 5; Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1990), 145–152 and Donald J. Versput, “Wisdom, 4Q185, and the Epistle of James,” *JBL* 117 (1998): 691–707.

not find him, and there is no hope. 13 And he—his days are like a shadow over the l[and]. (i 9b–13a)

Both Harrington (p. 37) and Tobin point out that lines 9–13 are a wisdom admonition on the fragility of humankind that shares affinities with our text, along with other texts where mankind is likened to the fading flower or withered grass (Pss 90:5–6; 103:15–16 and Job 14:1–2). The scribe uses the imagery of Isa 40:6–8 to stress the mortality of humanity in a context of judgment. He also alludes to the enduring nature of the word of God. The next section exhorts the listener to seek wisdom based on God's acts in the Exodus event, as described in Psalm 105:

And now listen please, O my people, and pay attention 14 to me, you simple ones, and draw wisdom from the might of God, and remember the marvels He did 15 in Egypt and His signs in [the land of Ham]; and let your heart tremble before His dread ii 1 and do His good pleasure [...] your souls according to his good mercies. Seek out for yourselves a way 2 to life, a highway [...] a remnant for your children after you. And why do you give up 3 your soul to vanity [...] judgment?

Listen to me, O my sons, and do not rebel against the words of the LORD. 4 Do not walk in [...in the way He laid down for Ja]cob, and in the path He appointed for Isaac. Is not one 5 day in His house better than [...] to fear Him not to be afflicted by the fowler's snare 6 [...] to be separated from His angels, for there is no darkness 7 nor gloom [...His good pl]easure and His knowledge. And you, 8 what can you understand [...] before Him will go forth evil to every people. (i 13b–ii 8a)

While the scribe draws his description from Psalm 105, the fact that the Exodus motif immediately follows his quotation of Isaiah 40:6–8 shows that the he was not simply quoting Isaiah as an illustration of man's transitory nature, but that he was intentionally pulling from the content of Isaiah 40. Verseput asserts:

The whole of Isaiah 40:1–8 with its new exodus motif appears to have been thoughtfully integrated into the author's message as the primary underlying text, the preparation of "the way of the LORD" in Isa 40:3 being understood metaphorically of a life according to the divine pleasure. By attentive performance of the will of God, the devout listener will escape the judgment of God pronounced upon the "sons of men" and experience liberation from the oppressive yoke of the Gentile peoples. (Verseput, 698)

The wisdom that the "sons of men" are to seek, is identified with "a way to life," "a highway" (ii 2-3) and the "words of the LORD" (ii 3b). Obedience to the enduring word of Israel's God provides the means of her restoration!

In examining 4Q185 it is reasonable to ask if James is aware of the Exodus imagery in Isaiah 40. While it is not likely that James was drawing upon the Second Exodus motif in the same way as 4Q185, James' mention of the double-minded man, unstable in "all his ways"

(πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ; v. 8), prior to the rich man who perishes in his pursuits/ways (ἐν ταῖς πορείαις αὐτοῦ; v. 11) may echo the wilderness way of Isaiah 40. This possible echo amplified, as in the context of testing, trial and temptation (πειρασμός; vv. 2, 12-14), the wilderness wanderings and grumblings of Israel may be heard as well. The connection that 4Q185 may also shed light on how James uses Isaiah 40:6–8 without explicitly contrasting the evanescence of man with the eternal Word of God. Luke Timothy Johnson points out that “the reader of James who catches this allusion (spelled out by 1 Peter 1:24) is prepared for the stress on ‘the word of truth’ in 1:18 and ‘the implanted word able to save your souls’ in 1:21.”<sup>9</sup> This ‘word of truth’ and ‘implanted word’ should be understood in light of James’ teaching on the wisdom from above that is gained by praying without wavering, and is characterized by proper ethics within the community (1:5-7; 3:13-18).

#### JAMES AND ISAIAH 40:6–8: VARIATIONS ON THEME

James’ affinity with Isaiah’s text can be shown by how his choice of wording actually matches the textual difficulties particular to the passage. Before turning to the largest textual issue in Isaiah’s oracle, it may be helpful to address some of the smaller ones. First, in Isaiah 40:6, “all its *grace*” (וְכָל-הַסְדֵּרוֹ) is translated “all man’s *glory*” (καὶ πᾶσα δόξα ἀνθρώπου) in the LXX (see also 1 Peter 1:24). The editors of the *BHS* propose either הַדְרָו, “its adornment,” or הַמְדָּו, “its loveliness,” as an alternative to the MT, but given the evidence from the versions and from Qumran, the editors of the *HUB* reject both proposals.<sup>10</sup> If the MT stands as is, then out of the 251 occurrences of חסד in the MT, this is the only place where it is rendered with δόξα in the LXX. Wrestling with this difficulty, L. J. Kuypers, cites evidence from Hebrew poetry where חסד is used in parallel and suggests that besides the typical connotation of “covenant faithfulness,” חסד can also refer to “strength.”<sup>11</sup> It has also been argued that δόξα is favorite theological word for the translator of LXX of Isaiah, emphasizing God’s manifested glory.<sup>12</sup> Given these factors and the context of Isa 40:1–11, the LXX translator is probably contrasting the passing glory of man with the glory of YHWH, revealed to “all flesh” in v. 5. Hence, the rendering of the LXX does not necessarily reflect a different *Vorlage*. Unlike Peter (1 Peter 1:24), James did not keep with

<sup>9</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB 37A; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 191. See also Versepunt, 691–707.

<sup>10</sup> Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein, ed. *The Book of Isaiah* (2 vols.; The Hebrew University Bible; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981).

<sup>11</sup> L. J. Kuypers cites Pss 59:10–11, 17–18; 143:12 and Jon 2:9 as examples in “The Meaning of חסדו in Isa. XL 6.” *VT* (1963): 486–492.

<sup>12</sup> L. H. Brokington, “The Greek Translator of Isaiah and his Interest in ΔΟΞΑ.” *VT* 1 (1951): 23–32.

the translation of the LXX. Instead he chose the phrase, ἡ εὐπρέπεια τοῦ προσώπου (lit. “the beauty of the face”). Out of the ten places where εὐπρέπεια is used in the LXX, it is used four times to translate הדר (Ps 104[103]:1; Prov 31:25; Lam 1:6; Ezek 16:14; note the proposed emendation of the BHS editors above). Πρόσωπον was commonly used in the LXX to translate פָּנָה “face.” While Hort asserts that the phrase here means “personage” so that the sense of ἡ εὐπρέπεια τοῦ προσώπου is “pride,” he maintains that πρόσωπον could simply mean “person” and act as a substitute for the personal pronoun.<sup>13</sup> Hence, James could simply mean “his beauty/glory.” So in essence, James’ choice of vocabulary could either reflect his own wrestling with the difficult use of חסד in the MT or a different Greek translation or Hebrew manuscript that is unknown. He also could have simply taken εὐπρέπεια as a nearly synonymous alternative to δόξα, as the words have been paired together in Psalm 25:8, Jeremiah 23:9 and Baruch 5:1.

Another textual issue that sheds light on whether James specifically had Isaiah 40 in mind, regards his use of the LXX’s substitution of χόρτου, “grass” for הַשָּׂדֶה, “field,” rendering “flower of the field” as the “flower of grass.”<sup>14</sup> Ralph P. Martin sees this as a “mistranslation,” but such a substitution is understandable given the repetition of הַצִּיר in the following verses and that one could imagine “grass” standing metonymically for “field.”<sup>15</sup> Either way the sense is not changed. James also reflects the LXX’s translation of נָבַל “withers” with ἐξέπεσεν “falls” (Isa 40:8). C. H. Toy suggests that the LXX translator read נָפַל “falls” rather than נָבַל and then translated it with ἐξέπεσεν.<sup>16</sup> Hort, however, contends that ἐκπίπτω often carries with it the connotation of “failing” (Sir 34:7) and “fading or wasting away” (Job 14:2; 15:33).<sup>17</sup> A remarkably similar phenomenon occurs earlier in Isaiah, where in both verses 1 and 4 of chapter 28, נָבַל is translated with τὸ ἐκπεσὸν, referring to the falling “flower” of Israel. So at least the translator of the LXX was consistent. At most the translator recognized a connection between the two pericopes (chs. 28 and 40) and reflected it in his translation technique.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> F. J. A. Hort, *The First Epistle of St. Peter I.1-II.17* (London: Macmillan, 1898), 18; see also BDAG on πρόσωπον and HALOT on פָּנָה (electronic eds.).

<sup>14</sup> Noted by David McCalman Turpie, *The Old Testament in the New: A Contribution to Biblical Criticism and Interpretation* (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1868), 167.

<sup>15</sup> See Martin’s comments in *James* (WBC 48; Waco, Texas: Word, 1988), 26.

<sup>16</sup> Crawford Howell Toy, *Quotations in the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1884), 239.

<sup>17</sup> Hort, *First Peter*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> The significance of this suggestion will be explored below.

James also uses the aorist active, ἐξήρανεν, stating that the rising sun with the scorching wind, “dries up” the grass, reflecting Isaiah’s passive “the grass withers,” (ἐξηράνθη; v. 7).

#### THE SCORCHING WIND

As noted above, the actual text of Isaiah 40:6–8 has a few textual differences between the LXX and the MT, which are reflected in James’ use of Isaiah’s imagery. The most substantial textual variant in Isaiah 40:6–8 is found in verses 7 and 8, where the MT has the longer reading, “when the breath of the LORD blows on it. Surely the people are grass,” and then repeats, “The grass withers, the flower fades.”<sup>19</sup> The original text of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> contains the same omission as the LXX, but a later scribe inserted the missing text between the lines and in the left margin, showing a preference for the longer reading found in a manuscript now long lost.<sup>20</sup> The longer reading of the MT is likely original, and the omission due to a scribe’s eye skipping from בִּשׁׁ in 7a to the same phrase in 8b.

At first glance, it would seem that this variant has little significance for James’ use, but closer examination may shed light on an interpretive difficulty, as James’ imagery probably reflects this longer reading. While James says that the rich in his ways will pass away just as the desert flowers of Palestine, he specifically sets the occasion for their wilting as when the sun rises σὺν τῷ καύσωνι (v. 11). The translations of καύσων have fallen into two different groups. Most English translations have “scorching heat” (ESV, RSV, NIV), while other translations have “scorching wind” (ASV, NAS). Καύσων is a relatively rare word, occurring only twice in the NT. In Matt 20:12 it refers to the heat of the day endured by day laborers, and in Luke 12:55, the same sweltering heat is held in relationship with the winds coming from the south (νότος). In the LXX both senses are found as well. The heat of the day is often the referent (Jdt 8:3; Sir 18:16; 43:22; Pr. Azariah 1:45 [Dan (Theodotion) 3:67]), as it is in Isa 49:10, where it is

<sup>19</sup> Later revisions of the LXX, such as Theodotion and Symmachus add ὅτι πνεῦμα κυρίου ἔπνευσεν εἰς αὐτὸν ἀληθῶς χόρτος ὁ λαὸς ἐξηράνθη ὁ χόρτος ἐξέπεσε τὸ ἄνθος in keeping with the MT. While Aquila has the literal, πράσον ὁ λαός ἐξηράνθη πράσον ἀπέρρευσε ἄνθος. See Joseph Ziegler, *Isaias* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed; *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis* 14; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 267, and Fridericus Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1875), 2:88. 1 Peter quotes the passage almost *verbatim* from the LXX.

<sup>20</sup> Aside from this omission, the variations between 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and the MT are mainly orthographic in nature. A possibly significant variant between the MT and 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> does exist in v. 6, where the MT has וַאֲמַר, “and he said”, while 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> has וַאֲמַרְהָ, “and I said” (cohortative Qal imperfect with *plene* spelling), supported by καὶ εἶπα in the LXX and *et dixi* in the Vulgate. This variant, while having possible implications for the interpretation of Isa 40, has no influence upon the interpretation of the text as James uses it. See discussion in Jan de Waard, *A Handbook on Isaiah* (Textual Criticism and the Translator 1; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 155.

paired with the sun (cf. Sir 34:16). In several other places, throughout the prophetic corpus, *καύσων* refers to the *קָרִיִם* or sirocco winds of the “spring” interchange between winter and summer. These winds originate in the east and bring in the hot desert air from the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>21</sup> While these winds may have nothing to do with the sun, the fact that they come from the east, makes the association with the sunrise quite logical (Jonah 4:8; Sir 34:16).<sup>22</sup> Hadidian views James’ language as evidence of a Palestinian origin, while Davids sees James’ usage as merely proverbial, taken from the common cultural background of the eastern Mediterranean. Both, however, fail to note the full theological significance of this imagery.<sup>23</sup> *Καύσων* is used to translate *קָרִיִם* often in judgment oracles against Israel.<sup>24</sup> In Ezekiel’s vision of the Two Eagles and the Vine (ch. 17), the vine—Israel—is doomed to wither, as soon as the east wind blows upon it (v. 10; see also 19:12). Hosea 13:15 employs similar language, but this time the east winds are associated with the *רוּחַ יְהוָה*. Though Israel may “flourish as the reed,” God will send “the east wind, the wind of the LORD” (*קָרִיִם רוּחַ יְהוָה* / ἄνεμον καύσωνα κύριος) in judgment. This is particularly important for our passage. While Isaiah’s description of man’s transience does not specifically mention the east wind, the longer reading of the MT and the corrector of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> does state that the *רוּחַ יְהוָה* is the cause of the falling flower (MT v. 7b). For any inhabitant of Israel, the sirocco winds come from the same direction as the rising sun, so James could easily bring this image into his appropriation of Isaiah’s text.

#### EXCURSUS: CONCEPTUAL LINKS WITH 5:17–18

Just as the hot, dry sirocco winds are a common motif of judgment in prophetic literature, the corollary holds true. God’s favor is marked by protection from rays of the sun and the burn of the wind:

The eyes of the Lord are upon those who love him, a mighty protection and strong support, a shelter from the hot wind (*καύσωνος*) and a shade from noonday sun (*μεσημβρίας*), a guard against stumbling and a defense against falling. Sir 34:16 (RSV)

<sup>21</sup> Dikran Hadidian, “Palestinian Pictures in the Epistle of James,” *ExpT* 63 (1952): 227–228.

<sup>22</sup> Contra Davids’ comment, “The sirocco has nothing to do with the rising of the sun” (*The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGCT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 78).

<sup>23</sup> Davids sees the passage as simply “proverbial” in that the *topos* of drying vegetation as a metaphor for human transience is a common motif in ancient literature (*ibid.*).

<sup>24</sup> The concept of the sirocco wind is a common *topos* in the prophets. These particular passages are emphasized because of their direct correspondence in vocabulary. The fullest treatment of this phenomenon has been done by Aloysius Fitzgerald in his monograph, *The Lord of the East Wind* (CBQMS 34; Washington, D. C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 2002). See particularly pages 24–27 for Hosea 13 and 141–142, where he briefly gives Ezek 17:10 and Isa 40:7–8 as examples sirocco storms consuming vegetation.

In a recapitulation of earlier words of comfort (ch. 40), Isaiah explains that neither the scorching winds (צָרָה/καύσων) nor the sun (שֶׁשֶׁת/ἥλιος) will strike the children of Zion, as their LORD will lead them to water (49:10). This corollary of blessing in the form of protection from the desert elements is not explicitly mentioned in Jas 1:9–11, but elsewhere in James a similar motif of blessing is found. The closely related image of drought is introduced in James' discussion of prayer (5:13–18). Here, community is encouraged to pray on behalf of the sick and corporately encourage the confession of sins in relation to that healing.<sup>25</sup> As an illustration of effective righteous prayer, James gives the example of Elijah (vv. 17–18), who is said to have “prayed fervently” that it would not rain (1 Kgs 17:1), and indeed, not a drop fell for three and a half years.<sup>26</sup> The drought was clearly meant as a tactical strike against the wicked regime of Ahab and Jezebel, who had instituted worship of the rainstorm-god, Baal.<sup>27</sup> The dynasty of Ahab's father, Omri, was known for its entrepreneurial spirit, and even Ahab's marriage to the idolatress was forged for the sake of a lucrative treaty with Tyre (1 Kgs 16:29–34).<sup>28</sup> Elijah's pronouncement of judgment and the subsequent drought not only proved YHWH's primacy over Baal's non-existence, it also struck at their economic heart, as the drought caused even the king and his retinue to search for water for their donkeys and horses (1 Kgs 18:5).<sup>29</sup> The meteorological contest between the idolatrous kingdom and the faithful prophet of YHWH

<sup>25</sup> A full discussion of this passage is beyond the scope of this paper. It debated whether the healing mentioned in these verses—whether literal or spiritual—is always conditioned upon confessed sins. See J. Christopher Thomas' discussion in *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (JPTSS 13; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 17–37. See also the newly completed study by Dennis R. Edwards, “Reviving Faith: An Eschatological Understanding of James 5:13–20” (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> That Elijah “prayed” in 1 Kgs 17:1 is up for debate, but suffice it to say his pronouncement of drought to Ahab could be taken as either a form of “prophetic prayer” or as a statement birthed in prayer as one who “stood before the LORD.” On the duration of the drought, see Luke 4:25 and Rev 11:2, both passages where Elijah's drought is given eschatological significance—in the inauguration of Jesus ministry (Luke) and in the ministry of the two witnesses (Revelation).

<sup>27</sup> See Fred E. Woods, *Water and Storm Polemics Against Baalism in the Deuteronomistic History* (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 1994), 95–113; James R. Battenfield, “YHWH's Refutation of the Baal Myth through the Actions of Elijah and Elisha” in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration* (ed. Avraham Gileadi; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 19–37. Leah Bronner *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics Against Baal Worship* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968).

<sup>28</sup> Martin Cohen paints the Omridic dynasty in a positive light, he refers to Omri and Ahab as the David and Solomon of the Northern Kingdom! See “In All Fairness to Ahab,” *Eretz-Israel* 12 (1975): 87–94. C. F. Whitley agrees that the author of Kings has a theological agenda that intentionally overlooks the economic and political gains the Omrides made for the kingdom. See “The Deuteronomist Presentation of the House of Omri” *VT* 2:2 (1952): 137–152.

<sup>29</sup> The tragic irony of this passage cannot be missed in Hebrew. Ahab is concerned that his horses and donkeys will not perish (נִכְרִיתָ) in the drought (18:5), while Jezebel sees to it that the prophets of YHWH perish (בְּהִכְרִיתָ); 18:3). The narrator makes it plain that exploitation is the strong suit of the Omrides, a theme developed further in the story of Naboth's vineyard (ch. 21).

came to its climax on Mt. Carmel, where lightning struck, the people repented, and Elijah prayed for the return of the rain (Jas 5:18; 1 Kgs 18:42). That James' chooses Elijah's prayer for drought and rain in a discussion of prayer for healing does not make much sense, unless one notes the association between judgment, repentance and restoration paralleled in the discussion of sickness, confession and healing in vv. 13–16. The drought narrative of 1 Kgs 17–19 bares a thematic resemblance to Jas 1:9–11, as well. The flower of the Omride dynasty was soon to fall, due to the scorching wind of the drought. The corollary reiterated by the prophets and wise men (Isa 49:10; Sir 34:16) rings true in the narrative as well, as repentance brings about the blessing of the rain and the end of the drought. Edwards rightly remarks that “Jas 1:11 alludes to the OT in order to illustrate the justice of God whereas 5:17–18 uses the OT to illustrate the power of prayer using an *example* of the justice of God.”<sup>30</sup>

#### THE RISING SUN

The excursus above, while somewhat tangential, opens up the possibility of intentional connections between James' use of sirocco imagery taken from Isaiah 40 and his use of Elijah as an example of effective prayer in the cycle of judgment, repentance and restoration. James' choice of imagery was not, however limited to the desert wind. Rather, the occasion of the wind was the rising of the sun (ἀνέτειλεν γὰρ ὁ ἥλιος; 1:11). The image of the rising sun is not present in any part of Isaiah 40, but as shown above, the pairing of the sun and sirocco was relatively a common motif, so it may be unnecessary to look for any particular passage as background for James' image. Given the juxtaposition of similar themes of drought/dryness in 1:9–11 and 5:17–18, and the mention of Elijah in the latter context, it may be worth looking into a possible textual background. The prophet Malachi closes the prophetic canon with the promise:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse. (Mal 4:5–6[3:22–23 LXX] RSV)

The promise of Elijah is to be fulfilled in conjunction with (before) the “Day of the LORD,” and the purpose of his coming is to initiate the restored bonds of community with repentance, lest judgment come. A description of this judgment precedes the hopeful promise above:

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<sup>30</sup> Edwards, 84–85; emphasis added.

For, behold, a day comes burning as an oven, and it shall consume them; and all the aliens, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble (שָׂק/καλάμη): and the day that is coming shall set them on fire, saith the LORD Almighty, and there shall not be left of them root or branch.<sup>2</sup> But to you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise (הַשֶּׁשֶׁשׁ...הַיּוֹם / ἀνατελεῖ...ἥλιος δικαιοσύνης), and healing (יְרֵא / ἰάσις) shall be in his wings. (Mal 4:1–2a[3:19–20a LXX] RSV)

Of particular interest is the sunrise of righteousness/justice envisioned by the prophet. The dawn of the “Day of the LORD” signals weal to those who fear his name, but fiery woe to the invaders of Israel, and all who do wickedly. Here the prophet recapitulates imagery from earlier in the chapter, where the return of the Lord is characterized as “a refiner’s fire” (v. 2), purifying the priesthood (v. 3). The impetus for this judgment, described in Malachi 3:5 is strikingly similar to several themes found in James:

And I will draw near to you in judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the witches, and against the adulteresses, and against them that swear falsely by my name, and against them that keep back the hireling’s wages, and them that oppress the widow, and afflict orphans, and that wrest the judgment of the stranger, and fear not me, saith the LORD Almighty.

Adulterers (Jas 4:4), those who swear falsely (Jas 5:12), those who withhold wages (Jas 5:4), and those who oppress widows and orphans (Jas 1:27) all stand condemned. God’s plea “Return to me, and I will return to you,” (Mal 3:7) is strikingly similar to James’ admonition, “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you” (4:8). God’s promise to “open the windows of heaven...and pour down...overflowing blessing” (Mal 3:10) could evoke the image of the Judge at the doors (Jas 5:9), who sent rain to Elijah in response to his prayers and Israel’s repentance.<sup>31</sup> The weight of any one of these parallels is not heavy enough to tip the scales in favor of James’ dependence on Malachi 3, but all together they suggest that the “Day of the LORD” as described by Malachi, and the eschatological function of Elijah as a prophet of judgment and restoration were easily accessible by James as background material for his teaching. Given the strong possibility of James’ familiarity with Malachi 3, it seems quite probable that he intentionally conflated the imagery of the rising sun in Mal 4:2[3:20] with the imagery of the sirocco wind of

<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that the promise of God to Israel to “open the windows of heaven” is conditional upon faithfulness with the tithe. Interestingly, John Painter suggests that James’ death was at least partially due to his support of poor (possibly Pharisaic) priests who were being exploited by the rich high priests. Josephus records that the high priests “had the hardness to send their servants into the threshing floors, to take away those tithes that were due to the priests, insomuch that it so fell out that the poorer sort of the priests died for want” (*Ant.* 20.8.180–181; trans. William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus* [rev. ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1988]; *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999], 140–141, 249–251).

the LORD in Isaiah 40:7 (MT). The pairing of Malachi 3 and Isaiah 40, is not unique to James. In fact, the chapters are brought together explicitly in Mark 1:2–3, where the Gospel conflates Exodus 23:20, Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3.<sup>32</sup> Here, Mark links Malachi’s and Isaiah’s prophecies of a New Exodus and a “way in the wilderness” to John the Baptist’s message of repentance. Note also that John uses the image of burning in his description of the coming ministry of the Messiah. He pronounces that the one who is coming will separate the wheat and the chaff, and “the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire” (τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστῳ; Matt 3:12; Luke 3:17).

If the image of the rising sun in James 1:11 is born out of Malachi’s prophecy, then the function of the sun in the prophet’s context may shed light on the function in James’ context. As noted above, the burning sun of justice in Malachi 4:1–2[3:19–20] is a recapitulation of the refining fire of YHWH’s return in 3:2. The unbearable refining process was not meant for the foreign enemies of Israel, rather it was directed at Israel’s cultic heart—the priesthood (vv. 3–4), and broadened to those of the *community* who indulged in sin (v. 4; see discussion above). Later in the chapter, separation and judgment are described as the result of the fires of refinement: “Then once more you shall distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him” (3:18). This image of separation and judgment is again reinforced, as the “sun of righteousness” rises with “healing in his wings” for those who fear God (4:2[3:20]), but for the wicked, the sun will burn like an oven that consumes the stubble of the field (4:1[3:19]). Given this prophetic context of separation and judgment aimed at Israel herself, perhaps it is best to see James as speaking prophetically of separation and judgment to his own community. James speaks of a time of testing throughout chapter 1 (vv. 1–4; v. 12). Though James does explicitly use the language of Malachi’s furnace in the immediate context of these “various tests” (πειρασμοῖς...ποικίλοις; 1:2), 1 Peter *does* pick up the language in his parallel description of endurance in trials:

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials (ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς), so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire (διὰ πυρὸς δὲ δοκιμαζομένου), may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1:6–7; RSV)

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<sup>32</sup> See also Luke 7:27 and Matthew 11:10 who similarly combine the texts but without Isaiah 40:3. In the Gospel accounts, these texts point to John the Baptist, and his message of repentance, as the fulfillment of the promise of Elijah.

Here the fires of the furnace are likened to the tests and trials that Peter's audience is enduring. It is important to observe that James addresses his letter ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ (1:1), while Peter addresses his to "the exiles of the dispersion" (παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς; 1 Pet 1:1)<sup>33</sup> In a manner strikingly similar to 1 Peter, James calls his readers to "consider it all joy" (Πᾶσαν χαρὰν ἠγήσασθε) when they undergo various trials (1:2), as endurance (ὑπομονήν) and perfection (τέλειοι καὶ ὀλόκληροι ἐν μηδενὶ λειπόμενοι) will be the result (1:3–4). Also, in the context immediately following his use of Isaiah and Malachi's imagery, James calls "blessed" (Μακάριος) those who endure testing (δόκιμος γενόμενος), as when they are tried, they will receive a "crown of life" (στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς; 1:12).<sup>34</sup>

Given this setting, James' command that the "lowly brother" "boast" in his exaltation, and the rich "boast" in his humiliation, is best set within this theme of "blessed" and "joyous" testing.<sup>35</sup> The community, in essence, is to boast in the result of this eschatological testing—the revealed separation of the faithful from the faithless under the light and heat of the risen sun.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The opening and closing of James form an eschatological *inclusio*, as it opens addressed to the restored twelve tribes of Israel (1:1) and closes, instructing his readers to imitate Elijah, restoring the "wandering" brother back to the truth (5:17–20). According to Sirach stated the mission of Elijah was "to restore the tribes of Jacob" (48:10). Here, he conflated Malachi's image of fire and judgment with Isaiah's restoration of the twelve tribes of Jacob in. S. Pines denies any eschatological reference in Jas 1:1, given that the twelve tribes are *still* in the dispersion ("Notes on the Twelve Tribes in Qumran, Early Christianity and Jewish Tradition," in *Messiah and Christos* [TSAJ 32; ed. I. Gruenwald; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992], 151–154). Matthew A. Jackson-McCabe, however, counters that 1:1 is an "evocative address that...both connotes a present state in which the promises of God remain unfulfilled and, especially in connection with a χριστός, sounds a note of eschatological hope" ("A Letter to the Twelve Tribes in the Diaspora: Wisdom and 'Apocalyptic' Eschatology in the Letter of James," [SBLSP; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1996], 504–517).

<sup>34</sup> Compare with 1 Peter's "unfading crown of glory" (ἀμάραντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον; 5:4). The similarities between James and Peter are quite numerous, including Peter's explicit quotation of Isaiah 40:6–8 in 1:24–25 and the description of new birth through the word of God (Jas 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23). Unfortunately, a detailed study is beyond the purview of this paper.

<sup>35</sup> See also Hort, F. J. A. *The Epistle of St James* (London: Macmillan, 1909), 14.

<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, Friedrich Spitta suggests that James switches from image of the "double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (ἀνήρ δίψυχος, ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ; v. 8) to a discussion of the "lowly brother" (ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ ταπεινός) based on the fact that Isaiah 54:11 is the only place in all of the LXX (and NT, besides James) where ἀκατάστατος is found, and that it is paired with ταπεινός. (*Der Brief des Jakobus*. [Zur Geschichte und Litteratur des Urchristentums; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1896], 25). Spitta fails to note that in v. 9 of Isaiah's text, God comforts Israel explaining that the mercy he will show in her restoration is the same mercy that he showed Noah when the flood subsided, as he promised not to flood the earth again. Next, in v. 10, he notes that "though the mountains may depart and the hills be removed" his mercy will never depart. Then, in v. 11, God refers to Israel as "afflicted and outcast" (ταπεινὴ καὶ ἀκατάστατος) and without comfort (οὐ παρεκλήθης). Given that 54:11 is the only place in all of the LXX where ἀκατάστατος is found, and that it is paired with ταπεινός and παρακαλέω, there is evidence of a conscious *gezerah shewa* linking of the unstable man with the lowly brother and the rich man who are about to undergo the trial of the rising sun and burning sirocco. The flow of James' teaching

## BOASTING IN THE GREAT REVERSAL

Contrary to Luke Timothy Johnson, who states that 1:9–11 is *not* a direct exhortation to his readers, but rather a statement of “basic principles concerning the human condition before God,” the command to boast should be taken as literal.<sup>37</sup> Καυχάσθω is one of fifteen third person imperatives found in James (1:4, 5, 6, 13, 19; 3:13; 4:9; 5:12, 13, 14, 20), and in every other instance of such an imperative, James gives a literal command to the community. So, both the rich and the lowly are commanded to boast. The exaltation of the humble, and the humbling of the exalted is a common motif in the biblical tradition (Ps 9:13; 74:7[8]; Prov 18:12; Job 5:11; Isa 2:11–12, 17; 2:17; 10:33; 26:5; Bar. 5:7). The command to “boast,” however—whether given to the rich in humiliation or to the humble in exaltation—is relatively rare. In the LXX and NT, the *prohibitive* command “do not boast” is found in 1 Kgs 21:11 and Prov 27:1, while the only place where the command is given in the positive besides Jeremiah 9:22–23[MT 23–24], is Psalm 32:11[MT 31:11]. All other instances of its use in the positive are in quotations or allusions to Jeremiah’s text (1 Sam 2:3, 10; Odes 3:3, 10; 1 Cor 1:31; 3:21; 2 Cor 10:17). It has been suggested that the text of Jeremiah 9 lies behind James’ injunction to the lowly and to the rich to “boast.”<sup>38</sup> Jeremiah’s admonition does bare similarity with James:

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man boast (καυχάσθω) in his wisdom, and let not the strong man boast (καυχάσθω) in his strength, and let not the rich man (ὁ πλούσιος) boast (καυχάσθω) in his wealth;<sup>24</sup> but let him that boasts boast (καυχάσθω) in this, the understanding and knowing that I am the Lord that exercise mercy, and judgment, and righteousness, upon the earth; for in these things is my pleasure, saith the Lord.

The repetition of the imperative (καυχάσθω) and the mention of the rich man (ὁ πλούσιος) points to the possibility of James’ intentional allusion. Williams also asserts that within Jeremiah 9, the theme of reversal is found in vv. 17–22[16–21], as women—typically marginalized—are called to be “representatives of the new order, pronouncing judgment upon Judah.”<sup>39</sup> Williams is helpful in pointing out links between James and Jeremiah, as he proposes that it helps solve some of the thorny issues of James treatment of the lowly brother and the rich in 1:9–11. First, Jeremiah is addressing Israel in ch. 9, so the wealth, riches and wisdom in

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is structured with the context of these Old Testament passages in mind, and he is not simply chaining words or listing unconnected aphorisms!

<sup>37</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, 191.

<sup>38</sup> H. H. Drake Williams, III, “Of Rags and Riches: The Benefits of Hearing Jeremiah 9:23–24 within James 1:9–11, *TynBul* 53 (2002): 273–282. Citing many scholars, Williams also asserts that Paul’s commands to “boast” are based upon Jeremiah as well.

<sup>39</sup> Williams, 278.

view are the wealth, riches and wisdom of Israel. He is admonishing God's people to not rely upon these things, but rather upon God's sovereign mercy and judgment. While other texts in James do address the rich as "outsiders" (2:14–17; 5:1–5), James does warn the "insiders" of the community away from the allure of wealth (2:1 ff.; 4:13 ff.) and admonishes them to "find true wealth in the Lord and not to adapt the ways of the world (cf. 2:5; 4:4)."<sup>40</sup>

If the theme of reversal truly is present in Jeremiah's text, then it also shows (contra Johnson) that James' command is a literal command. Believers are to boast in the reversal of the world's order. It should be noted, however (contra Williams) that the theme of reversal is only *implicit* in Jeremiah's text. It actually *lacks* the verbal language of reversal found in Isaiah (see discussion above). So, the question that remains to be answered, is how James moved from Jeremiah's theme of boasting into Isaiah's oracle of comfort. Verbal correspondence with Isaiah does occur in a later text's use of Jeremiah's admonition to "boast." In the Greek version of Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2, Jeremiah's text is inserted after the following text:

My heart is established in the Lord, my horn is exalted (ὑψώθη) in my God; my mouth is enlarged over my enemies, I have rejoiced in thy salvation. ...<sup>3</sup> Boast not (μὴ καυχᾶσθε), and utter not high things (μὴ λαλεῖτε ὑψηλά); let not high-sounding words come out of your mouth, for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and God prepares his own designs.<sup>4</sup> The bow of the mighty has waxed feeble, and the weak have girded themselves with strength.<sup>5</sup> They that were full of bread are brought low; and the hungry have forsaken the land; for the barren has born seven, and she that abounded in children has waxed feeble.<sup>6</sup> The Lord kills and makes alive; he brings down to the grave, and brings up.<sup>7</sup> The Lord makes poor, and makes rich; he brings low, and lifts up (κύριος πτωχίζει καὶ πλουτίζει ταπεινοῖ καὶ ἀνυψοῖ)<sup>8</sup> He lifts up (ἀνιστᾶ) the poor (πένητα) from the earth, and raises the needy from the dunghill; to seat him with the princes of the people, and causing them to inherit the throne of glory.<sup>9</sup> granting his petition to him that prays; and he blesses the years of the righteous, for by strength cannot man prevail. (1 Sam 2:3–9 [LXX]; Brenton)

It is at this point that the translator of the LXX (or an earlier redactor of the Hebrew) added the text of Jeremiah 9:22–23. Thematically, the theme of reversal is apparent. As Hannah's barrenness is exchanged for a son, she breaks into a lengthy celebration of God's vindication of the lowly. Besides the verbal parallels that have been mentioned above in the context of Jeremiah 9, the thematic parallels with Isaiah 40 and James 1:9–11 are readily apparent: that which is low is made high, and that which is high is made low. The presence of ὑψ\* cognates and synonyms, ταπειν\* cognates and synonyms, as well as the injunction "not to boast" (μὴ

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 281.

καυχᾶσθε; v. 3) all indicate that this passage was ripe for integration via *gezerah shewa* with Isaiah 40 in James 1:9–11.

Reading Hannah’s song as the background for the boasting in the midst of reversal helps shed light on James’ command to boast, but it does not solve whether this boasting, and this reversal is a present or a future phenomenon. Both the structure and grammar of vv. 10b–11 may shed some light on this. Richard Bauckham characterizes these verses as a certain form of parable where “A (the illustrand) is like B (comparison: noun + short narrative). So also C (application to the illustrand).” He then diagrams the passage as follows:

- (A) [The rich person] will disappear
- (B) like (ὡς) a flower of the field. For the sun rose with its scorching heat and withered the field and its flower fell and its beautiful appearance perished.
- (C) So also (οὕτως καὶ) the rich person will fade away in the midst of his life (1:10b–11).<sup>41</sup>

As seen from Bauckham’s translation above, the illustration of the parable is sandwiched between the two future verbs in the illustrand (παρελεύσεται in v. 10) and the application to the illustrand (μαρανθήσεται in v. 11). Clearly the focus of the parable is upon a future event. The rich person *will* disappear/fade away in the “midst of his life.” The illustration, however contains four aorist verbs (ἀνέτειλεν, ἐξήρανεν, ἐξέπεσεν and ἀπόλετο). Bauckham asserts that these aorist verbs should be translated in the past tense (rather than gnominically). “Though the events are what commonly happen to wild flowers in Palestine, the similitude narrates the particular fate of one wild flower.”<sup>42</sup> While the image that James uses is taken from everyday life in Palestine, he uses the eschatologically charged language of the prophets to describe the phenomenon (see discussion above). Perhaps within this blend of tenses, James is hinting at the inauguration of the eschatological age in the ministry of his brother that is yet to be consummated in a final reversal.

As noted above, Mark conflates Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3 in opening of his gospel, pointing to the ministry of John the Baptist, preparing the way for the LORD (1:2–3). John’s message of repentance anticipated the message of reversal that Jesus would teach. Wesley Hiram Wachob has asserted, “The Epistle of James is a deliberative discourse in the guise of a letter that uses sayings of Jesus to persuade an audience to think and act in ways that have

<sup>41</sup> Richard Bauckham, *James* (New Testament Readings. London: Routledge, 1999), 52.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 53–54.

significant social consequences.”<sup>43</sup> Though the language James 1:9–11 certainly evokes the words of the OT prophets, the passage is no exception to Wachob’s assertion. Though the Gospels do not record a saying of Christ upon which James is demonstrably dependent. Patrick J. Hartin notes that James’ teaching in 1:9–11 (recapitulated in 4:10) generally echoes the themes of Jesus teaching on the exalted status of humility (Matt 23:12//Luke 14:11; 18:14, noting also Mark 10:43//Matt 20:26//Luke 22:26 and Mark 9:35//Matt 18:4). Edgar notes that there are close verbal and thematic agreements between these sayings of Jesus and James’ language. The parallels are clearly seen below:<sup>44</sup>

James 1:9–10a	James 4:10	Luke 14:11	Mat 23:12
Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation.	Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.	Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.	For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.
Καυχάσθω δὲ ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὁ <u>ταπεινὸς</u> ἐν τῷ ὑψίᾳ αὐτοῦ, <sup>10</sup> ὁ δὲ πλούσιος ἐν τῇ <u>ταπεινώσει</u> αὐτοῦ	<u>ταπεινώθητε</u> ἐνώπιον κυρίου καὶ ὑψώσει ὑμᾶς.	ὅστις δὲ ὑψώσει ἑαυτὸν <u>ταπεινωθήσεται</u> καὶ ὅστις <u>ταπεινώσει</u> ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται.	ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὑψῶν ἑαυτὸν <u>ταπεινωθήσεται</u> , καὶ ὁ <u>ταπεινῶν</u> ἑαυτὸν ὑψωθήσεται.

While Edgar is right to note the thematic and verbal parallels, Hartin contends, that “the wealth of references to this theme shows the importance it assumed in the early Church traditions.”<sup>45</sup> Hence, James need not be dependent upon a specific saying of Jesus.

The setting of this particular teaching in Luke’s gospel may still however, shed light on James’ seemingly ironic admonition for the rich to “boast” in their humiliation. The saying of Jesus given above follows Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector at prayer in Luke 18:9–14. In this parable, the two men went up to the temple to pray. The Pharisees’ prayer focused on self aggrandizement, as he stated “God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes

<sup>43</sup> Wesley Hiram Wachob, *The Voice of Jesus in the Social Rhetoric of James* (SNTSMS 106; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 22–23.

<sup>44</sup> David Hutchinson Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James* (JSNTSS 206; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 68–69.

<sup>45</sup> Patrick J. Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus* (JSNTSS 47; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 198; Davids, *The Epistle of James*, 48; Edgar, 77.

of all that I get” (vv. 11–13). The tax collector, on the other hand, though rich, and most likely guilty of the very sins the Pharisee decried, humbled himself and called upon God to “Be merciful me a sinner!” (v. 13). Jesus pronounced that the tax collector was justified out of his humility, “for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted” (v. 14).<sup>46</sup> The content of Jesus’ message was repentance. Indeed, the tax collector could boast that he had made himself low, bringing about his repentance and restoration. Jesus’ message of reversal inaugurated the judgment that calls the proud and rich to humble themselves. Elsewhere in his teaching, Jesus makes it clear that present resistance to the kingdom message of repentance will result in the future humiliation (Luke 20:18). Through the preaching of John and Jesus’ message of the Kingdom, the humiliation of the repentant rich began and the future judgment of the stubborn rich was guaranteed.

EXCURSUS: ISAIAH 40, THE PRIESTHOOD AND THE CROWN

As noted above, the LXX shows remarkable consistency in translating נבל with ἐκπίπτω in 40:8 and 28:1–4, suggesting that the translator recognized a close link between the indictment of the drunkards of Ephraim in (ch. 28) and Isaiah’s words of consolation in (ch. 40). Closer examination will show that the connections are more than linguistic. Isaiah 28 opens:

Ah, the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, and the fading flower (וְצִיץ נָבֵל) of its glorious beauty (צִבְיֵי הַפְּאֲרֹתָיו),<sup>47</sup> which is on the head of the rich valley of those overcome with wine! Behold, the LORD has one who is mighty and strong; like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest, like a storm of mighty, overflowing waters, he casts down to the earth with his hand. The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden underfoot; and the fading flower (צִיֵצַת נָבֵל) of its glorious beauty (צִבְיֵי הַפְּאֲרֹתָיו),<sup>48</sup> which is on the head of the rich valley, will be like a first-ripe fig before the summer: when someone sees it, he swallows it as soon as it is in his hand. In that day the LORD of hosts will be a crown of glory (לְעֹטְרַת צְבִי),<sup>49</sup> and a diadem of beauty (וְלִצְפִירֵת הַפְּאֲרֹה),<sup>50</sup> to the remnant of his people, and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. (vv. 1–6; ESV)

<sup>46</sup> That Jesus’ pronouncement follows a story of two men at prayer, may also have implications for James switch to a discussion of the reversal of the lowly brother immediately following his teaching on prayer and double-mindedness (1:5–8).

<sup>47</sup> τὸ ἄνθος τὸ ἐκπεσὸν ἐκ τῆς δόξης ἐπὶ τῆς κορυφῆς τοῦ ὄρους τοῦ παχέος “the flower that has fallen from the glory of the top of the fertile mountain” (Brenton).

<sup>48</sup> τὸ ἄνθος τὸ ἐκπεσὸν τῆς ἐλπίδος τῆς δόξης “fading flower of the glorious hope” (Brenton).

<sup>49</sup> ὁ στέφανος τῆς ἐλπίδος “the crown of hope.”

<sup>50</sup> πλακεῖς τῆς δόξης “the woven crown of glory.” Compare with 1 Peter 5:4, φανερωθέντος τοῦ ἀρχιποίμενος κομιεῖσθε τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον “And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (ESV).

The oracle against the drunkards of Ephraim expands to include drunken *priests* and *prophets* (vv. 7–8), who see Isaiah’s message of doom as fit only for “Those who are weaned from the milk, those taken from the breast” (v. 9; ESV).<sup>51</sup> The prophet condemns these “scoffers of Jerusalem” while assuring remnant of Israel that YHWH “has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation” (vv. 14–22; ESV).

The verbal similarities between Isaiah 28:1–6 and 40:6–8 are striking, but the conceptual similarities abound as well. In both oracles humans are compared to fading flowers, easily trampled and quickly faded, while the power and effectiveness of Israel’s God stands in stark contrast. There is also evidence that *both* chapters were seen by early interpreters to involve the *priests* of Jerusalem. The MT directs the oracle of Isaiah 40 to an unknown messenger.<sup>52</sup>

While the translator of the LXX directed this divine command at the priests of Jerusalem, “Speak, ye priests, to the heart of Jerusalem; comfort her, for her humiliation is accomplished, her sin is put away: for she has received of the LORD’s hand double the amount of her sins” (v. 2; Brenton). As noted above, the Targum for chapter 28 expands the earlier oracle, “Woe to *him who gives the crown to the proud, the foolish master of Israel, and gives the turban to the wicked one of the sanctuary* of his praise.”<sup>53</sup> The ancient association of the priesthood with these chapters is not unfounded. The imagery of fading flowers and withering grass could easily have evoked images of the temple cult, as the priests were to wear a rosette (צִיץ) upon their head (Exod 28:36; 39:30; Lev 8:9), and as the temple was decorated with an abundance of floral imagery (צִצִּים; 1 Kgs 6:18, 29, 32, 35).<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere in the New Testament, the link between chapters 28 and 40 is evidenced in Peter’s use of Isaiah, as he quotes from Isa 40:6–8 (1 Pet 1:24–25), and then alludes to Isaiah’s message of “milk” (28:16) in 2:2. He then explicitly quotes the

<sup>51</sup> J. Alec Motyer contends that the priests and the prophets were mocking Isaiah’s message as “mere playschool material” (*The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* [Downers Grove: IVP Press, 1993], 231).

<sup>52</sup> The words are directed to the prophet himself? For issues regarding the identification of the “voices” in Isaiah 40:1–11, see Christopher R. Seitz, “The Divine Council and Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah,” *JBL* 109 (1990): 229–247.

<sup>53</sup> Translation by Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum* (The Aramaic Bible 11; Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1987), 54. He comments further that the woe was directed specifically upon the Roman authorities (ca. A.D. 66) and the priests that they appointed, showing that such a view was contemporaneous with the writers of the NT (55).

<sup>54</sup> The use of צִיץ to describe the rosette decoration worn by priests on their turban is mentioned by William Henry Irwin *Isaiah 28–33: Translation with Philological Notes* (BibOr 30; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977), 4. He also mentions that in Ugaritic literature, Baal himself was said to wear a “šš” (Anat IV.45). Note also the explicit reference in Isa 28:3 to “The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim” that was to be “trodden underfoot” (ESV), and the Targum’s reference to “*the turban of the wicked one*” (מִצְנִפְתָּא לְרִשְׁעִיָּא) in vv. 1 and 4 (Chilton, 54).

cornerstone prophecy (28:16) in 2:6.<sup>55</sup> The link perceived between Isaiah 28 and 40 has potential for our understanding of James 1:12, and its connection to vv. 1–11. In v. 12, James pronounces the beatitude: “Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life (στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς) which God has promised to those who love him.” Given the association of flowers and crowns in Isa 28:1–4, James’ macarism offers an interesting corollary to the fading flower of vv. 10–11. The flowered garland of the rich and powerful who do not endure the test will fall to the ground and fade away, but those who endure will receive a garland crown of life. Thus v. 12 continues the theme of reversal that began in v. 9.<sup>56</sup> Johnson notes that this “crown of life” can be understood as signifying “elevation into the future life of God” (cf. 2 Tim 4:8; Jas 2:5; Rev 2:10).<sup>57</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper has been to explore the use of Scripture in James 1:9–11. The claim that James neither knew nor cared about the context of the Scriptures he alluded to has been shown false. Rather, James intricately wove the prophetic themes of reversal, judgment, repentance and restoration, found in Isaiah 40, Malachi 3 and Jeremiah 9. James’ blending of prophetic imagery of judgment, repentance and restoration, along with eschatological reversal show that the message of Jesus continued to be the message of the church. For James, the church was the firstfruits of the restored Israel (1:1, 18). It was a community that practiced a prophetic ministry in the prophetic style of Elijah, calling the rest of Israel to repentance, lest one day she face the burning sun with its scorching wind.

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<sup>55</sup> Of the literature surveyed, only Frederick W. Danker suggests that Isaiah 28 could have been in the foreground of Peter’s mind when he quoted 40:6–8. See pages 94–95 in his article, “1 Peter 1:24–2:17—A Consolatory Pericope,” *ZNW* 58 (1976): 93–102 (*CTM* 38 [1967]: 329–332). The author would like to vent his frustration here, as he fancied the possibility of uncovering a previously unnoticed aspect of Peter’s use of Scripture, but alas, he was bested by the great Frederick W. Danker, perhaps the author will succeed in finding an original thought regarding James’ use of Isaiah!

<sup>56</sup> As mentioned above, John Painter has associated James with the lower-class priests, who had been exploited by the Sadducean high priests. It is fascinating that later church tradition gave James himself the status of High Priest, “and it was permitted him once a year to enter the holy of holies” (Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 29.4.3). James was also said to have worn the priestly crown (πέταλον; see Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 78.14.1; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.31.3. It may be worth investigating the historicity of James’ “priestly status” and associations, as it could have bearing on his understanding of this text as well. Unfortunately, time and space do not permit such an investigation here. The above translation by Philip R. Amidon, *The Panarion of St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis: Selected Passages* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990).

<sup>57</sup> Johnson, *James*, 188.

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